

# **PSEUDO-PUBLIC SPACES IN CHINESE SHOPPING MALLS: Rise, Publicness and Consequences**

By

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## **CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP**

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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## **Abstract**

Shopping malls in China create a new pseudo-public urban space which is under the control of private or quasi-public power structure. As they are open for public use, mediated by the comingling of private property rights and public meanings of urban space, the rise, publicness and consequences of the boom in the construction of shopping mall raise major questions in spatial political economy and magnify existing theoretical debates between the natural and conventional schools of property rights. In particular, (a) how have pseudo-public spaces emerged in China, and why does this particular urban space grow so rapidly; (b) to what degree pseudo-public spaces are public, and how they affect the publicness of Chinese cities; and (c) what are the economic, socio-spatial, and environmental consequences of their rise?

Using a trans-disciplinary spatial political economy framework and original data collected in selected Chinese cities, this thesis finds that (1) the rise of pseudo-public spaces in China is a conventional process driven by a series of major institutional fixes and reforms which have significantly changed the relations between the state, capital investors, and the public in China after the country's turn to neoliberalism; (2) Chinese pseudo-public spaces are generally less public than publicly owned and managed public spaces. However, at the same time, the rise of pseudo-public spaces does not necessarily result in what many western urban scholars call the 'end of public space' in Chinese cities; and (3) the rise of pseudo-public spaces is intimately connected with the economic restructuring, spatial transformations, massive evictions, growing inequality, and rising pollution levels in China. The rapid growth of pseudo-public spaces, as a result, threatens to undercut any progress that Chinese cities purport to have made.

These findings stand the 'doxy' of existing literature on its head and provide insights that can help to better understand –and ultimately transcend the 'doxa' of urban development in China. In turn, apart from enriching theoretical and empirical debates, these findings also have the potential to inform urban policy in China

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## Publications from the Thesis

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- Wang, Y.** 2017, 'A Critique of the Socio-Spatial Debate and the Publicness of Urban Space', *Norwegian Journal of Geography*, forthcoming (SSCI).
- Wang, Y. & Chen, J.** 2017, '西方研究中城市空间公共性的组成维度及“公共”与“私有”的界定特征 [Dimensions of the Publicness of Urban Space and Defining Features of "Public" and "Private" in Western Research]', *Urban Planning International [国际城市规划]*, vol. 32, no.3, pp. 59-67 (CSSCI).
- Wang, Y. & Chen, J.** 2016, '国外城市空间公共性评价研究及其对中国的借鉴和启示 [Methods of Assessing Public Urban Spaces and Their Implications for Research in China]', *Urban Planning Forum [城市规划学刊]*, no.6, pp. 72-82 (CSSCI).

### Conferences Papers:

- Wang, Y. & Chen, J.** 2017, 'How Public? New Public Spaces in Neoliberal Chinese Cities: Case Studies in Chongqing', In *2017 International Conference on China Urban Development*, University College London, United Kindom, 5-6 May 2017. Retrived from: <https://fulongwu.files.wordpress.com/2017/03/ucc-brochure4.pdf>.
- Wang, Y.** 2015, 'Methods of Assessing the Publicness of Pseudo-Public Space: a Review and Directions for Future Research', In *The 21st Construction, Building and Real Estate Research Conference of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (COBRA 2015)*, University of Techonology Sydney, Australia, 8-10 July 2015. Retrieved from: <http://www.rics.org/au/knowledge/research/conference-papers>.

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