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‘Living off the campus’: urban geographies of change and studentification in Beijing, China

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ABSTRACT

Studies of the connections between changing urban geographies and studentification have a widening international signature across continents. Yet, to date, the transformative effects of increasing university student populations in China have generally been under-stated within broader theorisations of urban change, despite unprecedented demands for student housing. In this paper our aim is to explore neighbourhood change in Haidianlu, which is adjacent to Peking University in Beijing. With an original focus on both off- and on-campus student accommodation, findings are presented to show that studentification processes are fuelled by socio-cultural predilections to live off-campus and the production of student-oriented rental housing in Haidianlu. The broader significance of our discussion is to assert that in China less-regulated student lifestyles are reinforcing urban geographies of socio-spatial segregation and are illustrative of the wider effects of the privatisation of housing and land markets in China. The concept of studentification is pivotal to theorise how cross-cutting relations between neoliberal higher education and housing markets are reshaping Chinese cities to become more exclusionary, and comparative to other geographies of global studentification.

KEYWORDS: students, student housing, neighbourhood change, urban transformation, studentification

Introduction

Scholarship on studentification increasingly transcends the Anglophonic roots of the concept (He & Lin, 2015), and extends the geographic lens of links between urban change and higher education to a more diverse range of continents (Revington, 2018). This is epitomised by recent studies from Africa (e.g. Ackermann & Visser, 2016), South America (e.g. Betancur, 2014) and South-east Asia (e.g. Razak et al., 2017), and it can be contended that geographies of studentification have 'gone global'.

Yet, there is a paucity of studies of studentification in Chinese cities despite China having the foremost higher education system in the world (Mok, 2016), with a rapid growth of total student populations. The *Education Revitalization Action Plan in 21st Century* (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 1999) was the catalyst for a 20.2% (+725,500) and 17.4% (+34,615) increase of total undergraduate (4,314,200 in 1999) and postgraduate (masters and doctoral) (233,500 in 1999) students between 1998 to 1999 (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2000). Remarkably, by 2017, the total number of undergraduate and postgraduate students had risen to 27,535,900 and 2,639,600, respectively (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2017). Over the last two decades, these conditions have stimulated high sub-national migration flows of young people and an upsurge in the demand for student housing, sparking processes of studentification in large Chinese cities, such as Nanjing (Zhao & Zou, 2017; Zhong et al., 2018).

Nonetheless, within broader theorisations of urban geographical change in China processes of studentification are under-reported. Feng et al.'s (2008) insightful analyses of suburbanisation trends in Beijing, for instance, does not consider the impacts of student populations and the on-going development of on-campus accommodation for changing population densities and growth rates, despite numerous higher education institutions and campuses being located in the suburban areas of their analyses.

This is a noteworthy omission given socio-spatial concentrations of student populations and housing will have knock-on effects on wider housing, population and

socio-economic structures in Chinese cities, influencing the supply of housing and cultural services for other social groups. In this way, geographies of studentification will influence the intra-urban scale and magnitude of some of the key motifs within leading theorisations of changing urban geographies (e.g. Liu et al., 2017). This includes the growing levels of segregation and polarisation between affluent and low-income households underpinned by the privatisation and marketization reforms to housing (He, 2010, 2012; He & Wu, 2009; He & Qian, 2017), and the increasing marginalisation of vulnerable social groups, such as 'floating 'rural-to-urban' migrants' (Wu & Logan, 2016), and 'displaced persons' from state-led land expropriations (Gu et al., 2015, 2017).

These intersecting features of urban change are exemplified by pioneering investigations of studentification in Guangzhou. These studies describe how the municipal government has enabled 'urban villagers' in Xiadu (He et al., 2011) and Nanting (He, 2014), close to the campuses of Sun Yat-Sen University, to self-build, student-oriented housing and shops and cafes. This provides an important signal of the parallels between processes of studentification in China and other national contexts, such as the displacement of settled residents and the economic restructuring of local housing and land markets, and cultural services.

From this springboard, the aim of this paper is to explore the growth of off-campus student populations and the production of student housing in China. We use the case study of Haidanlu, close to the main campus of Peking University, Beijing. First, we outline the methods and the case study, and, discuss some factors that has fuelled the growing student population in Beijing, and shaped the production of on- and off-campus student housing within Beijing. We then present qualitative findings of socio-cultural predilections to live off-campus in less-regulated student housing. Finally, we adopt a comparative perspective to consider some similarities and differences between expressions of studentification in China and UK.

