

Urban Redevelopment, Gentrification and Gentrifiers in Post-reform Inland China: A Case Study of Chengdu, China

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Abstract: Since its process evolved in recent years, the definition of gentrification has expanded to cover different forms of social upgrading, new spaces and new actors around the world. Studies on gentrification in Chinese cities began to take off in the 2000s. However, they all mainly focused on the newly emerging global cities and there has been a lack of investigation on provincial cities. Furthermore, discussions on gentrifiers' profiles and their motivations for housing choice are absent from literature on Chinese gentrification. Therefore, this paper aims to assess the relevance of the broad definition of gentrification in provincial Chinese cities through empirical research on urban redevelopment projects in Chengdu, and to examine the characteristics of gentrifiers (as new incoming residents) in it. The results show the rationality of gentrification processes as urban redevelopment in Chengdu, and reveal original outcomes on the corresponding gentrifiers' profiles and the motivations behind their housing choice, which are different from the general features of gentrifiers in standard Western gentrification research.

Keywords: gentrification; new-build gentrification; urban redevelopment projects; gentrifiers; motivations for housing choice; Chengdu, China

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1 Introduction

Gentrification is an evolving concept, having undergone significant changes and mutations over time and space (Lees *et al.*, 2008). In this sense, the term 'gentrification', coined by Glass (1964), has gradually been challenged. Today, a broader view is required to examine this concept. The definition of gentrification should include redevelopment and new development with social upgrading on both residential and non-residential lands (Ley, 1996; Smith, 1996; Davidson and Lees, 2005), whilst the rehabilitation of existing stock is only one aspect of the process. As such, gentrification has been

seen as a class upgrading process and as the production of affluent spaces through (re)investment (Clark, 2005; Lees *et al.*, 2008; Doucet, 2009).

Gentrification is closely linked to recent globalization (Smith, 2002; Davidson, 2007), and has cascaded down the urban hierarchy (Dutton, 2003). It has also spread through many national contexts (Atkinson and Bridge, 2005), and other spaces outside of city centers, such as suburbs (Badcock, 2001; Robson and Butler, 2001) and even rural areas (Phillips, 1993; 2002). With regard to the temporal dimension, three or even four waves of gentrification have been identified, each of which encompasses various actors and processes relating to the

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evolution and mutation of gentrification (Hackworth and Smith, 2001; Lees *et al.*, 2008). Because of the increasingly diverse spatial and temporal aspects of gentrification, the 'geography of gentrification' has been built with consideration to its contextuality and temporality (Lees, 2000).

Over the past fifty years, gentrification has transformed from a sporadic and fortuitous phenomenon into a widespread one, interweaving with urban renewal and redevelopment projects (Lees *et al.*, 2008). Urban renewal (or urban renaissance and regeneration) has become part of the 'rhetoric' of gentrification, masking the critique that displacement and urban inequality are a result of the gentrification process, publicizing its positive aspects, such as the revitalization of declining inner city areas, improvement of social mix, and encouragement of further development (Atkinson and Bridge, 2005; Davidson and Lees, 2005; Bridge *et al.*, 2012). Consequently, the process of gentrification has been utilized by policymakers, and glossed over with the terms 'urban renewal' and 'urban renaissance', meant to avoid the political baggage of the term 'gentrification' (Lees *et al.*, 2008).

Gentrification has been thought of as a 'back to the city' movement through both the lens of 'capital' (Smith, 1979) and 'people' (Ley, 1986). The divergence of views has caused a debate over the explanations for and mechanisms of gentrification in the 1970s and 1980s; some scholars have argued the standpoint of capital, underlining the power of capital flow (the production-side thesis) (Smith, 1996), while others have supported the standpoint of people, stressing people's behaviors and cultural elements (the consumption-side thesis) (Caulfield, 1994; Ley, 1996). Supporters of these two theories have debated each other for nearly half a century, with neither side emerging victorious. As a result, more and more gentrification researchers have accepted both of these explanations as parts of 'the elephant of gentrification' (Hamnett, 1991) or as 'two sides of the same coin' (Lees, 1994).

However, the consumption-side thesis has opened gentrification research to investigation of housing choice. Most literature on this topic highlights the middle-class desire to establish an urban life, which is based on leftist-liberal ideology, opposition to mundane suburban life, and conspicuous consumption (bars, galleries, boutiques, *etc.*) (Caulfield, 1994; Ley, 1996). More-

over, within the process of gentrification, housing choices have recently begun to stress practical factors, such as the convenience of living and the combination of work and family (Rérat and Lees, 2011).

To date, the vast majority of empirical research on gentrification has focused on the West, whereas studies on China have taken off since the 2000s. Generally speaking, research on gentrification in China can be divided into two categories. The first focuses mainly on the introduction of Western theories of gentrification, summaries of its development, and discussions of how it might develop in China in the future (Xue, 1999; Wu and Luo, 2007; Wu and Yin, 2008; Huang and Yang, 2012; Song, 2012). The second stresses case studies of gentrification in China, which started around the mid-2000s, following changes in trends by examining the new forms of gentrification, e.g., new-build gentrification, rural gentrification, commercial gentrification, studentification (Wang, 2011; He *et al.*, 2012; He, 2010; 2015), the development stages of gentrification (He, 2012), and state actors through their development processes (He, 2007; Shin, 2016).

