

RESEARCH SEMINAR

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

The Rise of Education-Featured Gated Communities in Chinese Cities: (Re)producing the Enterprising Self via the Entrepreneurial Local State-Capital Nexus

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Since the 1990s, an emerging form of gated communities (GCs) packaging K-12 schools with tailor-made residential services, i.e., education-featured gated communities (edu-featured GCs), has transformed the residential and education landscapes in Chinese cities. Drawing on an empirical investigation in Guangzhou, this research examines how the entrepreneurial local state leverages private investments and orchestrates the (re)production of the enterprising self to give rise to edu-featured GCs. Specially, the entrepreneurial state strategically forms nexus with private capital at different stages to serve different (re)development priorities and thus gives rise to various types of edu-featured GCs. Meanwhile, the enterprising self is forged by a process of neoliberal responsibilisation of individuals to produce a competitive labour force feeding into the needs of domestic economic restructuring and global capitalism. Seemingly harvesting a great fortune through investment in education and housing markets, middle-class households are involuntarily mired in a vicious circle of 'involution' that reproduces the enterprising self in a hypercompetitive manner. Foregrounding the indispensable role of the state in shaping the new residential form entwining housing and education choices, this study epitomises how education and housing offer critical prisms to examine broader and more profound urban issues.

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Shenjing He is Professor of Urban Studies and Head of Department of Urban Planning and Design, The University of Hong Kong. Shenjing is an elected Fellow of the British Academy of Social Sciences (FACSS). Her research interests focus on a number of urban and housing issues, and more recently the interface between three major types of social infrastructure, namely housing, healthcare and education. As the founding director of the SIEW Lab, she leads research projects on multi-dimensional and multiscalar healthcare inequalities, education-featured gated communities, multi-dimensional housing inequalities in pandemic-stricken megacities, rural revitalization in Hong Kong and cross-border healthcare utilization in the Greater Bay Area.



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