Global geographies of studentification?

Given the unfurling of the neoliberal expansion of Higher Education systems in many national contexts (Brennan et al., 2018), and the international normative practice of young people to migrate to another place for study, either across regional or international boundaries (Holton & Finn, 2018; Yu et al., 2018), it is hardly surprising that studies of studentification have a global reach and footprint given the large pools of potential studentifiers (Smith & Fox, 2018).

The contemporary phenomenon of 'student experiences' as an act of migration is also a harbinger of urban change in a diversity of national contexts (Wu et al., 2016, 2018), as identified for example in Australia (Ruming & Dowling, 2017), Malaysia (Ghani & Suleiman, 2017), South Africa (Kola & Ahmed, 2016), and USA (Powell, 2016). Annual seasonal migration flows of young people have serious implications for local housing markets and services within neighbourhoods in diverse national contexts (see Nakazawa, 2017 for fuller discussion). Typically, across diverse national contexts, migrant student populations seek accommodation within relative walking / cycling or short-commuting distance of their place of study and campus, such as the USA (Foote, 2017; Ma et al., 2018; Woldoff & Weiss, 2018), Canada (Moos, 2016; Moos et al., 2018), and Malaysia (Sabri & Ludin, 2009). At the same time, the recognition by businesses of omnipresent student populations can be galvanic in the formation of distinctive retail and leisure services to cater for student cultural consumption tastes and practices (for example, see Haghighi's (2018) discussion of urban change in Sydney, Australia), albeit highly specific to different national contexts.

Scholarship on studentification shows that the markers of the processes of urban change have similar international expressions in local housing markets. First, student populations mostly reside in off-campus, shared, housing in multiple occupation – which is rented from private landlords on a temporary basis during their studies (Smith, 2005; Munro and Livingstone, 2008; Hubbard, 2008). The penetration of student geographies into urban landscapes is further reinforced by the emergence of private and public services oriented to the predilections and tastes of student lifestyles. Geographic changes are exacerbated by the displacement of settled populations due to changing economic conditions in the local land and housing

market, and feelings of dispossession and loss linked to neighbourhood change. Second, scholarship also reveals the growth of commercial and real estate interests in the student housing market, with the wide-scale development of new-build, purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) (Hubbard, 2009; Chatterton, 2010), which is fuelled by a commodification of student lifestyles and student living, and, more broadly, higher education systems. This latter form of studentification means that student populations now more fully reside in 'student-only' housing and locations, and underpins a growing sociospatial segregation between student and other social groups, as well as between students along axes of affluence and privilege (Smith and Hubbard, 2014). In the context of this paper, it is important to note that both of these forms of studentification are empirically-grounded in Chinese studies of studentification. He et al. (2011: 1508) identify residential areas of housing in multiple occupation and students within Guangzhou, which are 'equipped with cultural and retail services, such as theme bars, restaurants and recreational facilities'. In a more recent study, He (2015: 2871) contends that 'PBSA is starting to emerge' in cities such as Beijing, where demand from international students for student housing is fuelling the participation of commercial developers and investors.

In this way, from an international perspective, we would argue that an unintentional consequence of the neoliberalisation of higher education is the transformation of local neighbourhoods and urban landscapes, often in close proximity to university campuses by landlords, commercial businesses and investors, to supply temporary rental housing and services for students. As outlined above, empirical studies from across the globe serve to demonstrate these commonalities of studentification, irrespective of marked geographic contingencies in education systems, housing markets, and political and ideological conditions, as well as divergent, place-specific expressions.

These points are exemplified by He's (2015) pioneering study of studentification within Guangzhou, which argues that studentification 'is better interpreted [in China] as the spatial result of students' conscious residential, entrepreneurial and consumption choices to escape from the rigid control of university dorms, to accumulate cultural

and economic capital, as well as actualise their cultural identity' (p. 2849), when compared to western forms of studentification. Using the case studies of Xiadu and Nanting villages, He reveals diverse geographies of studentification within Guangzhou, stressing differences in the: institutional arrangements for the production of student housing; populations of studentifiers, and; the agency of the local villagers. Perhaps most significant for a comparative perspective of studentification, He provides a relatively positive perspective of studentification in China, contending that studentification may 'provide a potential solution to sustain and upgrade villages in the city' (ibid) through expressions of increasing social mixing and enrichment of culture. Key here is the view that 'substantial displacement' is not experienced by local villagers who have become 'a petty rentier class', although it is notable that He discusses that there is some evidence of marginalisation of local villagers, both culturally and spatially.