However, most of these case studies are based on certain newly emerging global cities in coastal China, such as Shanghai and Guangzhou. Fewer studies focus on other, non-global cities in inland China. As previously mentioned, gentrification in the West is no longer confined to global cities, and has spread to other cities on a national level (Dutton, 2003; Lees *et al.*, 2008). Therefore, it is also worth examining this phenomenon in cities beyond the global cities in the Chinese context. Moreover, without question, the process of gentrification includes 'people', including gentrifiers and displacees. Although some recent studies have focused on the issues of displacement (He, 2010; 2012), few have shed light on the characteristics of gentrifiers and their motivations on housing choice in urban China.

Accordingly, this paper aims to demonstrate the relevance of gentrification in the provincial Chinese city of Chengdu through empirical research of urban redevelopment projects, and to investigate the characteristics of gentrifiers (as new incoming residents).

2 Gentrification and gentrifiers

Early definitions of gentrification proposed by Glass (1964), which referred exclusively to the rehabilitation

of existing buildings, can be described as 'classic gentrification', whilst demolitions, reconstructions, and new builds on plots of previous residential settlements or industrial wastelands have come to be known as (Davidson and Lees, 2005). However, these two forms of gentrification do share four principal characteristics: 1) the reinvestment of capital, 2) the social upgrading of locale by high-income groups, 3) landscape change, and 4) direct or indirect displacement of low-income groups, which applies to all forms and spaces, as a broad description of gentrification (Davidson and Lees, 2005).

Playing one of the main roles in the process of gentrification, the characteristics of gentrifiers have transformed with its mutation and evolution. 'Gentrifiers' initially referred to pioneers who were rich in cultural capital but lacked economic means (Lees *et al.*, 2008), and then later to the 'new middle class' who rejected the mass-produced, standardized, and sterile homogeneous suburban landscape (Caulfield, 1994; Ley, 1996). The categories of gentrifiers then began including other groups, although these new groups still form minor categories, such as single mothers (Rose, 1984; Bondi, 1991) or dual-career households (family gentrifiers) (Karsten, 2003), stable super wealthy professionals and financiers (Lees, 2003), and the mobile global elite (Bridge, 2007). The profile of gentrifiers is no longer limited to specific age groups and household types; middle or old age individuals, as well as family households, have all appeared in recent gentrification literature (R erat, 2012; Karsten, 2003; 2014).

Studies relating to the motivations of gentrifiers' housing choices have been investigated by numerous gentrification scholars (Lees *et al.*, 2008). In this regard, two arguments have been marked out (Tallon and Bromley, 2004; Bromley *et al.*, 2007; R erat, 2012). The most influential argument emphasizes the valorization of gentrifiers' urban lives, including conspicuous consumption, aesthetization tastes, and the rejection of the oppressive, mundane, banal routines of suburban life (Caulfield, 1994; Ley, 1996; R erat, 2012). Another argument claims practical factors are the reason gentrifiers choose to live in a central city, stressing the convenience of urban life and issues of accessibility in avoiding the time-space constrictions of suburbia (Danyluk and Ley, 2007; Hamnett and Whitelegg, 2007; R erat and Lees, 2011). Indeed, the above-cited study concerning the mutation and diversity of gentrifiers highlight a strong

connection between the characteristics of gentrifiers and trajectories of urban development in the Western context. As Rose (1984) has shown, 'the processes through which those groups we now subsume under the category gentrifiers are produced and reproduced', emphasizing that 'gentrifiers' are a distinct group according to the spatial and temporal specificities of gentrification.

In a majority of Chinese cities today, gentrification, here characterized as high-end housing redevelopment, has become one of the main means of state-sponsored urban transformation, along with the recent boom in real-estate development (He, 2010). However, China has experienced a totally different trajectory of gentrification from the West. First, the large scale of suburbanization in the West has not yet appeared in Chinese cities. As a result, the so-called idea of a 'counter for the suburban life' is unlikely to be a factor in Chinese gentrifiers' mindsets. Second, state-owned urban land makes it easily possible for public authorities to sponsor gentrification and complete redevelopment within a short period of time, which has been known as state-sponsored gentrification (He, 2007). Moreover, factors such as the land and housing reforms, the changing family structure caused by the one-child policy, and issues pertaining to the local traditional culture of inhabitants have also laid the foundation for the unique context of China.

Consequently, characteristics of gentrification and gentrifiers in urban China may provide different, distinctive, and special results. In this sense, this paper will investigate the profiles and motivations of 'gentrifiers' (as new incoming residents), aiming to contribute to a wider empirical understanding of the 'geography of gentrification' beyond the West in a specific space and time, namely, an inland Chinese city of the post-reform period (from the 1990s until now).

3 Materials and Methods

3.1 Study area

Chengdu, with more than 2000 years of history, is the provincial capital of Sichuan Province, and is also a central regional city in the western China (Fig. 1). During the 1960s and 1970s, Chengdu was a major city of light industrial production in China, especially in the fields of electronics, aerospace, manufacturing, and military-related industries. Since the implementation of

China's economic reform and open-door policies, Chengdu has transformed its industrial development, and has been designated by China's central government as the western center of logistics, commerce, finance, science, and technology. Rapid economic growth has been the main goal for the Chengdu local government since 1990, and it has indeed been developing year-by-year (Wikipedia, 2014). Against this backdrop, two mega-urban redevelopment projects in central Chengdu were formulated by the local government between the 1990s and the 2000s, and are this paper's object of research.

