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In the shadow of Shanghai: A new small town, relay of urbanisation and metropolitan urbanity

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ABSTRACT.— **This contribution on small towns and cities underlines the relaying and supporting role of rapid urbanization in the 2000s, through the example of a small, new town. We demonstrate how the new town of Songjiang, on the outskirts of Shanghai, structures the polycentric networking organization of the Shanghai metropolis, through the development of a well-planned urban project designed to accommodate median incomes. Through the accumulation of geographically and socially different populations, this small, new town participates in the socio-spatial restructuring of the megalopolis's periphery, in order to function as a melting pot, encouraging the development of a Chinese – and not a local – metropolitan urbanity.**

CHINA, NEW TOWN, RELAY TOWN, URBANISATION, URBANITY, URBAN PROJECT

RÉSUMÉ.— **À l'ombre de Shanghai : une petite ville nouvelle, relais de l'urbanisation et de l'urbanité métropolitaine.— Cette contribution sur les petites villes et bourgs chinois souligne le rôle de relais et de support de l'urbanisation rapide des années 2000, à travers un exemple-type de petite ville qui est également une ville nouvelle. Nous montrons comment la petite ville nouvelle de Songjiang, en périphérie de Shanghai, contribue à l'organisation polycentrique en réseau de la métropole shanghaienne, par l'aménagement d'un projet urbain de qualité, destiné à accueillir des revenus médians. Suivant un processus d'accumulation de populations géographiquement et socialement différentes, cette petite ville nouvelle participe à la restructuration socio-spatiale de la périphérie mégapolitaine, pour fonctionner comme un creuset, favorisant l'apprentissage d'une urbanité métropolitaine, non proprement locale, mais chinoise.**

CHINE, PROJET URBAIN, URBANISATION, URBANITÉ, VILLE NOUVELLE, VILLE-RELAIS

In the 1990s, academic publications focusing on China's small towns and cities analysed their industrial development, asking whether these were capable of supporting urbanisation, given the rural industrialisation then going on in the Yangtze River Delta (Ma, Fan, 1994) and along the Pearl River (Sanjuan, 1997). In the 2000s, these same small towns and cities were studied through the lens of the urbanism of China's largest cities and metropolises; questions were asked about the industrial and residential factors of suburbanisation, as well as the economic, social, landscape and property-based changes which resulted from it. Our approach is centred on one typical example of a small town born from this urban development

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(*chengzhen fazhan*): New planned towns adjacent to industrial towns on the periphery of major Chinese cities. In coastal provinces, these are rarely built from nothing, due to these areas' population density; there, small new towns are often added onto former rural centres, large towns which were industrialised in the late 1950s and then again in the 1980s, before returning to the centre stage of municipal urban development policies in the early 2000s. Building these new urban sectors, at first situated in nearby suburbs, then extending to far suburbs, happened when the real estate market, particularly the residential real estate market, was re-opened in China, and a financially-solvent Chinese middle class who was able to invest in this market emerged (Rocca, 2016).

Fig. 1/ Where to find Songjiang and Fangsong within the city of Shanghai

Songjiang, in our eyes a representative small Chinese town, is also a new peri-metropolitan coastal town. Since 1999, its urban planning has been continually reaffirmed and adjusted by six polycentric redeployment programs. This small town, 32 km Southwest of Shanghai's People's Square, an hour and five minutes away by metro, has benefitted from a certain concentration of means, allowing it to develop rapidly and to become a hub in its own right, major for the size of the town, one structuring the socio-spatial redistribution of Shanghai's outskirts. Furthermore, the new town, within Songjiang's perimeter of intervention, as was planned in 2002, essentially covered the administrative limits of the neighbourhood of Fangsong until July 2015. This provides us with statistics, rare at this scale, to understand Songjiang's size. The town had 190,240 inhabitants in 2014, spread over 33.8 km2 (*Songjiang nianjian*, 2015, p. 27), and was thus then classed in the category of small cities (*xiao chengzhen*) – with less than 500,000 inhabitants – according to the Chinese scale for urban size as updated in November 2014 by the State Council (Sanjuan, 2015, p. 58). Finally, as it has been fifteen years since this new town was founded, with statistics from ten years of direct observation, we have had enough time to capture this moving object and come to understand the dynamics of its urban planning and population growth. We have also been able to see how these have changed over time: which ones have strengthened, remained the same, or decreased (fig. 1).

This contribution will analyse how this small, planned town, established some fifteen years ago, has grown in the shadow of the neighbouring metropolis of Shanghai and is, in fact, a further projection of that city, a sort of bridge, meant to provide a centralising structure for suburban urbanisation (I), guaranteeing urban quality (II), designed for "ordinary people" (III).

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Small planned towns meant to provide structure for suburban urbanisation

In the early 2000s, China's government proposed the development of small cities and towns in the suburbs of major metropolitan centres. In nearby suburbs and mixed environs, different kinds of urban sectors then developed[1] – the "new town" (*xincheng* or *xinzhen*), "large residential communities" (*daxing juzhu shequ*)… and simple, private residential subdivisions, all in line with a re-opening of the real estate market, and following strict urban planning. At first glance, these projects seem simply juxtaposed one next to the other. Among these projects, growing side by side, there are large new suburban cities, such as Minhang and Pudong; new towns, such as Anting and Zhujiajiao; luxurious residential neighbourhoods like Sheshan and large social housing estates like Sijing (fig. 2), there are also small peri-urban medium-sized towns like Jiading and Songjiang, designed to serve as centres for Shanghai's outgrowth and to provide structure to the suburbs.

Segmented suburbs

The real estate market was progressively reintroduced in Shanghai in the early 1990s, following on reforms to China's system of housing distribution between 1991 et 1998. Starting in 1993, the government also sold off Shanghai's public residential parks to work units (*danwei*) and to their inhabitants for very low prices. Private real estate ownership was thus reintroduced within the city, though the urban landscape continues to belong to the State and to the regional authorities. Time-limited ownership based on land-use rights was granted starting in 1995. For residential properties, the time limit was set at 70 years. In 1993, the government permitted real estate investment in new housing buildings, which were sold at market price. At the same time, between 1994 and 1998, a program for social housing and assistance for buying property was founded in order to provide new homes for the people who were displaced from central Shanghai because of urban renewal projects. They were moved out to nearby suburbs. In 2000, the former system of awarding housing was abolished; from then on, Shanghai residents and new migrants[2] had to find housing on the open market, either in new buildings or in formerly public residential parks. Some Shanghai residents were also able to benefit from a legally-limited social housing market.