He's studies, for instance, serve to demonstrate that studentification as a field of study warrants more comparative analyses to more fully explore the commonalities and differences of the causes and consequences of the processes of change in different national contexts. Indeed, the thematic issue of studentification has the potential to be an important part of debates within scholarship on comparative urbanism (e.g. Ward, 2008; 2010). Flourishing discussions on comparative urbanism are propelling the advancement of theorisations of changing urban geographies (e.g. Clarke, 2012; Robinson, 2014; McFarlane et al., 2017), and similar manoeuvres could be undertaken for progressing understandings of studentification. It would be beneficial to put questions about the effectiveness and merits of transposing the concept of studentification into different geographic contexts directly into the spotlight, in a similar way, for example, to recent exchanges about the salience of the term 'planetary gentrification' within and between the Global North and Global South (Lees et al., 2016), and urban and rural spaces (Phillips & Smith, 2018); the main impetus for the following sections.

As a starting point it is beneficial to consider how a framework of studentification from the UK (Smith, 2008) might be usefully transposed to the Chinese context, and this

raises some interesting questions to explore the alignment between expressions of studentification in China and the UK (see Hubbard, 2008; 2009; Munro & Livingstone, 2012; Holton & Riley, 2014), including:

- Does studentification in China involve the displacement of the settled local population by transient groups of students?
- Is there a concomitant growth of student-oriented services to cater for student consumption practices and distinctive lifestyles in China?
- Are there issues of noise nuisance and conflict in studentified neighbourhoods in China?
- Is there an escalation of rental and housing cost and a rise of unrelated people living together in housing in multiple occupation or PBSA in China?
- Does studentification lead to a degradation of the built environment including refuse and litter in China.

In the following sections we compare these features of studentification in the UK with the urban changes tied to studentification in China.

Methods

The empirical findings presented in this paper are drawn from a wider investigation of studentification in Beijing, with a specific focus on the student population of Peking University (PKU) (Gu, 2015). The study involved three distinct phases of research. As a starting point, it is important to note that undertaking social science research in China can be fraught with context-specific constraints, when compared to undertaking similar studies of studentification in the Anglophonic world (e.g. Hsiung, 2015).

In this study, constraints were encountered for identifying and gaining access to official datasets of student populations and housing, which were not available on-line. First, to identify the make-up of the student population of PKU, as well as conduct primary research, it was necessary for Gu (of native Chinese origin) to take-up residence on campus as a visiting student (during 2013). This allowed use of the university intranet

to gain access and extract annual student population data for 2012. A subsequent request to the Secretary Office of the Vice-Chancellor for access to student population datasets from 1999 to 2012 was granted. This enabled analyses of the changing student population by mode of study (postgraduate and undergraduate), and place of origin (home and international students).

During this period, a 'random' content analysis of local media sources (local newspaper, university and news websites, advertisements on billboards on campus) was undertaken to identify recent coverage (2010-) of key issues tied to the local student population, such as reports of noise nuisance, conflicts, housing.

The final phase of research involved in-depth qualitative research with students living off-campus, established settled residents and key institutional actors. Unfortunately, requests for interviews with state and local government and university officers (state and higher education) were declined. A formal request to PKU for permission to conduct a questionnaire survey on the campus with students was also not granted. Permission was obtained to undertake semi-structured interviews, which required authorisation from university security services on a daily basis. In total, semi-structured interviews with 42 students living-off campus were undertaken within on-campus cafes. A snowball sample for interviews was used, initiated by an English academic in the Geography Department at PKU, to identify students living-off campus. The average length of interviews was one to two hours. Semi-structured interviews were also undertaken in off-campus locations with: local housing agents (3), academics (8), settled residents (5), and student-oriented business persons (2). Three follow-up focus groups with students (each with 4 students), taking on average 50 minutes, were undertaken in on-campus cafes to deepen understandings from the interviews. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed in Chinese, and then translated into English for analyses to identify the key themes and sub-themes of importance.

The case study of Haidianlu, Beijing: a studentified neighbourhood?