One of the redevelopment projects is the Funan River Rehabilitation Program (known as the No.1 Project). Funan River is the major waterway in Chengdu, and was famous for its dirty water and the dilapidated residential housing that ran along the riverside before the early 1990s (Chinese Economic Times, 2006). In order to restore the Funan River and modernize the city, the Chengdu municipal government initiated the No.1 Project from 1993 to 2000. About 2.7 billion yuan (RMB) was invested into the project by the Chengdu municipal government (West China City Daily, 2000). This project spanned the waterway area of the Funan River inside Chengdu's Second Ring Road, including the clearance of the waterway, the demolition of dilapidated areas along the riverside, as well as the subsequent resettlement of local residents. According to interviews with

officials from the Jinjiang District Government, around 30 000 households (almost 100 000 people) were displaced by this project. Many of those displaced residents had come from the lowest social strata in Chengdu, including poor workers, vendors, and scavengers.

Following this, the Chengdu municipal government began to lease out newly developed riverside land to real estate companies through tenders or auctions in the late 1990s. The most notable area in this project was Jiuyanqiao, which is located near the southeast First Ring Road (Fig. 1). With investment from more than five real estate developers, this area has witnessed a tremendous transformation in its urban landscape. The dilapidated low-rise neighborhoods have been replaced by modern high-rise condominiums, which cater only to affluent residents (Fig. 2).

The other urban redevelopment is called the Dongdiao Project and was conducted from 2001 to 2009. This project aimed to remove all secondary industrial SOEs (state-owned enterprises) from the eastern district of central Chengdu and to initiate the redevelopment of the old urban areas. Before 2000, the eastern part of central Chengdu was well known as a secondary industrial district, composed of around 160 declining SOE factories and their dilapidated *danwei* (work unit) compounds. Over the past years, due to the Dongdiao Project, the eastern part of central Chengdu has seen the demolition

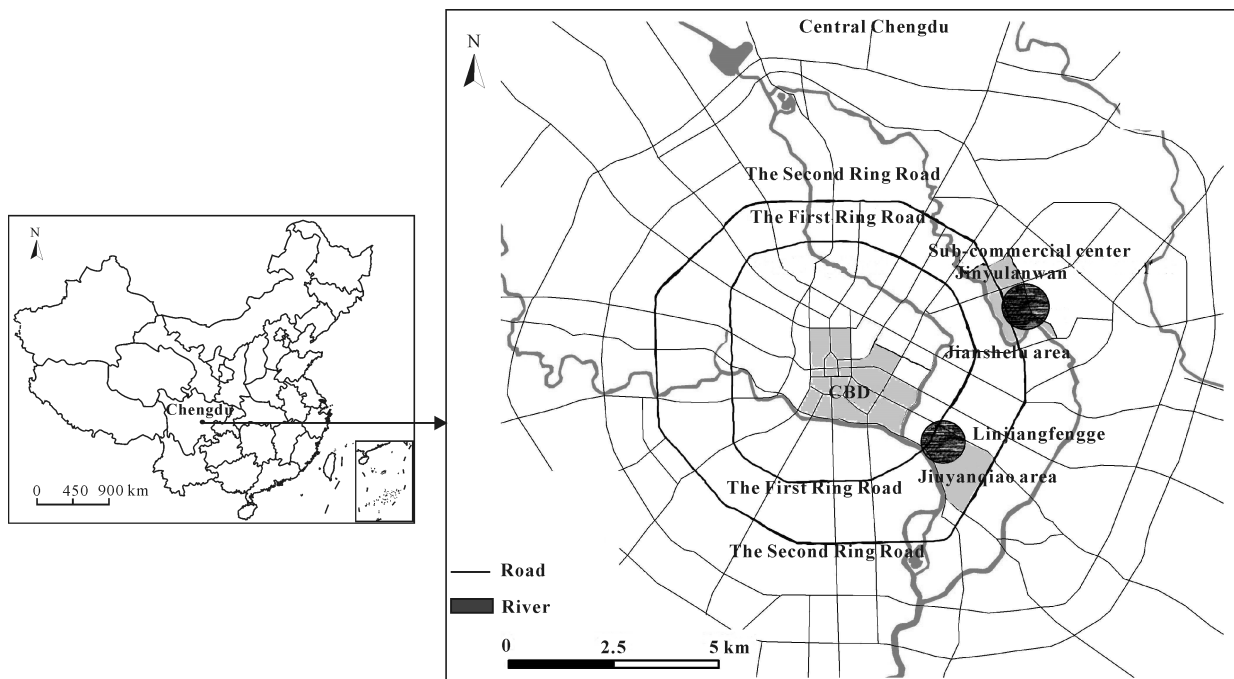


Fig. 1 Central area of Chengdu



Fig. 2 Undeveloped dilapidated old dwellings (left) and newly developed high-rise flats along riverside (right) in Jiuyanqiao Area

of old factories and their *danwei* housing, the construction of new-build developments, and the displacement of thousands of working-class residents.