From that point forward, the nearby suburbs in the immediate periphery of central Shanghai, such as Minhang et Pudong, experienced heavy urbanisation pressure, spreading out like fingers with new infrastructure on all roads, then pushing out through the metro system. In these neighbourhoods, the suburban residential landscape continues to evolve in tandem with the city centre, and a multitude of residential development projects continue to juxtapose on one another without any real urban planning coherence or pre-defined polarity. Since the mid-1990, the sector of Xinzhuang – in central Minhang, has served as the locus for rehoming people displaced out Shanghai's centre (Laurans, 2008). As types of projects vary from one area to another, a certain amount of social mixing is thus de facto generated in each neighbourhood. Light rail stations and commercial centres emerge as structuring centres for the suburbs. These sectors of urban extension, born out of the opening of the real estate market, were thus quickly built up in Shanghai's near suburbs without any real overall coherence. The Western side of the district of Minhang, for example, was essentially built up between the mid-1990s and mid-2000s.

1. We use the terms "new towns" to refer to the projects planned at a municipal level, as part of municipal or neighbourhood projects, whereas we use "sectors" to refer generally t o planned and built-up spaces, whether or not they are part of a new town.

2. We use the term "migrants" here to refer to those residents who do not have a hukou – an identity card providing social rights on a local basis..

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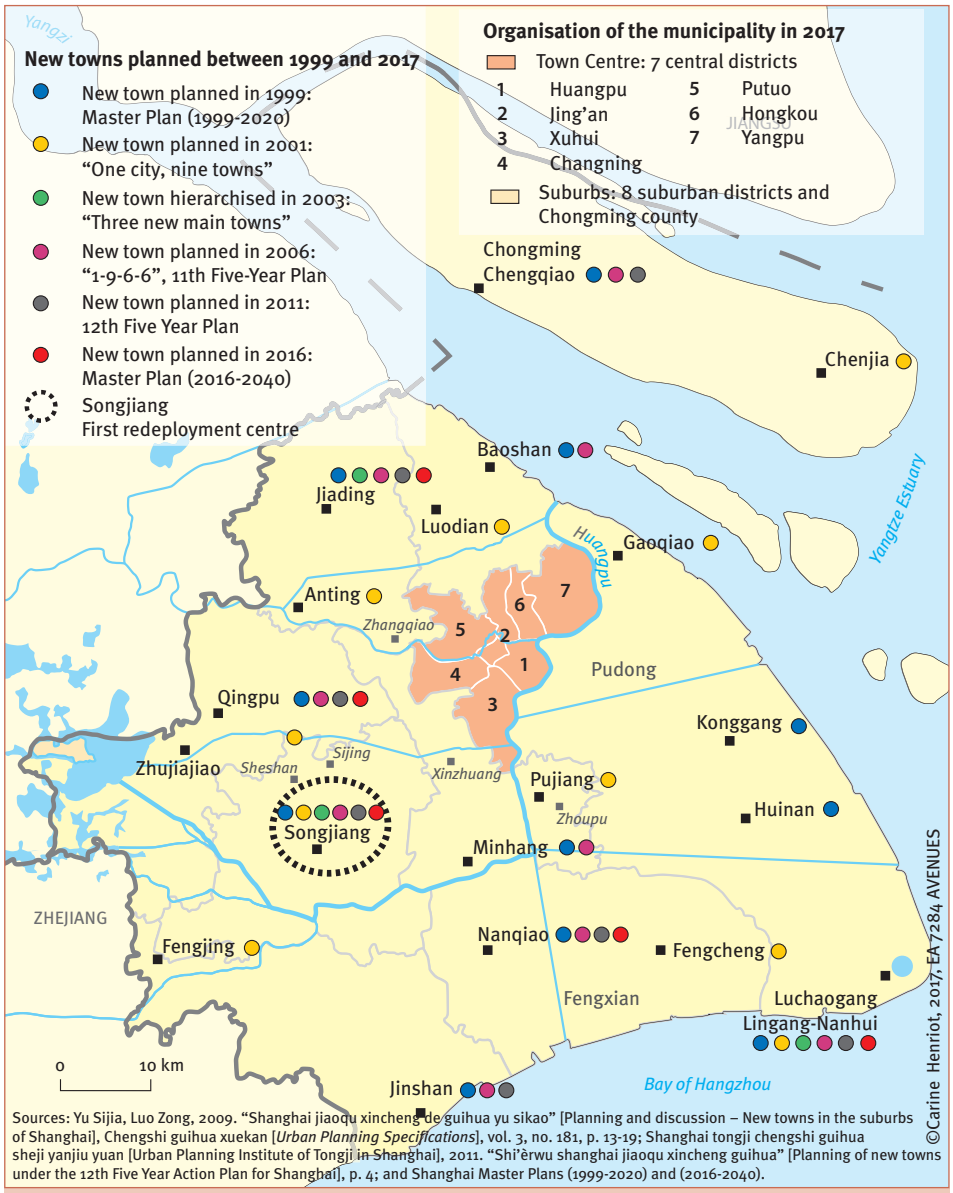

Sources: Yu Sijia, Luo Zong, 2009. "Shanghai jiaoqu xincheng de guihua yu sikao" [Planning and discussion – New towns in the suburbs of Shanghai], Chengshi guihua xuekan [*Urban Planning Specifications*], vol. 3, no. 181, p. 13-19; Shanghai tongji chengshi guihua sheji yanjiu yuan [Urban Planning Institute of Tongji in Shanghai], 2011. "Shi'èrwu shanghai jiaoqu xincheng guihua" [Planning of new towns under the 12th Five Year Action Plan for Shanghai], p. 4; and Shanghai Master Plans (1999-2020) and (2016-2040).

Fig. 2/ Urban planning and the Shanghai area's new towns: 1999-2017

This first phase of suburban real estate development was followed by a reorganization of further-out suburbs; more commercial activity was moved there, as did more residents (Henriot, 2013; Liu, 2014). These urban planning projects were on a large scale, taking the burgeoning segmentation of the real estate market into account. As such, certain residential sectors were designed for high-end – even luxurious – real estate, such as the neighbourhood with villas in Sheshan, in the district of Songjiang, or Wujiajiao in the Qingpu district. Other sectors are oriented towards low-rent housing.