In the following sections we specifically focus on the case study of Haidianlu, which is directly adjacent to the south boundary of the campus of PKU (see Figure 1). Haidianlu

has a population of 1,047 households with 2,591 persons (Beijing Haidian District Government, 2016), and it is the main neighbourhood where PKU students live off-campus. It is a gated residential compound that was developed in 1987 to accommodate the Haidian District government employees, as part of the social-welfare public housing work-unit system in Beijing (Gu & Shen, 2003). Within the gated community, there are ten large blocks of housing with 4 to 6 floors of individual apartments.

< Figure 1 here >

Following the 1992 housing reform in China (see Wang et al., 2005; He & Wu, 2009; Wu, 2018), the tenure profile of the neighbourhood was transformed as some tenant households took up the option to purchase their apartments, and individual private homeownership became prevalent. Subsequently, some property owners have now moved out of Haidianlu, as their economic capital and wealth has continued to increase. To provide additional sources of income, instead of selling their property in Haidianlu, they have converted their housing into rental accommodation to cater for the growing demands from students that are in-migrating into Haidianlu. This has resulted in major urban changes to the housing market, demographic and population structures, retail and leisure services, local cultures, environment, levels of noise and social relations within Haidianlu.

To maximise rental income, private rented housing is available as single and collective rooms (parlours converted into bedrooms). In general, single rooms provide basic facilities (desk and bed) with air conditioning, and are marketed by individual landlords as spaces for tenants seeking privacy and quiet spaces for learning. Larger communal rooms cater for between 4 to 6 persons, expecting to share daily activities within more crowded spaces. Single rooms (100-120 RMB per day) are popular for (un)married student couples, and communal rooms (650-700 RMB per month) often cater for longer-term tenants. Rental accommodation is predominantly managed by landlords and advertised by signs on building facades (see Figure 2), as well as an advertisement

wall within Haidianlu (see Figure 3). There is also a few small-scale, informal, housing agencies that have other businesses in Haidianlu, such as restaurants and café owners. Local media discourses describe the escalation of rental costs in Haidianlu during recent years (Beijing Real Estate Network, 2013).

< Figures 2 & 3 here >

The transformation of the local housing market is tied to marked population changes in the neighbourhood. Although it is not possible to obtain official population data at a fine-grained geographic resolution to analyse the total number of students residing within Haidianlu, common anecdotes of rapid ongoing population changes were articulated during interviews, for example, one settled resident notes: “Most of my neighbours are moving out buildings, and now lots of students are moving within the building”.

There is also a common view of growing population transience in Haidianlu, with one interviewee expressing her exasperation that Haidianlu has become a: “community for the student migrant population”. This interpretation of population transience and student migrants is, in part, explained by the majority of students returning to their place of origin (i.e. parental home) for the two university holidays: ‘Hanjia’ in the Chinese spring festival (normally one month in Chinese lunar calendar either January or February) and ‘Shujia’ in summer season (July to September), and leading to the depopulation of students during these periods.

Another illustration of the rising student population in Haidianlu is the rapid growth of student-oriented bars, cafes, and restaurants on the aptly named ‘Food Street’. As described by one restaurant manager:

There are increased [number of] restaurants to provide different value meals in order to attract students from university and Haidianlu community.... If they organise birthday party or other party, here (food street) always is a first choice.

An expression of the less-regulated management of off-campus student housing, such as no curfews for lights-out and being able to socialize in rooms, is the rising level of noise nuisance within student housing and on streets. This has created conflicts between the student and settled population, and typical vexed comments from settled residents included: “I heard about the social conflict reported by an older grandmother. She said that they (student) always make [loud] noise in the community”. Other articulations of concerns related to student behaviour include the negative effects of students on the local physical environment, such as disposal of refuse, littering of bicycles on pavements (see Figure 4). One landlord, for example was irked that:

students destroy the local environment, sometimes they throw refuse from their apartment windows, or they will leave their refuse in the corridors within the building. I really do not like it, but I cannot stop them doing so.

< Figure 4 here >

The regulation of student populations and university-managed dormitories

PKU is a renowned global university, ranked 30th in the 2019 QS world rankings. There is a fervent demand from native Chinese young people to study at PKU, and there is year-on-year increasing total recruitment at the PKU. Figure 5 shows that the undergraduate population at PKU increased by 50% between 1999 (9,456) and 2012 (14,166). More remarkably, the postgraduate population rose from 6,970 (1999) to 22,106 (2012), with postgraduate students outnumbering undergraduate students at PKU since 2005. This includes an increasing international student population, which is not the focus of this paper and is discussed elsewhere (Gu & Smith, 2018).