Jianshelu was a typical district in Dongdiao Project (Fig. 1). In the past, it housed more than five large industrial SOEs and their *danwei* compounds. With the implementation of the Dongdiao Project, this area has attracted much domestic and overseas investment. For example, the SM Group, a Filipino enterprise, invested 54 million USD into redeveloping the former industrial sites in the Jianshelu Area. A large shopping center and other facilities, such as retail stores, a cinema, cafes, and restaurants, were also built on this land. By 2009, more than five large private real estate developers had devel-

oped high-rise housing and commercial complexes in this district. To date, the former socialist landscape of secondary industrial SOEs with numerous plant buildings, brownfields, and workers' *danwei* compounds has been transformed into modern high-rise residential buildings and high-end commercial complexes to cater to wealthy residents and consumers (Fig. 3).

3.2 Methodologies

To investigate the profiles of incoming residents and their motivations for choosing the new developments of the two projects, this study will examine two separate case studies of the neighborhoods Linjiangfengge and Jinyulanwan, respectively located and conducted in the



Fig. 3 Left is a heavily contrasting landscape, which sees new developments (behind) and old run-down *danwei* compounds housings (front) standing side-by-side. Right shows the newly constructed high-rise flats in Jianshelu area. Due to indirect displacement, it is evident that some old houses in the *danwei* compounds are now empty

Jiuyanqiao and Jianshelu regions in 2009 and 2013 (Fig. 1). A door-to-door questionnaire and in-depth interviews were adopted as methods in this research. Questionnaires were distributed randomly to 280 heads of household or their spouses, which accounted for approximately 10% of the total number of households in each place. In addition, 63 in-depth interviews were also conducted, including with 41 members of households in these two neighborhoods, four officials from Street Offices, six cadres from residents' committees, and 12 local residents. The questionnaires were mainly used to investigate the socioeconomic characteristics of new residents and their motivations for housing choice, whilst the aim of the in-depth interviews was to thoroughly grasp the incoming resident's preferences, information relating to displaced residents, and other matters concerning the transformation of these two areas.

Linjiangfengge neighborhood (hereafter, LF) (130 questionnaires; response rate: 89.2%) is the result of the most prestigious and successful housing redevelopment program in the 'No.1 Project'. It is located on the riverbank of the Funan River in the Jiuyanqiao Area, near the CBD. At the end of the 1990s, a Singaporean real-estate developer, Keppel Land Co., purchased the land (40 906 m²) at auction. Through an investment of around 11.2 million USD the site has been transformed into a luxury gated community with total construction space of 166 138 m² and an average floor-to-area ratio of 467 percent. Primarily catering to middle-to-upper income homebuyers, the neighborhood is comprised of

eight high-rise housing buildings (equating to 1143 households), a large local garden, and numerous other facilities (Fig. 4a).

Jinyulanwan neighborhood (hereafter, JL) (150 questionnaires; response rate: 90.6%) was one of the first and biggest housing redevelopments to be completed in the Dongdiao Project. It is situated in the Jianshelu Area, far from CBD, but adjacent to the newly built sub-commercial center and Second Ring Road in central Chengdu. With an investment from a large domestic real-estate developer, Vanke Group Co., this area (74 000 m²) has been developed into a luxury gated community, comprising of ten highly-quality condominiums (equating to more than 1500 households), a swimming pool, a public gymnasium, and a scenic garden with construction space of about 300 000 m² and an average floor-to-area of 405 percent (Fig. 4b).

4 Results: Incoming New Residents and Local Residents' Displacement

4.1 Profiles

Age groups (mainly focusing on the leaders of households) were first examined based on the survey data (Fig. 5). It is clear that both in LF and JL more than two thirds of residents were in their 30s and 40s. Specifically, in LF, those in their 40s (middle age group) occupied the majority (39%) of dwellings, while in JL residents in their 30s (young age group) accounted for the highest proportion (45%). In addition, those above 60