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Starting in 1998, neighbourhoods of inexpensive rent-to-own properties (*jingji shiyong fang*) also began to be built in Shanghai's suburbs, meant for residents who could not afford to buy a home on the open market and were thus eligible for social housing assistance. Faced with rising market prices and in line with the policy of guaranteed social housing (*baozhang xing zhufang*), large social housing groups offer plans made up of four types of housing, two which are rent-to-own (the majority), and two which are traditional rentals (the minority). As of 2008, individuals capable of buying in the social housing market[3] have been encouraged to buy an affordable price-limited home in mixed communities (*gongyou chanquan baozhang xing zhufang – jingji shiyong fang*),[4] in places like the "New Triumph" development in Sijing in Songjiang district, where a residential satellite of 112,000 was designed and put up for sale via a system of municipal lottery (Henriot, 2014). There, if potential residents did not have the means to buy a home otherwise, they could buy a price-controlled home (*xianjiafang*). Locals without means, neither enough to buy real estate on the open market nor in the price-limited social housing market, can benefit from a low-cost rental (*lianzufang*), such as those in Jiangqiao in Jiading district, or, since 2011, a public rental (*gongzufang*), from a company which has contracted an agreement with the local government on guaranteed social housing and has participated financially in its construction. At the same time, the urban renewal programs in central Shanghai continue to generate large population movement towards the vast residential re-housing sectors, like the large collectives in neighbourhoods in Zhoupu, in Pudong district, built between 2005 and 2008. These were constructed in the middle of fields and isolated from the rest of the new urban areas.

All of these neighbourhoods thus contain new large-scale developments, often designed for tens of thousands of inhabitants, and each is specialised in a particular segment of the real estate market or the social housing market, seeking to fulfil quantitative urbanisation goals.

New towns: Their planning and their size

In the early 2000s, the city of Shanghai planned six programs to construct new towns, for which each relevant district's government would be responsible. These new towns symbolised the modernisation of the swiftly changing peri-urban landscape and individual home acquisition for people from Shanghai and beyond. The rapid growth of Songjiang district, marked by the rapid opening of new sectors to be urbanised, in particular at the edges of the new town, makes it a representative example of the development and diversification of new housing, residential mobilities, and the new inhabitants who have been moving into Shanghai's new urban peripheries.

Shanghai's masterplan (1999-2020) contains blueprints for renovating urban infrastructure throughout the city (*shanghaishi chengshi zongti guihua chengzhen lianxi guihua*). Each of the eleven new towns (*xincheng*) were to provide housing for 200,000 to 300,000 residents, according to the prevailing development-centric vision. Ten of the towns are built onto towns with already-existing infrastructure. During the 2000s, these new towns experienced varying degrees of development, all planned by the city and carried out by the district governments. The plans were also adjusted for the 10th (2001-2005), the 11th (2006-2010), 12th (2011-2015) and 13th (2016-2020) 5-year-plans. In 2003, the new towns of Songjiang, the development of which was already well-underway, and Luchaogang, part of the expansion of the port city Lingang, were designated to house 300,000 residents. In November 2004, the "orientation document

3. Despite the fact that the Shanghai government uses the term "guaranteed social housing" (*baozhang xing zhufang*) to designate the system of social assistance for property-buying, as well as for the rental market (extremely limited) and for housing intended to rehome displaced residents (the majority of such developments), we have chosen to describe this as a price-limited social housing market, because the system is financially balanced and is essentially intended to cater to financially-solvent individuals, capable of buying a home at a preferential price, and who often take out a thirty-year mortgage or borrow from their friends and family to raise the needed sum.

4. A "new format" adapted for the affordable housing market tests out "mixed properties." In this setup, the State, as represented by the neighbourhood or town government, owns a percentage of a private individual's property. According to the proportion of shares owned by the government, a price reduction of about 30% is applied, which allows for people without the means to invest otherwise to buy a [share of] their "mixed property social housing at an affordable cost" (*gongyou chanquan baozhang xing zhufang – jingji shiyong fang*) (Henriot, 2014).

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for implementing the 'three large concentrations' and developing Shanghai's suburbs" suggest centralising the urban population in Songjiang, Jiading-Anting, and Lingang, together expected to house 800,000 to a million new residents.

In January 2006, as part of the 1-9-6-6 program (1 central city, 9 new towns, 60 new sectors, and 600 new villages), the aforementioned three new towns' planned population numbers were increased, up to 300,000 residents each. And in the 12th 5-Year-Plan, the two primary new towns, Songjiang and Jiading, were designated to – by 2020 – provide housing for over a million residents. The new towns at the second tier in size were now expected to house 600,000 to 800,000 inhabitants; towns at the third size tier would provide more modest accommodations for 300,000. Finally, Shanghai's new masterplan, which was released on 22nd August, 2016 and is meant to provide urban planning guidance between 2016-2040, contains provisions for continued building in five new towns: Jiading, Qingpu, Songjiang, Nanqiao, and Nanhui-Lingang-Luchaogang. This plan has so far, however, not provided any new population objectives.

To briefly summarize, in all of Shanghai's successive new plans for population decentralisation since 1999, culminating with Shanghai's masterplan for 2016-2040 (table 1), the new town of Songjiang has been designated as the main hub for Shanghai's polycentric development. In fifteen years of changing polycentric development policy for these new towns, moreover, population targets have significantly risen overall in order to accommodate more and more residents who have been displaced from Shanghai's centre. We intend to compare these population targets with the population trends we have observed. This will enable us to classify the new town of Songjiang according to the Chinese typology of urban "breadth."

Table 1/ Population plans for Songjiang since 1999

Year	Planning document	Population guideline
1999	Masterplan (1999-2020)	200,000-300,000
2003	Three new major towns	300,000
2004	Three large concentrations	800,000-1,000,000
2006	11th 5 year plan (2006-2010): 1-9-6-6	300,000
2011	12th 5 year plan (2011-2015)	› 1,000,000
2016	Masterplan (2013-2040)	–

Note: The newest masterplan does not specify population objectives for the new towns for the year 2040.

Sources: Planning documents.