< Figure 5 here >

State regulations stipulate that all Chinese native students must reside in on-campus university-managed dormitories (UMDs) (Ministry of Education of the People's

Republic of China, 2004). A cornerstone of PKU student housing supply for increased student populations is the provision of relatively low cost (750 RMB to 1,200 RMB per year) UMDs. Compared to student accommodation in western contexts, rooms within UMDs tend to be overcrowded with 4-6 students/beds per room, and this makes it difficult for students to study in their room. The accommodation tends to be low-quality with aged décor, basic furniture, and a lack of essential facilities in bedrooms. Communal toilets are provided in a room on each floor, and showers are often located in another building on campus with limited opening times and lack of hot water. Social communal spaces within UMDs are not provided.

Following the tragic ‘Majiajue incident’ in 2004, when an undergraduate student killed 4 of his roommates within a UMD at Yunan University, the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China (2004, 2005, 2007) issued stricter regulations for UMDs to enhance the security/safety of shared student accommodation and improve the management of on-campus student accommodation. This dictate is translated at PKU via *Provisions of Peking University Dormitory*, established in 2004 to more carefully co-ordinate the allocation and management of student housing arrangements. This sets out that rooms within UMDs are allocated by PKU Student Accommodation Centre in highly regulated ways. New enrolled students are grouped based on the school and/or department of registration, and mode of study, with 4 and 2 students allocated to rooms for the duration of their undergraduate/masters or doctoral studies, respectively.

At the same time, allocation processes are shaped by a ‘cycling process’, whereby new enrolled students are assigned to replace outgoing graduates from the same school/department in respective rooms. As one interviewee remarks:

When our fresher students (same programme) were moving in our dorm (No. 35), the same programme of graduates were moving out this dorm. Our school arranges this programme student within the same dorm by each year, as a cycle process (third-year undergraduate student).

Students have to strictly adhere to the official allocation of bed spaces in rooms. There are serious consequences for students if beds or rooms are swapped/exchanged, or guests visit or stay in rooms overnight. As one student remarked: “We cannot exchange our beds and rent our beds for others. If university found this behaviours, they will punish us” (postgraduate student). Another student described how some schools and departments use a ‘ballot-style’ system for the allocation of rooms in UMDs, which can be concerning:

Our school ballots the dorm for us, if my school ballots a low quality dorm, this is not lucky for us. We have to accept and face this result to reside within this dorm for my next four years of university life (third-year undergraduate student).

The allocation of rooms in UMDs is also strictly divided by the gender of students, with respective floors of student housing blocks segregated by male-only or female-only occupants. As one interviewee reveals: “Although our dorm is gender mixing, there is still divided by the floors. Floors 1 to 3 only accommodate for boys, while floors 4 to 6 provides for girls” (first year master student). Segregation by gender is reinforced by the use of electronic entry systems, with students needing to swipe their student ID card to gain access to on-campus dorms and floors. As one interviewee commented: “I need to swipe my student ID card to access my dorm and floor, others cannot go into our dorm” (undergraduate student).

Living arrangements and lifestyles are also highly regulated in UMDs with restrictions on the use of personal electrical appliances such as fridges, heaters, kettles, and televisions within their rooms. PKU also strictly enforces a maximum usage and curfew on the use of electrical appliances and ‘lights out’ (at midnight) in rooms. As one interviewee complained:

We could not use any high power electrical appliances in our room. If we use any high power electrical appliances, the dorm will automatically cut off our power (undergraduate student).

Adherence to the rules and regulations of UMDs is checked and monitored on a daily basis by a live-in 'dorm manager', who will ensure, for example, that cleanliness of rooms in UMDs is maintained:

The dorm manager will organise a group of students to inspect our living conditions each month, evaluating factors such as the cleanliness of the rooms. If the living conditions are too dirty, for example, we will be asked to clean the room to an appropriate standard (third-year undergraduate student).

It is apparent from the interviewees that the strict rules and regulations of UMDs can impact negatively on their student lifestyles and everyday experiences, and some students are motivated to move off-campus to realise a different student experience; the main focus of the following sections.