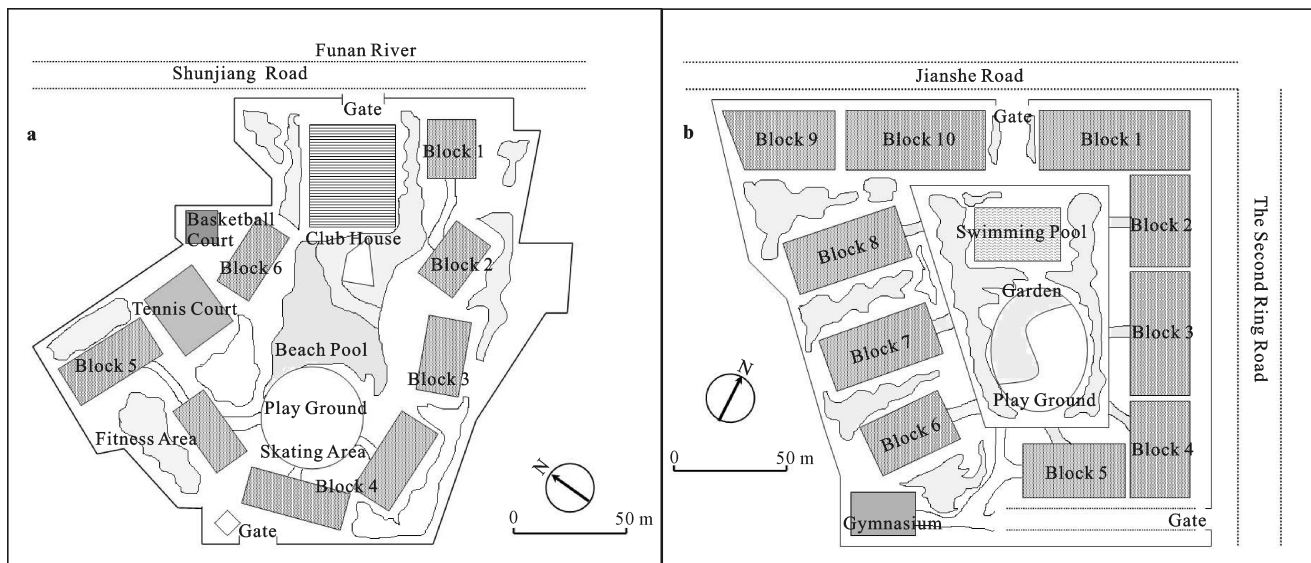


Fig. 4 Composition diagrams of Linjiangfengge (LF) (a) and Jinyulanwan (JL) (b)

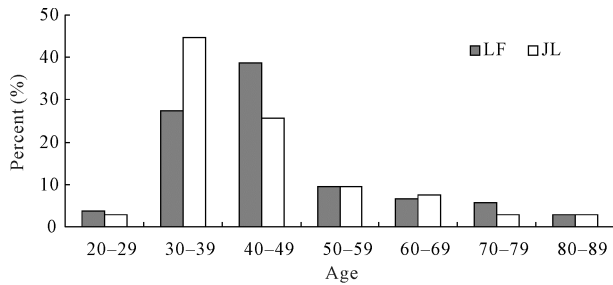


Fig. 5 Age groups of new incoming residents in percentage (LF: Linjiangfengge; JL: Jinyulanwan)

(old age group) were also found in these two neighborhoods, which highlights the diversity of age groups in these cases. However, the results for age groups were above the normal level of gentrifiers in most Western gentrification studies.

Table 1 highlights other respondent socioeconomic and demographic features in terms of occupation, education, birthplace, tenure, and household type. With respect to occupation status, in LF, managers and senior officials constituted half of all respondents, whilst in JL, people in similar occupations accounted for more than 30%. In addition, professionals also made up a large proportion of the residents in these two sites (LF: 34%; JL: 38%). As such, there were far more people in white-collar occupations than the average level in Chengdu, indicating that they own a relatively high level of economic capital in the city. This fact was also reflected in the tenure status in these two neighborhoods: an overwhelming majority of residents have purchased houses (LF: 80%; JL: 98%).

In terms of educational level, the proportion of individuals with a university degree or above accounted for 79% in LF and 86% in JL, almost four times the average level in Chengdu. In addition, the proportion of residents with low qualifications in these two neighborhoods (LF: 10%; JL: 4%) is far lower than the average level in Chengdu (70%). In this sense, it is evident that residents in both LF and JL possess much cultural capital. Moreover, although results relating to place of birth were a little different between LF and JL, residents from Sichuan Province (including Chengdu and other cities in Sichuan) accounted for a high proportion in these two neighborhoods (LF: 73%; 77%). This fact may indicate that Chengdu has the characteristics of a provincial city, differing from global cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, which have attracted people from all over the

Table 1 Socioeconomic and demographic features of new incoming residents

	Linjiangfengge (%)	Jinyulanwan (%)	Chengdu (2010) (%)
Occupations			
Managers and senior officials	56	31	5
Professionals	34	38	18
Associate professionals and administrative	7	18	13
Other occupations	3	13	64
Tenure			
Owner-occupier	57	46	–
Owner mortgage	23	52	–
Work unit rent	8	1	–
Private rent	12	1	–
Educational level			
University postgraduate	17	35	2
University undergraduate	62	51	13
Technical school	11	10	14
Other	10	4	71
Birthplace			
Chengdu	55	33	–
Sichuan Province but outside Chengdu	18	44	–
Outside Sichuan Province	14	23	–
Overseas	13	0	–
Household type			
Single	11	3	–
Childless couples	4	6	–
Couples with children	39	29	–
Couples with children and parents	23	35	–
Couples living away from offspring	15	19	–
Couples with parents	4	6	–
Couples with grandchildren	2	2	–
Flat shares with friends	2	0	–

Notes: questionnaire (2013), Chengdu Municipal Bureau of Statistics (2010)

country. Moreover, a small number of inhabitants from overseas can be found in LF (13%), which can be explained by the accessible location of LF (it is close to CBD) and the gradual internationalization of Chengdu in recent years.

An interesting aspect of the profile of these respondents was their household type; a topic that brought about complex and diverse responses. Family households constituted a high proportion of total residents in both neighborhoods. In LF, nuclear families made up the

highest percentage of all household types with 39%, followed by extended families, which was the second biggest category with 23%. Couples living away from their offspring also occupied more than 10% of the total figure, whilst childless couples were clearly underrepresented. On the other hand, amongst all household types in JL, the highest percentage was extended families (35%), followed by 'couples with children' (29%), with couples living away from their offspring and childless couples representing a similar proportion to the results found in LF. Indeed, extended family households are very common in contemporary urban China, which can be explained by the fact that couples' parents often move in to help look after the children, owing to couples' busy working lives. These results are very different from the usual profiles of Western gentrifiers in terms of their household types. In most gentrification literature, gentrifiers are normally single or childless couples. Although family gentrifiers have recently emerged in Western countries, it is still a minor group of gentrifiers-household type (Karsten, 2003). Nonetheless, they form a major category in Chengdu. Moreover, couples living away from their offspring can be found in both neighborhoods. The overall household types show diversity, which can partly be explained by the fact that housing reform was triggered by the desire to own houses across different ages and household types in China.