Table 2/ Actual population growth in the new town of Songiang

Year	New town = Fangsong perimeter	Actual population
2000	Fangsong – 5e recensement	25,613
2010	Fangsong – 6e recensement	161,438
2014	Fangsong – *Songjiang nianjian*, 2015	190,240

Sources: Fifth and sixth Shanghai city censures; *Songjiang nianjian*, 2015.

Songjiang, a small *new town*

As we have seen, in the 1999 masterplan the new town of Songjiang was expected to house 200,000 to 300,000 inhabitants by the year 2020, a plan which was revised in 2004 and in 2011 to allow for a million new residents. It should be observed, however, that actual population statistics show far more modest results (table 2). In effect, in 2000, 25,613 people already lived in the area where Songjiang was to be built up. Most of them were farmers. As of 2010, Songjiang counted over 160,000 residents. The town has thus grown in size, gaining 135,000 residents in ten years.

In 2014, the most recent year for which we have statistics, fifteen years after the project's beginning, Fangsong, the primary urban neighbourhood in the new town of Songjiang, houses 190,000 inhabitants. This

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makes it, according to the Chinese typology for urban "breadth" as updated by the State Council in November 2014 (Sanjuan, 2015, p. 58), a small town (*xiao chengzhen*) – with fewer than 500,000 habitants – but with almost 200,000 residents, it sits at the junction between type I and II. But what kind of qualitative urban planning is going on there?

An attentively-built up small new town

As a neighbourhood and a suburb, the new town of Songjiang is in morphological rupture from downtown Shanghai. The urbanisation project, as it has evolved over fifteen years in Songjiang and as it has moved away from initial governmental plans, now emphasizes creating a structural centre, a backbone for new urbanisation with both quantitative and qualitative goals.

An urban project of quality

In Shanghai's suburbs, since the late 1990s, various neighbourhood governments have issued plans for new cities. Different municipal polycentric redeployment programs have then selected, supported and promoted some of these. Songjiang's town management committee was established in 1996. As initially planned, the urbanisation project included doubling the size of the old town, Songjiang's downtown, reinforcing the town's role as an urban centre to structure the suburbs and the surrounding countryside.

Instead of and in place of old towns most of the territory to be developed was made up of Jiangnan countryside (South of Jiangsu), upon which industrial zones and housing estates for workers had been built in the late 1950s, planned as industrial satellites and designed on the Soviet model. These industrial and residential sectors experienced a second major phase of development during the 1980s, a time when the government sought to economically develop the coastal countryside.

At this time, the old town grew significantly, expanding outwards from the neighbourhood of Yueyang (an administrative unit of *Yueyang jiedao*) and extending towards nearby villages, such as Cangqiao to the west and Dongmen to the east (fig. 3 and 4). To the south, the old town's spread was restricted by the railway, along which industry was concentrated, but to the north, it had room to grow. In the 1990s, new urban sectors were built to the north, in the direction of the G60-A8 highway and the HuHang (Shanghai-Hangzhou) axis. It was not until the late 1990s that new sectors were planned to be built north of the highway; these were built as part of constructing the new town. But, while a management committee for the new town of Songjiang was established back in 1996, the Shanghai government did not officially adopt or integrate the project of building a new town until 1999. It took until 2001 for the project to be approved by the State Council. This is why in this article, we date the official beginning of the Songjiang new town project to 1999, not to 1996 (fig. 5).

While the old satellite-town of Songjiang was laid out between the railroad (to the South) and the highway which linked Shanghai and Hangzhou (to the North), the new town of Songjiang, which has been in the process of construction since 1999, was laid out North of the highway to serve new developing sectors. Multiple masterplans were issued, one following on another, in 1999, 2000, 2002 and 2003. Each of these projected doubling the old town, turning it into an urban centre, and including both the old town and the adjoining commercial and industrial zones within the new town's

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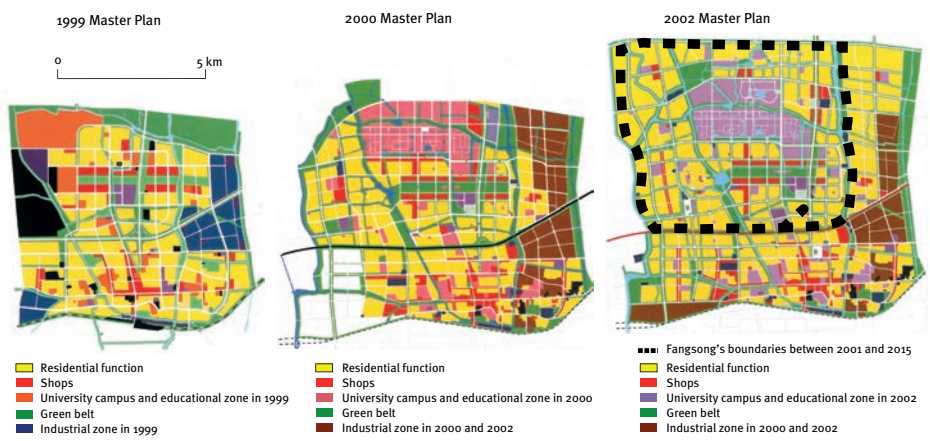
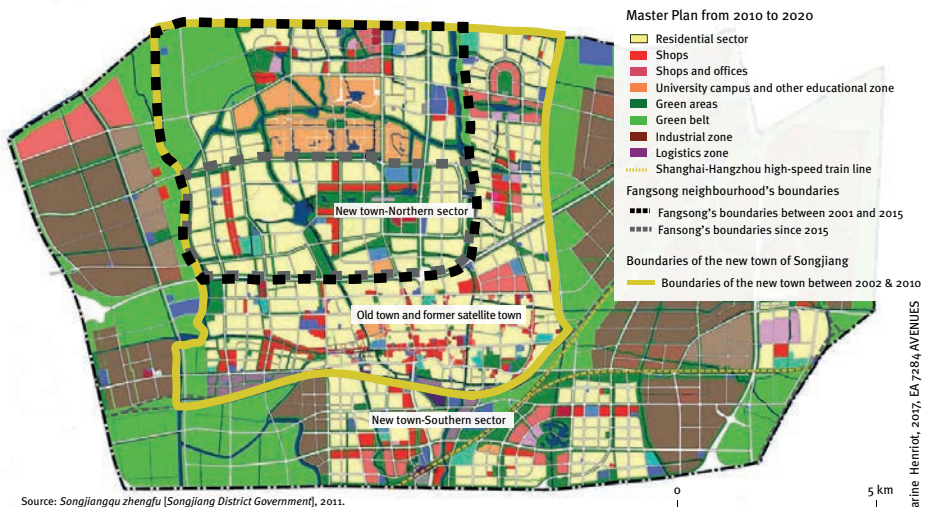


Source: Wang Z.L. (ed.)(2003). *Zhongguo xincheng guihua dianfan: Shanghai songjiang xincheng guihua sheji guoji jingbiao [A Model for Planning a New Town in China: The International Contest for Planning a New Town from Songjiang to Shanghai]*. Shanghai, Tongji daxue chubanshe, p. 17.