Motivations for living off-campus in shared rental housing

To move away from 'the shackles' of highly regulated, communal living arrangements, and the surveillance and strict management of on-campus UMDs, some distinct groups of students seek off-campus rental housing to realise more freedom and private space. Regulations by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (2005) allow students to live off-campus pending the submission of a detailed report by the student. This report must provide a robust justification for the reasons to live off-campus and must include the signed agreement of student's parents. If authorised by the university, the student can live off-campus, but must report to the university on a monthly basis. Findings from the interviews reveal that four key factors are prominent in socio-cultural predilections to live off-campus and these influence the specific production of shared housing in Haidianlu.

The first pull factor for moving off-campus is the desire for students in relationships to live together, given this is not possible on campus given the zero-tolerance stance of PKU for students to not have guests in their room or to swap rooms within UMD, and

the reinforcement of gender segregation within UMDs. One landlord notes, for example:

I have lots of different types of rental rooms under my charge. For example, I provide the single room as 120 RMB per/day. Peking University student couples prefer to rent this type of room. I also provide monthly rental rooms. If they would like to rent in here for a long time, we can discuss the prices.

This means that there are relatively high proportions of cohabiting or married postgraduate students in rented housing within Haidianlu. As one student interviewee reveals: “Some of my classmates, they rent housing off-campus, because they got married” (first-year postgraduate student).

The movement into off-campus accommodation is also, in part, facilitated by the provision of postgraduate university scholarships that enable higher weekly rental costs to be paid for off-campus accommodation (when compared to UMD). As a student interviewee stresses:

I rent housing off-campus with my husband about 3500 RMB per/month. He is a Ph.D. student. The important thing is that we have the student scholarship provided by universities, so we could pay the rent. The quality and facilities of my apartment (rental housing) are better to dorms in PKU. I have a living room, bedroom, kitchen and toilet. This is very nice for us (Ph.D. student).

A further factor that is stimulating the movement of postgraduate students into off-campus accommodation is a lack of supply of ‘postgraduate dorm rooms’ on campus, given the rapid increase in the postgraduate student population at PKU. As one interviewee identifies:

Although university will provide a couple-room for married student couples, two Ph.D. students have to be both registered for PKU students. If one party graduated, they could not apply for a couple-room in UMDs. Actually, before

2010, the regulation of couple housing was not like this, married student couples could apply the couple-room whether one party is a graduate, but the couple-room is in a shortage now (final-year Ph.D. student).

Second, the availability of air conditioning and being allowed to use electrical devices is a major appeal of off-campus student accommodation. For instance, one interviewee notes the influence of the local climate upon the residential decision-making processes of students in Haidianlu:

The summer is very hot in Beijing..... lots of students rented housing [in Haidianlu] to spend the summer time. For example, one of my roommates she will leave the dorm when the summer is coming' (third-year undergraduate student).

Another key motive for living in off-campus accommodation is the need for private quiet space for learning and revising for examinations. Revision is often difficult to conduct in overcrowded rooms within UMDs, due to the 'lights-out curfews' and social noise from co-residents. Of course, there is a higher economic cost to live in single, less crowded rooms within off-campus housing, and interviewees often contended that the more affluent students tend to live in Haidianlu. Typical comments include: "Some rich students will rent housing off-campus during exam time. Because they are not used to the curfew and shared space in dorm" (fourth-year undergraduate student).

The flexibility of student accommodation within Haidianlu is a key factor in the proliferation of shared housing, and this is further reinforced by a distinct group of students (Kaoyan [students] in Chinese) that are preparing for their postgraduate Masters entrance examination, to gain entry to PKU. As one student interviewee comments: "I think if I want to kaoyan (master entrance exam), I need a private room off-campus" (third-year undergraduate student).

The rapid growth of postgraduate students at PKU has led to a surge in Kaoyanzu students seeking temporary off-campus accommodation in Haidianlu, who require quiet spaces for learning and revision, typically for two-three months (January-March). It is also important for Kaoyanzu students to attend lectures and compile resources for the examination at PKU, given schools design their own topics on the Masters programme examinations:

I plan to take exams to the college of governance at PKU, and I need to listen to some lectures in the school in order to get some information and exam reviewed resources. Importantly, the school will take master entrance exam topics by itself, and you have to come to Peking University to prepare exams (Kaoyanzu student).

Kaoyanzu students usually return to their origin universities and/or home to wait for the examination results to be published during March. Importantly, the majority of Kaoyanzu students living in Haidianlu are thus not students of PKU. Rather, they are final-year undergraduate students from other universities seeking to gain entry to PKU for postgraduate study, who often have the opportunity to move to another place during their final year of undergraduate study since this often involves an internship and limited contact time at their university of study. As one interviewee reveals:

I am an undergraduate from Changchun University (located in North-east of China). I am a final year undergraduate and only have the undergraduate thesis. So I have enough time to prepare my exam (master entrance exam), and I do not need to live in my university now (Kaoyanzu student).