4.2 Motivations

The reasons for new incoming residents' choosing and moving to their present dwellings were first investigated through questionnaires. Respondents could give more than one reason for their housing choices. Table 2 shows the answers from respondents. There was not one dominant reason for moving into either of these two neighborhoods, but rather there were multiple factors behind the residents' decisions to relocate. However, it is important to stress that data gleaned from the questionnaires can not sufficiently reveal the resident's true motivations. Each element may contain single or multiple implications. Therefore, in-depth interviews were also conducted with 41 residents in order to grasp more information about their reasons for choosing these neighborhoods. Based on the information taken from in-depth interviews, along with findings from the questionnaires, a series of observations was made, as follows.

Table 2 Factors of motivations behind choice of housing in Linjiangfengge (LF) and Jinyulanwan (JL)

Factors	LF (%)	JL (%)
Garden and green space in neighborhood	93	92
Proximity of city center	87	0
Reputation of real estate company	81	84
Convenience and accessibility of transport	75	79
Recreation facilities in community	62	57
Proximity of commercial district (shopping mall)	26	92
Nice neighbors	60	57
Along waterfront	49	14
Good scenery outside of community	29	2
Proximity of famous schools and nurseries	28	20
Friends living in community	16	5
Proximity of hospitals	13	11
Recommended by acquaintances	11	2
Type of dwelling	10	13
Quietness of community	9	5
Proximity of parks or green space	9	3
Proximity of workplaces	7	21
Housing density	6	0
Nightlife	2	3

4.2.1 Diverse and convenient urban life

The interviews in both LF and JL emphasized the combination of leisure and families, which equates to a desire for a diverse and convenient urban way of life. These factors are primarily the concerns of nuclear and extended family households in the young- and middle-age groups. This is evident in Table 2, which shows the frequency of 'Proximity of the city center' in LF and 'Proximity of the commercial district', as well as 'Convenience and accessibility of transport' in JL. LF is located next to CBD, while JL is situated in a sub-urban center; both of these sites are composed of a large number of leisure facilities and commercial complexes. Meanwhile, many supermarkets, daily goods markets, childcare facilities, as well as public transportation facilities, can also be found in these two sites.

The interviewees indicated that they enjoy participating in various leisure activities, such as shopping, going to the cinema, going to bars, and eating out in restaurants. These kinds of activities have become essential parts of life for many inhabitants.

For many rich residents, Chengdu's rapid development offers a range of novelties, fashions, and diverse lifestyles, which is in sharp contrast to the pre-reform

era, characterized as a mundane, standardized socialist lifestyle, with less developed urban infrastructure. The numbers of leisure and culture facilities have increased rapidly in the city in recent years. This transformation has meant that people have become more eager to enjoy a greater variety of leisure activities. CBD and sub-centers, in which there are several types of leisure facilities, are now seen as promised lands providing leisure activities and consumption space for the affluent.

Furthermore, in addition to the desire for leisure, a majority of interviewees also revealed that they had given a great level of consideration to their families. As mentioned previously, a large percentage of family households live in these two sites, which means there are many elders and children in both LF and JL. Therefore, convenience of daily life, along with accessibility to facilities, has been viewed as very significant factor for people choosing housing. Many adult interviewees stated that they primarily consider the accessibility of any potential residence for their children and/or parents, who might possess limited mobility. This factor was also often placed above the needs of the purchasers themselves when choosing new housing, and represents a high sense of social and familial responsibility amongst adult residents.

4.2.2 *High-quality life and security*

A desire to live in high-quality homes was mentioned by almost all interviewees in both LF and JL, irrespective of their age. According to the interviews, a number of the new incoming residents in these two neighborhoods had previously lived in *danwei* compounds. The deteriorating housing conditions and housing reform stimulated their long-existing eagerness to improve their housing standards. Better living conditions, namely high-quality homes, have become their goals.

Broadly speaking, high-quality homes possess good services, beautiful gardens, space for activities and recreation facilities (e.g., swimming pools, tennis courts, gymnasium), and even the design of houses can be easily distinguished from lower-class neighborhoods. These elements appear clearly in Table 2, with respondents stating a preference for neighborhoods with sufficient green space or recreation facilities, and for real-estate developers with good reputations. In particular, the motivation for 'a real estate company with a good reputation' implies that having high-quality private services in a neighborhood was important to decision makers.

These factors, particularly the private services and recreation facilities, which were lacking in the *danwei* compounds, have become key to attracting wealthy consumers in the contemporary housing market. With the housing reform and the decline of *danwei* compounds, the affluent groups have proven to be willing to pay for a luxurious and comfortable home environment.

Security was another very important factor to interviewees in both LF and JL. This criterion does not appear directly in Table 2, but manifested in 'Reputation of Real Estate Company' and 'Nice neighbors'. In particular, real estate developers with a good reputation can provide not only a 'high-quality life', as mentioned above, but also a 'safe life', for their customers. A number of interviewees revealed that they felt contemporary society, with its many complexities, is not safe or secure, and that the good and effective management of an estate can effectively decrease, if not entirely remove, the potential threat of crimes, such as burglary or robbery.