Source: *Songjiangqu zhengfu [Songjiang District Government]*, 2011.
Shanghaishi Songjiang xincheng zongti guihua 2010-2020 [Master Plan for the New Town of Songjiang 2010-2020].

Fig. 3/ Masterplans for the new town of Songjiang between 1999 and 2020

limits. The new town is distinguished by a central landscaped area going from the "Songjiang New Town" metro station – to the east – to the English-style sector called "Thames Town," to the west, a distance two kilometres long by 300 meters wide. Different public buildings, including the new seat of government for the Songjiang district, Shanghai's most prestigious hospital and its university centre, and a shopping centre, ring this green space. To the North, since 2000, Songjiang's university campus complex (*Songjiang daxuecheng*) houses satellite locations of seven of Shanghai's universities in a space measuring over 530 hectares, making it one of the largest university complexes in continental China. The other sectors of the new town consist of residential neighbourhoods. Since 2000, these have quickly been divided into plots, with each cluster having either in front or at its centre a small area for corner shops and services.

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These different neighbourhoods offer a wide variety of residential options, from very large apartment blocks to individual-family houses. Despite this diversity, however, all the residential segments of the new town are intended for purchase. The building stock, despite the variety in housing styles, is all sold at market price, designed for those who are financially solvent and can invest in Shanghai's suburban housing market.

The town network is now finally connected to the broader region by the Shanghai-Hangzhou highway, which links it to the dense web of peri-urban highways, as well as by the metro line 9 which, since December 2008, runs between the new town and downtown Shanghai. In December 2012, metro line 9 was further extended to the south, from the new town of Songjiang to the South Songjiang train station, thus connecting the old town as well as the new town – via the light rail network – to central Shanghai. In late 2017, Songjiang's first tramway lines should start running. Made by Alstom and operated by Keolis, the T1 line will run from Thames Town, through the old town, to