What this latter point serves to demonstrate is one noteworthy feature of processes of studentification in China and, with studentified neighbourhoods accommodating students from universities in other cities. Indeed, this process can be perpetuated by the return of Kaoyanzu student's following failure to pass the Masters entrance examination in the previous year. As outlined in a media discourse on Haidianlu: 'I learned that some of the graduates of the Haidian Road community had been tested

for years, some had been tested for four years, and some had lived there for five or even ten years' (NetEase, 2016). This also demonstrates that local studentified housing markets in China may include more diverse lengths (tenancies) of stays in temporary rental accommodation, when compared to the UK for example.

Discussion and Conclusion

The main aim of this paper was to explore linkages between the restructuring of a local neighbourhood in close proximity to the main campus of PKU, Beijing, and the in-migration of transient student groups. As a starting point, we presented a UK-based framework of studentification to highlight five questions to consider parallels and differences between studentification in China and the UK. Drawing on the empirical findings from the case study, we emphasised, that in tandem with the UK, studentification in China can include: the displacement of a settled local population by transient groups of students; the concomitant growth of student-oriented services to cater for student consumption practices and distinctive lifestyles; issues of noise nuisance and conflict in studentified neighbourhoods; an escalation of rental and housing cost and a rise of unrelated people living together in housing in multiple occupation, and a degradation of the built environment including refuse and litter. In this way, there are clear commonalities between forms of studentification in China and the UK. At the same time, our findings mostly concur with He's (2015) study of studentification in Guangzhou, with the exception of the issue of displacement of the local settled population (see also He et al., 2011). It is possible, of course, that with time the local settled population may be increasingly displaced as processes of studentification mature in Guangzhou.

Nevertheless, our comparative lens also allows the identification of some notable differences (as well as similarities) between studentification processes in China and elsewhere. Some themes can be flagged as important lines of difference with the UK, for example, and to illustrate our argument, we highlight six exemplars below.

First, we have affirmed the dominance of housing in multiple occupation within processes of studentification in China (c.f. He, 2015), in line with the UK. However, in

China the production of shared rental housing is more fully driven by the demands from a range of student groups to 'side-step' what are perceived to be the regulatory shackles (e.g. curfews, strict living arrangements, gender segregation) and/or constraints (i.e. overcrowding, lack of private space for personal relationships, noise nuisance when learning/revision, and basic facilities) of residing within UMDs. This is an original finding of the ways in which experiences of on- and off-campus student living are interwoven and impact on processes of urban change in China.

Second, the extraordinary high totals of student populations within Chinese cities, when compared to other western contexts, mean that even a relatively low percentage of the student population moving into off-campus housing can have a major transformative effect on local housing markets and neighbourhoods. Clearly, expressions of studentification unfold within China even when the vast majority of the student population continue to reside within on-campus UMD. In this sense, the enormities of total student populations are a marker of different proportional relations between on and off-campus student geographies in China. Other contingent factors that will result in higher demands for off-campus student housing include the longer years of study for undergraduate (4 years) and postgraduate Masters programmes (3 years) in China, when compared to the UK.

Third, despite the entrenchment of the marketisation and privatisation of land and housing in China, it would appear that the increasing commodification of student housing and 'student living' in the UK (Smith & Hubbard, 2014) is not echoed in China. Despite He (2015) justly noting the rise of commercial developers within the international student housing market of Beijing, generally speaking there is limited development of new-build PBSA, by large-scale investors and commercial organisations. Equally, there is also limited expressions of the commercialisation of student letting agents and landlords in China. A key factor here is the state regulation and imposition of on-campus, low cost, UMDs as the main source of student accommodation for native Chinese students. The state subsidization of UMDs (i.e. low weekly rental costs for students) may reduce the willingness for native Chinese students to pay high weekly rental costs for more expensive student accommodation

(such as single bedrooms with ensuite bathrooms), and this may also be influenced by a lack of economic capital for students. Although some high-cost new-build PBSA has been developed for relatively affluent international students (see Gu and Smith, 2018), this accommodation tends to be on or very close to campus (e.g. PKU Global Village in Beijing). What this means is that the off-campus student housing market in China tends to be dominated by small-scale landlords. Large-scale commercial organisations that are dominant in the UK context are generally absent in the off-campus Chinese student housing markets (Chatterton, 2010). This is especially poignant given the high flows of investment capital from China to western contexts are paramount to rapid development of off-campus, new-build PBSA (Smith & Culora, 2018).