'Nice neighbors' does not mean that residents wished to have neighbors they could become close friends with, but implies that residents like to share their living environment with individuals of the same social class. Indeed, this desire often manifested in people expressing concerns over the security of the area. According to our investigation, many interviewees seldom communicate with their neighbors. Meanwhile, they believed that living surrounded by neighbors of the same social class would potentially prevent several problems from arising, such as difficulties in communication and jealousy over other people's wealth. Essentially, there was a widespread view amongst participants that a homogeneous environment can ensure a sufficient level of security.

4.2.3 *Concerns over reputation of areas*

The reputation of areas was not a factor that appeared in the questionnaire survey, but was frequently mentioned in the interviews, especially among the Chengdu locals. Here lies a nuance between LF and JL: the former contains a vast number of Chengdu locals, whilst the latter does not. The reputation of an area strongly influenced residents' housing choices in China (Wang and Li, 2004), which is connected closely to urban history and culture. Chengdu's eastern area, which borders the Second Ring Road, was established as an industrial zone with high levels of pollution as early as the 1950s. Thus,

Chengdu locals generally considered the eastern section of the city as an undesirable and inferior location in which to be based. This perception is deeply ingrained in the minds of Chengdu locals, especially in middle and old-age groups.

Moreover, interviewees not born in Chengdu confirmed that they had hardly any preconceived ideas about the area and that this was not a factor in their motivation for moving into one of these two sites. This partly explains why JL comprises more migrant residents than LF.

Nevertheless, this viewpoint has changed with the fast pace of urban restructuring and redevelopment. Many locals of the younger generation interviewed in JL expressed that they did not consider the reputation of the area or historical factors of that nature when choosing their potential houses. In addition, interviewees from the young age group in LF also expressed similar opinions. This indicates that the influence of the reputation of an area on residents' housing choices is dependent on the age and birthplace of individuals, highlighting the unique local culture of Chengdu.

4.3 Local residents' displacement

Along with whole-scale demolition in the No.1 Project and Dongdiao Project, mentioned previously, the former local residents of the Jiuyanqiao and Jianshelu areas have suffered permanent displacement. Tracking them down and directly recording their experiences is a very difficult challenge, but information about the displacement of local inhabitants can be obtained from local officials and the residents who remained behind.

According to the investigation, the low social status of the local residents in Jiuyanqiao and Jianshelu is evident: most local residents who lived along the former slum-like riverside in the Jiuyanqiao were laborers, vendors, scavengers, the unemployed, and so on; while

those in the Jianshelu were mainly working class residents from the declining SOEs factories. In addition, almost all of them possessed low educational qualifications. Therefore, a sharp contrast in socioeconomic characteristics can be drawn between these local residents and the new incoming residents whom we examined previously (Table 3), confirming the in-situ class upgrading taking place in these two cases.

Moreover, the displacement of local inhabitants in the Jiuyanqiao and Jianshelu can be attributed to the high prices of the newly built commercial high-rise flats. In specific, the average price of a two-bedroom apartment in the Jiuyanqiao area would cost about 1.31×10^6 yuan (RMB). This figure equates to a price-to-annual household disposable income ratio of 34 to 1 for an average Chengdu household in 2012, and 65 to 1 for an average low-income household (the bottom 20% of income distribution) in Chengdu (Chengdu Municipal Bureau of Statistics, 2013). On the other hand, the average price of a two-bedroom apartment in the Jianshelu area was 1.268×10^6 yuan (RMB), as much as 33 times higher than the average price-to-annual household disposable income for Chengdu in 2012, and 63 times higher than the average for low-income households (those that fall in the bottom 20% of income distribution) (Chengdu Municipal Bureau of Statistics, 2013). Accordingly, purchasing newly built commercial dwellings on the site of their former homes was impossible for the local residents. Besides, those residents who accepted in-kind compensation have been resettled out of the periphery of the city, which means they may never return to their former homes.

Furthermore, in addition to direct displacement, indirect eviction has also been taking place. In the Jianshelu local residents living in old dwellings located beside the newly developed high-rise flats have been threatened with displacement (Fig. 3). Since the newly built

Table 3 Comparison of socioeconomic characteristics between local residents and new incoming residents in both Jiuyanqiao and Jianshelu areas

Characteristic	Local resident	New incoming resident
Occupation	Low-income groups, such as laborers, vendors, scavengers, and the unemployed	Managers or senior officials, professionals, associated professionals
Educational level	Low qualification, mostly lower than secondary school education, some even lower than primary school, or illiterate	High qualification, university diploma or above
Age group	Mainly accumulated in middle and old-age groups, mostly in their 50s or above	Mainly in their 30s and 40s, including a small number from the old age group
Residential form	Low-rise dilapidated houses and old <i>danwei</i> compounds	Newly built modern high-rise flats, gated communities

commercial facilities specialized in catering for high-income consumers, the expensive commodity prices make the local residents feel the pressure of life. In addition, the redevelopment project forcibly broke up old neighborhoods and tore friends away from one another. In this sense, the local residents' indirect displacement occurred through the upgrading of the in-situ consumer market and the modification of local social networks.