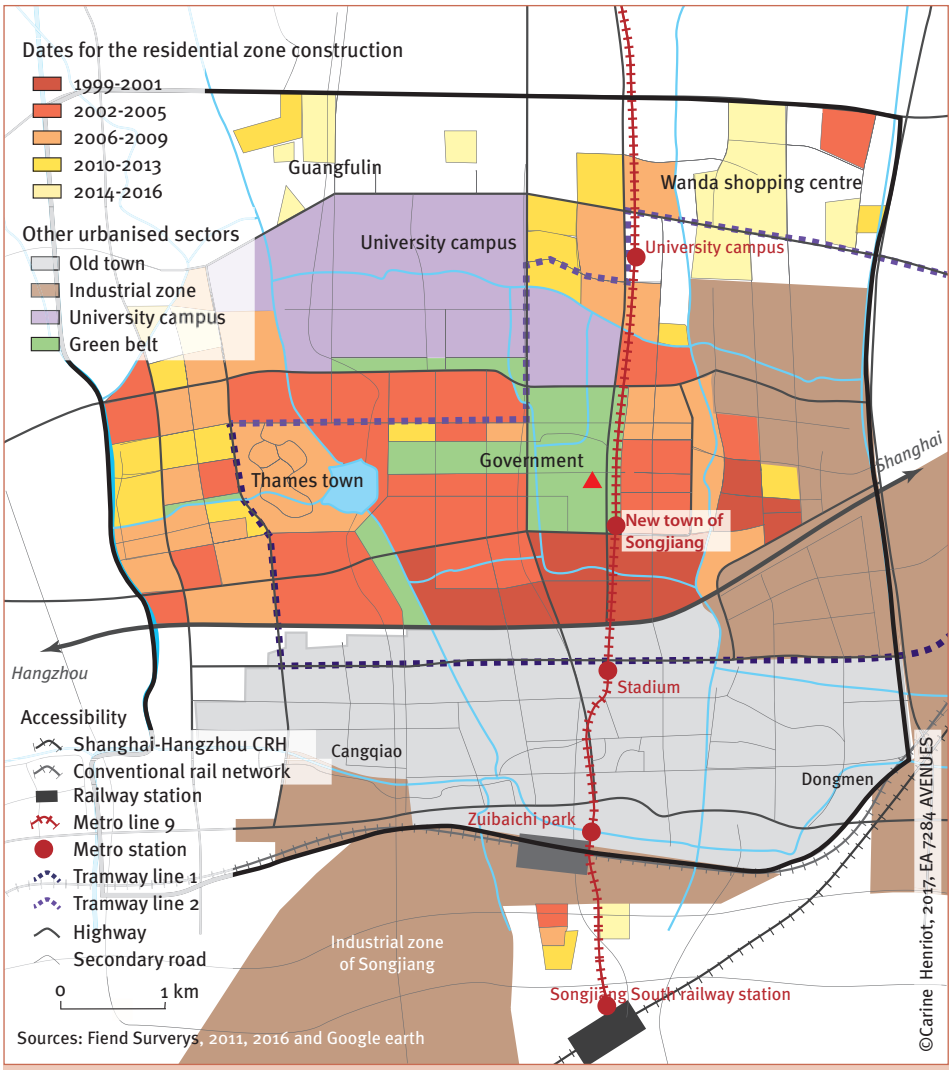

Fig. 4/ The new town of Songjiang between 1999 and 2016

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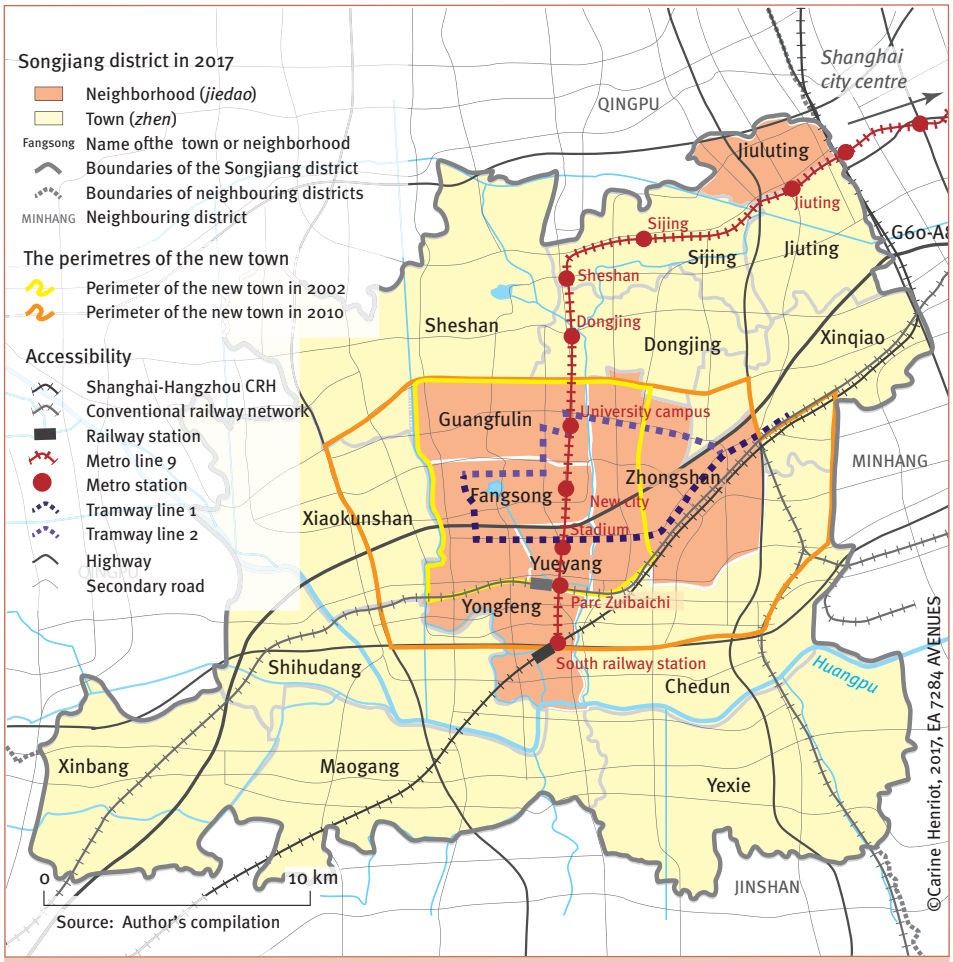

Fig. 5/ Infrastructure in the neighbourhood of Songjiang

Songjiang's industrial zone; the T2 line will run from Thames Town, through the new town, up to the university campus complex, and the on to Songjiang's industrial zone. The tramway project is intended to improve public transit within the different urban sectors of the district and to help modernise Songjiang's image.

Thus, the urban planners for the new town of Songjiang have focused on quality of life, on the availability of green and airy spaces, and provided a much lower population density than in the centres of China's major cities. The new town offers the chance to buy various kinds of homes, all with good access to the peri-urban highways and public transport. In short, it is a project designed to attract people seeking modern convenience and a higher quality of life. What assures this kind of coherence in the town's planning? Does it benefit from any particular status?

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Songjiang – A flexible status and a watered-down project

These small new planned towns in the outskirts of Shanghai have not been given a fixed place in governmental administration. Moreover, in China, the speed with which urbanisation is now taking place and the flexibility of administrative statuses make it difficult to collect statistics or follow logistic evolutions. This is especially the case for foreign observers without an applied research contract sponsored by the relevant district government. Nonetheless, we shall use the statistics we have to answer the following question: does this flexibility in status strengthen the urban planning project in the new town of Songjiang?

We should start off by explaining that the new urban sectors of the new town of Songjiang have their own territorial administration. This gives them a relatively unique status. The neighbourhood of Fangsong (*Fangsong jiedao*) was, in fact, founded in August 2001 and encompasses 33.81 square kilometres, which nearly corresponds perfectly to the area concerned by the new town, as planned since 2002 (36 square kilometres). This small town was thus, practically at its founding, given a status which allowed it to manage its own territory and population, linking the political project of the Fangsong neighbourhood intrinsically together with the new town's planning process. In fact, however, the *jiedao*'s government only really serves to manage its territory and population. It has only very limited decision-making power: to make decisions, it must keep good relations between its officials and district officials, who, themselves, work hard to keep good relations with city officials. Furthermore, this territorial coherence can be facilitated by the connection between the jiedao's administration and its authority over the new town project, which is both segmented and focused on raising housing value, rather than the territorial project. In a previous publication, we studied how new actors, organizing urban planning, had been introduced into suburban districts by companies developing new cities (Henriot, 2013). In Songjiang in 2001, three different development companies shared the sectors which were open for urbanisation: The new town of Songjiang development society in the West, the Fangsong construction company to the South and East, and the university complex development company. The new town's ability to manage its own development was thus dispersed. It should be noted, however, that in 2004 the new town of Songjiang development society absorbed the university complex development company. In 2005-2006, the new town of Songjiang development society moved its headquarters next to the Fangsong district government in Thames Town; this shows the permeability which exists between the two structures, one which manages public administration, and the other which develops, prepares sites, and promotes land and property ownership in the district.

Moreover, in 2010, the Songjiang district government, within the scope of its continuing development-centric vision, proposed new plans for the new town with a significantly-enlarged perimeter. In it, the industrial zones are now incorporated into the same planning document as the residential neighbourhoods and commercial and service sectors; the size of the new town is also doubled. The new town of Songjiang 2010 masterplan provided the new town with a Northern sector where the Fangsong neighbourhood was, a Southern sector South of the old town, between the traditional railroad tracks and the new bullet train line from South Songjiang station, and – to the East – a vastly enlarged industrial zone. In 2016, the North sector of the new town was still under development; in the Southern sector, areas were already prepared and divided into large, collective lots. The new town is thus already developing both to the North and to the South.