Fourth, it can be contended that student demands, expectations and preferences for off-campus accommodation in China, such as rental costs, in-house facilities and management services, may be shaped by previous residential experiences of low-quality, overcrowded, and low-cost on-campus student accommodation in China. There may not be a sustainable market for relatively expensive off-campus student accommodation for native Chinese students, which may be a factor in the lack of large-scale commercial actors in the production of off-campus student housing market in China. This underpins a major difference between geographies of studentification in China and UK, with PBSA in the latter viewed as a major asset class in financial trading markets. Of course, the rapid rate and scale of the development of new-build, high rise, residential and office blocks may be prioritised by large-scale commercial organisations in large Chinese cities, given the excessive profits that can be accrued from this sector of the construction industry when compared to the student housing market in China.

Fifth, and interwoven with the above, there are profound differences between student lifestyles and identities in China and the UK, which influence the expressions of studentification. In the UK a dominant marker of socio-cultural identity for some students involves the cultural consumption of alcohol and participation of (sometimes noisy) parties. This element is generally not important to the socio-cultural identities of the majority of native born Chinese students, who tend to more fully prioritise

studying for longer hours in the day/week. This difference in student identities is likely to lead to less noise nuisance and conflict within and between students and settled residents in China, as student accommodation is used more as a space for sleeping. By contrast, student housing in the UK is important for realizing cultural consumption practices, such as parties and socializing/leisure. Of course, we must be cautious of stereotyping and making over-generalisations about student groups and settled populations within national contexts here.

Sixth, our case study reveals that migration processes tied to studentification are more complex and varied in China, due to key differences in the systems of higher education, such as entry to university requirements and processes. This is typified by students from universities in other cities residing within Beijing for a relatively short period of two to three months to study for the Masters entrance examinations.

These six exemplars of difference between geographies of studentification in China and UK point to the value of more fully embedding the thematic issue of studentification within debates on comparative urbanism. Adopting a comparative lens, will enable the advancement of theorisations of geographies of global studentification, and pin down the salience and prowess of studentification to conceptualise differential expressions of urban change.

To conclude, it is asserted that theorisations of broader urban geographical changes in China need to take more seriously the impacts of studentification. This is timely and relevant with large Chinese cities now witnessing the dramatic effects of state-led doctrines for the expansion of higher education and the marketisation of universities within a competitive global environment. Indeed, it is highly possible that the market-oriented Chinese economy will result in the increasing commodification and commercialisation of student lifestyles and housing, and that processes of studentification will penetrate into more local neighbourhoods within large Chinese cities.

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Figure 1: Haidianlu in context (south of Peking University campus)

Figure 2: Street-sign in Haidianlu: 'Student apartment for renting, provide bed space for male and female, provide single room and twin room, free Wi-Fi and contact number' (translated)

Figure 3: ‘Advertisement wall’ in Haidianlu with rental housing information

Figure 4: Notice in Haidianlu: 'Notification from Haidianlu Community Committee: from 6th March to 20th March 2013, this community needs environmental remediation by the Superior order. Within this community, bicycle and other refuse needs to be cleaned up as soon as possible. If you do not put your bicycle and refuse in order, we will relocate and destroy it.'

Figure 5: Total number of undergraduate and postgraduate students at Peking University (1999-2012)

source: Peking University Vice-chancellors Secretary Office

Table 1: The signifiers of studentification in Haidianlu

<p>Social:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing socio-demographic structure that is dominated by young people (students). • Increasing out-migration of displaced settled residents. • Students represent a transient migrant group, and lead to seasonal depopulation. 	<p>Economic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student population sustains an active shared housing rental market, with an increased value of property. • The student housing market is a 'informal rental market' operated and managed by landlords and a few informal housing agents.
<p>Cultural:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native Chinese students have sustained the development of local business (such as restaurants on Food Street), and the rise of street-food/fast-food for student consumption tastes and practices. 	<p>Physical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The housing structure of apartments has been restructured into two types of rooms (single room/collective room). • The higher population density of students in shared housing is a challenge for local public services (e.g. policing and cleansing), increased refuse and litter, and need for more refuse collection.