5 Discussion and Conclusions

Along with the transformation of its definition, gentrification has emerged in many different countries. The concept of gentrification in its widest sense encompasses 'the vast diversity of processes and types of gentrifications we might find around the globe' (Lees, 2014). In post-reform China, gentrification has been the product of a series of reforms and a clear example of urban space restructuring, mainly in the form of redevelopment with the aim of rapid economic growth and fiscal revenue. Our analysis shows that gentrification in Chengdu began with the implementation of urban redevelopment projects initiated by the local municipal government. It confirms the four cores of contemporary gentrification, namely 1) the reinvestment of capital, 2) landscape change, 3) the social upgrading by an influx of high-income groups, and 4) direct or indirect displacement of low-income groups (Davidson and Lees, 2005), which will be discussed below.

First of all, reinvestment was clearly evident in these two cases. Investments into both projects have come from diverse sources, including the local municipal government, domestic and overseas developers (e.g., Singaporean enterprise in Jiuyanqiao and Filipino investment in Jianshelu) and affluent homebuyers. Second, both of these projects have witnessed changes in the landscape. The dilapidated slum-like low-rise neighborhoods, factories, and old *danwei* compounds have been razed and replaced by high-end modern

commercial buildings, such as luxury high-rise flats, a shopping center, cafes, and restaurants. Third, the influx of new wealthy residents and the upgrading of class are evident through our empirical research in both cases. Finally, as stated previously, both cases have seen the displacement of local residents, not only through direct but also indirect forms. Based on the above reasons, this paper views the term 'gentrification' as an appropriate description of the two urban redevelopment projects in discussion. In particular, new-build gentrification has emerged as the major phenomenon of class transformation in residential spaces in Chengdu.

Moreover, this paper also particularly examined the characteristics of gentrifiers (as the new incoming residents) in Chengdu. According to our findings, a series of characteristics of Chengdu's gentrifiers have been identified: nuclear or extended family households, diverse age groups (mostly in their 30s and 40s, together with a certain number of old age groups), employed mainly in managerial and professional occupations, highly educated, a majority of housing purchasers, and mainly from local or lower status cities in Sichuan Province or other neighboring provinces. In particular, the diverse age groups can be explained by the fact that housing reform meant that people received greater freedom in choice of housing. In other words, in contrast to the pre-reform era, people now can choose their desired area of settlement based on their economic capability, regardless of age. Many gentrifiers' expressed a desire to own their own property after the housing reform. This helps shed light on why the majority of gentrifiers opted to purchase their houses. Results concerning gentrifiers' birthplace reflected the limited capacity of provincial cities to facilitate migrant elites. This may be a significant point of different from global Chinese cities (e.g., Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou) which can attract elites from all over the country. In sum, these results are very different from the general characteristics of gentrifiers found in typical Western gentrification research (Table 4).

Table 4 Comparison of socioeconomic characteristics between traditional gentrifiers in West and gentrifiers in Chengdu

Characteristic	Traditional gentrifiers in West	Gentrifiers in transitional Chengdu
Age group	Young age group, normally in their 20s or 30s	Middle or old age groups, normally more than 30s or 40s
Occupation	Managers, professionals, technicians, artists	Managers, senior officials, professionals
Household type	Non-family household, e.g., singles or childless couples; family household forms a minor category	Family household, e.g., nuclear family and extended family; non-family household is rare
Motivation for housing choice	Rejection of mundane suburban life, desire of diverse urban life, urban aesthetics and conspicuous consumption	Emphasis on 'good life', proximity to public facilities, convenience of life; characteristics of neighborhoods, desire for a high quality life

Furthermore, gentrifiers' motivations for housing choice have also been investigated in this paper. Through analysis of surveys and interviews, we can summarize a number of conclusions: the combination of leisure (diverse urban life) and families (living convenience), high-quality of life and security, as well as the reputation of areas, are strongly connected not only to the profiles of gentrifiers, but also to the special context of transnational China.

These findings differ from what is often reported in the West (Table 4). This is because there is no experience of suburbanization for Chengdu's gentrifiers. Indeed, they are not counterculture groups of traditional Western gentrifiers. In contrast, they desire a better quality of life against a background of market reform and rapid urbanization in contemporary China. A series of possible reasons can further explain gentrifiers' motivations in Chengdu. It is well known that in the past many urban Chinese dwelled in *danwei* compounds, in which housing was in the same location as the workplace. As such, people used to live in an almost homogeneous and stable environment which provided convenience and security, as they shared their residence with colleagues and acquaintances from the same workplace. After the housing reform, people acquired the freedom to choose the dwellings that they could afford, and the old *danwei* compounds gradually declined against the rise of commercial dwellings. The affluent tend to select more prestigious sites as their places of residence and as environments that can provide private, peaceful, convenient, and safe lifestyles. High-quality services, living conveniences, and security have been stressed as motivations when selecting a desirable location to live. All these elements conform to an 'image of the good life'. After the market reform, this 'good life' was created and promoted effectively by developers and local governments. Consequently, the affluent can obtain this so-called 'good life' through investment of their significant economic capital. Contemporary Chengdu offers various kinds of new and exciting lifestyles, which have been utilized by the local government and developers to sell the urban spaces to wealthy residents, contrasting with the insipid life of the pre-reform era. These results highlight the significance of the 'geography of gentrification' (Lees, 2000) in the Chinese context, which contributes to empirical understanding of the attributes of gentrifiers.

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