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The urban planning project for Songjiang's new town has, however, recently lost some coherence due to a recent administrative subdivision. In July 2015, the Fangsong neighbourhood was split in two. The southern part kept the name of Fangsong jiedao and occupies 14.76 square kilometres of already-built up land. The Northern part, in contrast, is now renamed *Guangfulin jiedao* and takes up 19.05 square kilometres of land that is currently being developed North of the university campus complex. Finally, between 2014 and 2016, a sort of new-new town adjoining the new town has been developed to the North-East of the metro station "Songjiang university campus complex." This new sector is built around the Wanda developers' shopping centre (*Wanda guangchang*), at the intersection of Guangfulin and Guangxing, and makes up the "new new town of Songjiang" (*xin Songjiang de xincheng*). This is the case despite the fact that the sector in question is not even in the neighbourhoods of Fangsong or Guangfulin; rather, it is located within Zhongshan, *zhongshan jiedao*. Nonetheless, since 2003 it has officially been listed in the intervention-perimeter for the new town's development.

From then on, it has become difficult to describe the new town of Songjiang's development. Population statistics (table 3) allow us to describe the new town's evolution juxtaposed with that of the old town, which is also undergoing major urban development and is expanding outwards towards the East, West, and South, into areas which do not always correspond to specific administrative districts, which themselves often have their borders changed. Moreover, official statistics do not always take one another into account; they are developed according to diverging methods.

Table 3/ Real population statistics for Songjiang and the difficulty in comparing them

Year	Old town	Total actual population + migrants	New town	Total actual population migrants
1990	Songjiang	91,381	–	–
2000	Yueyang + Yongfeng	110,218 + 30,068 = 140,286 of which 18,796 + 24,707 = 43,503 registred residents do not have a Shanghai *hukou* (*wailai renkou*)	Fangsong < 5th recensement	25,613 of which 10,583 registred residents do not have a Shanghai *hukou* (*wailai renkou*)
2010	Yueyang + Yongfeng	112,671 + 93,330 = 206,001 of which 7,395 + 40 623 = 48,018 *wailai renkou*	Fangsong < 6th recensement	161,438 of which 52,792 *wailai renkou*
2014	Yueyang + North Yongfeng	Partial statistics found	Fangsong < *Songjiang nianjian*, 2015	190,240 of which 87,259 *wailai renkou*
Julyt 2015	Yueyang + North Yongfeng	–	New town = Fangsong + Guangfulin + North-West around the Wanda guangchang + Southern part of Yongfeng	–

Sources: Songjiang nianjian, 2015; fifth and sixth Shanghai city censuses; Territorial diagnostic for the Songjiang district planning documents; Interview with Zhang Jiehong, communications director for the Fangsong district, 21 March 2012; Official website for the Songjiang district; August 2016 field observations.

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The creation of the Fangsong district has thus enabled outside scholars to understand the overall urbanisation project, the rhythm of constructing the new town of Songjiang, and the rise in its population over nearly fifteen years. Nonetheless, the physical and administrative subdivisions of the last few years has made analysing this small protean town more difficult, all the more so for its rapid changes, spurred by the arrival of numerous non-locals who want to buy an apartment in Songjiang.

A small town for "ordinary people"

In order to describe the way in which the new town's population has grown, we started with statistical analysis of the 5th and 6th Shanghai Municipal Censuses, 2000 and 2010. We also incorporated fieldwork carried out in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2016. Even though we were only able to carry out one-time semi-directed interviews, the information and narratives we are able to include help us to better understand the new town's population growth and the reasons for it.

A socially-heterogeneous group

In spring 2012, we carried out a number of semi-directed interviews with families who live in the new town of Songjiang, asking questions about their residential mobility and history, trying to understand exactly who had come to live there. The results have only partially been published (Henriot, 2016), so we would also like to describe our interview questions and the primary results we obtained. These interviews sought to learn about residents living in various different sectors of the new town, particularly in places that were built up at different times, and built in different styles, with different kinds of social cachet. As much as possible, we wanted to avoid concentrating resident responses to one complex or residence cluster. We thus interviewed 87 households in the new town of Songjiang, as well as their residence committees. For each residence, we wanted to find out:

• The population makeup: what is the proportion of formerly-rural people who already lived in Fangsong before it was urbanised; how many used to live in the old town of Songjiang, from different parts of Songjiang, and who came from downtown Shanghai or from other periurban districts – surrounding Shanghai? Who came from further afield?

• The specific nature of each population strata: do the first sectors that were opened to urbanisation have the same social makeup as the more-recently urbanised sectors? In which sectors do the most long-term Songjiang residents live? How about people from other Shanghai districts, or people who are new to the region?

Our interviews focused on four zones in the new town: the first sectors to be urbanised, notably those located near to the old town and to the new town of Songjiang metro station; the urban sectors close to the university complex; the recently-urbanised sectors close to the university complex's metro station; and the English-style sector of Thames Town. What did we learn about these sectors' composition and the process by which they were populated? What did we learn about how they relate to Shanghai – in terms of residential and employment mobility?

From these interviews, we learned that the first to come live in the new town of Songjiang were rural people who had been displaced by development projects in the Fangsong district, or had been dispersed from the old town of Songjiang or transported in from the neighbouring countryside.

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In one housing complex in Lanqiao gongyu, a man in his sixties affirmed that he was one of the first farmers to be displaced. Previously, he had had five mu of land and a village house that measured 245 square metres. He had built it himself, and had lived there with his wife, his two sons, his daughter-in-law, and his grandson. In 2000, the government offered him 340,000 RMB to leave his house, and a non-agricultural *hukou*. With the money, the man bought two homes: one in the old town to be a rental property, and a new 122-square metre home in Lanqiao gongyu for 1,598 RMB per square metre, in which his whole family (six people, three generations) now lives. The man explained that he was satisfied to "leave the land," though he regrets the low rate of compensation he received and was troubled by the pressure that the local authorities put on farmers who did not want to accept money and leave, who wanted to continue cultivating their land.

A man in his thirties, originally from a town in Xiaokunshan, and who has lived since 2002 in the "Dingxin gongyu" housing complex, explained that he wanted to buy a new-built home when he got married. At the time, the only new-build available was in the new town. He bought a 120 square metre apartment at 1920 RMB per square metre in a development with small and medium-sized apartment buildings near to the "New Town" metro station – at the time, the line had not been built. He lives there with his wife and his child, and works as a taxi monitor in Xiaokunshan; he has a twenty-minute commute to get to work. His *hukou* still has him registered as a farmer in Xiaokunshan, where he still has three or four mu of land, which he rents out to villagers or migrants for 500 RMB per person per year. His account is thus that of a voluntary departure from the rural zones of Songjiang district.

A second group of new residents came to Songjiang's new town some years later, encouraged by the construction of metro line 9. Some of these people have lived in the Shanghai region for a long time, but others come from further afield; some are white collar workers, others blue collar, and still others are retired. Some holiday there, or own a residence there as well as in other places.

A young retiree, originally from the Xuhui district in downtown Shanghai, has lived in the "Sili huacheng" residence complex, next to the "university complex" metro station, since 2006. He chose to buy a ground floor 130 metre square apartment, for which he paid 7000 per square metre, so that in his retirement he would be able to have a small garden and in order to achieve his dream: getting a dog. His is a narrative of a longterm Shanghai resident, one from downtown, who came to retire in Songjiang for a better quality of life.

Also in Sili huacheng, I met a nanny who was taking her charges for a walk. These were the three children of a family originally from the city of Wenzhou, in Zhejiang province. This thirty-something couple and their children moved to the Shanghai region in 2007, and came to live in Songjiang, where they bought a 169 square metre home for 6000 RMB per square metre. The husband then opened a factory in the Sheshan industrial zone. In 2012, they owned two other homes in Songjiang and sought to buy a house there, too. Today, the whole family has non-agricultural Shanghai *hukou*. Theirs is a story of individual success borne out of entrepreneurship.

In the shopping area near to the "Minfeng gongyu" housing complex, not far from the "new town of Songjiang" metro station, a couple originally from Jiangxi province runs a fruit and vegetable shop. They rent their store front and live there as well, in the shop's back room. They came to live in the new town because the young

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woman's brother moved to Songjiang, where he works as a cook, in 2009. He lives in the new town, too, in a 10-metre-square room which he rents for 1,000 RMB a month. All have kept their agricultural *hukou* from Jiangxi and officially declare that they came to Shanghai to earn money.

These examples show that the new town of Songjiang's population is socially heterogeneous, from different geographical origins and different financial situations. This makes Songjiang lucky, for it thus avoids the phenomenon, so common in other places, of a town population that moves in young and then ages as one generation. The poorest residents get by in the town's cracks: living with multiple roommates or in sublets. Some even rent apartments which they leave practically vacant and do not decorate, or live in temporary prefabricated housing. The vast housing complexes are, however, oriented towards financially-solvent residents or would-be residents – that is to say, the middle classes.

In a small town like in a big city?

The different neighbourhoods in Songjiang's small new town, de facto, houses people in various different financial situations but, as our interviews have shown, sharing relatively similar reasons for coming to live in Songjiang.

In fact, our interviews show that people come to live in these small new suburban towns most often for "green, healthy" surroundings which are "close to the places where we shop and well-connected by public transport" and "new" modern apartments which are "bigger and less expensive than those downtown" – and this whether they buy or rent. They do not particularly seek to be among people like themselves. For renters who do not have the means to own a home, living in Songjiang allows them to benefit from better living conditions than they would have had in downtown Shanghai, and, in some cases, allows them to live better than most working-class Chinese people. Homeowners (*yezhu*) who were asked about their socioeconomic status usually described themselves as "ordinary people" (*putong de ren*). Nonetheless, the market prices they paid to buy their home, their status as homeowners, and their ability to build up a real estate holding portfolio all confirm that they are, in fact, "middle class."

Moreover, living in Songjiang's small new town, in the suburbs of Shanghai, enables local people – as well as those coming from further afield – to "build a new, modern city life for themselves."

Hui, who I met in August 2016, has lived in the new town of Songjiang since summer 2014. He works as a researcher and instructor at the Shanghai university of international business and economics. In January 2016, with his wife, who works in administration at the engineering university, he bought a 150-square metre apartment for 2.7 million RMB, or 18,000 RMB per square metre (more than 2,400 euros per square metre). He bought this apartment with third-party assistance: his university gave him 200,000 RMB; his boss loaned him a further 100,000, which he needs to pay back soon; his parents and his in-laws also contributed money. For Hui, living in this neighbourhood enables him to be in an urban environment. Songjiang's little new town allows him to "live close to his work and to own the home that he bought for the family he hopes to found." In short, for Hui, living in Songjiang means living in a modern neighbourhood in a new town in Shanghai's suburbs. Hui is from Anhui. Now, however, he is "in the system": he has a new Shanghai *hukou*. Nonetheless, Hui doesn't feel at all like a Shanghaier, nor does he identify as being from Songjiang; he is

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rather a "Chinese person from greater Shanghai," "living in Shanghai and part of the system."

His account illustrates the role of small cities in migrants' social ascension, (enabling them to become homeowners) and in their becoming used to a metropolitan, urban lifestyle, where they feel not like locals, but identify overall as Chinese.

Songjiang's small new town: A way-point for Shanghai's urbanisation where people learn to live modern, urban lives

Songjiang's development and population growth represent a common trajectory of social and territorial reorganization for the small cities and towns around Shanghai. Songjiang's new town's flexible administrative status has enabled rapid development, in continuity with the traditional and industrial town that Songjiang was before, and a quality urban project meant to house financially solvent people and their families, whose home purchases will pay for continuing urban development and guarantee the new town project's continued growth – and along with it, rising land and real estate value. Following this reasoning, the new town of Songjiang project now faces competition to the northwest with the Guangfulin project, to the northeast with the Wanda real estate project, and to the south with the development of new residential land near the South Songjiang train station. Due to this, the small town's urban planning seems to have lost territorial and formal cohesion. Nonetheless, its recently-urbanised and populated spaces bring geographically and socially different people together, distinguishing this social-spatial space, all the while serving as a centre for integrating people into the Shanghai metropolis. Songjiang's small new town thus also serves as a hub for Shanghai-region urbanisation, both for the rural population of the district and for migrants, new arrivals who seek to become part of the system. It thus also serves as a melting pot where "ordinary" Chinese people – of all geographical and social backgrounds – learn to be "urban people in the big, modern town." As such, these small Chinese cities and towns present a certain continuity in their roles as hubs, even as they serve new, distinct, even antagonistic objectives to those which they served in the past. Support for rural industrialisation limited urbanisation in the 1990s, but in the first decades of the 21st century, China's small towns and cities have become structural support for rapid urbanisation, suburban sprawl, and a place where rural people learn to live metropolitan, urban lives.

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