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Abstract

The report explores first, perceptions of meanings and causes of wealth and second, preferences about redistributive policies in urban villages of Shenzhen, China. A questionnaire survey was conducted with a sample population of 2500 respondents approached in public spaces in five urban villages. Results are presented for the entire population and for subgroups defined by the criteria of gender, age, education, family status, residential status (incl. native villager), political affiliation, and subcultural group. In addition, respondents were asked to judge their own position in the societal ladder of wage income and wealth, which also defined subgroups in the analysis. In general, these judgments reflect a less unequal distribution than suggested by the national data, though clearly manifesting a positive perception bias. Poorer strata manifest stronger preferences for policies supporting business over direct measures of support and redistribution, which matches a general tendency towards weighing internal success factors stronger than external ones. This relates to the observation that there is no clear alignment of self-positioning in the wage and wealth ladders with criteria of social status such as education and residence, indicating relatively low barriers to upward socioeconomic mobility. Other important insights include that many younger respondents tend towards post-materialist criteria of happiness while maintaining more traditional conceptions of success and family status. In general, different social ecologies, such as of different subethnic groups often reveal a stronger impact on response patterns than perceived positions of income and wealth.

Keywords: urban villages in Shenzhen; perceptions of wealth disparities; causes and consequences of wealth; redistributive preferences

1. Introduction[1]

One of the most significant patterns of economic and social changes in China accompanying the transition to the market economy has been the growing inequality of income and wealth. This has motivated shifts in policy priorities, epitomized in President Xi Jinping's notion of 'common prosperity'. On the surface, this shift demonstrates the validity of the simple hypothesis that increasing inequality fosters the demand for redistribution: yet we do not observe substantial redirections in specific policy domains such as income taxation or expanding social support. Indeed, as we overview in section two, the literature on inequality and redistribution has shown that the connection is ambiguous: This is mostly explained by the intervening variable of perceptions of inequality and related value stances. Accordingly, our paper focuses on the role of perceptions in shaping preferences over policies in a Chinese case study.

The background of this case study is our research on property and social change in the urban villages of Shenzhen, China (building on (Herrmann-Pillath et al., 2021); for first results, see (Jing et al. 2022)). Urban villages are a distinct phenomenon of transition in China and differ fundamentally from informal settlement types such as favelas or slums since their development is governed by a distinct institutional regime, the shareholding cooperatives of the villages who are the original collective owners of the land (Wang, 2016). Today, these SCs are hybrid organizations combining the roles of a business entity with public administration. They are owned by the villagers who often gained considerable wealth from transferring land rights to the municipality and developers. Many of

[1] We are indebted to Philipp Köncke and Jonathan Rinne for extensive comments and suggestions. Guo Man's work was supported by the Guangdong Planning office of philosophy and social science (GD20CLJ02).

them operate as real estate businesses. Urban villages have been an essential institutional feature of extremely rapid economic growth in Shenzhen in becoming the main residential areas of migrant workers because they offer cheap accommodation compared to the formal residential units in other areas (Qiao, 2018). In the first decades of development, construction did not follow strict standards and infrastructure was built with many provisional arrangements. Today, these low-cost housing areas are undergoing redevelopment, often involving well-known phenomena of gentrification highlighting aspects of unequal wealth (He, 2019).

Against this background, we are interested in how people living in these areas experience inequality, what they think counts as determining their well-being, and what they expect from the government regarding measures that contain growing inequality. Inequality is highly visible in China, epitomized in the rise of a distinct group of billionaires, now only surpassed by the United States. In 2021, China featured 28,130 ultra-high net worth individuals, compared with 110,850 in the US and 4,320 in India (Credit Suisse 2021: 22). China now occupies the middle ground in the deciles of the global distribution of wealth, by far dominating India, other emerging economies, and the developing world. Nine percent of the world's dollar millionaires live in China, compared to 39 percent in the US, and 7 percent in Japan or 5 percent in Germany, though at a low, but rapidly increasing density (0,5 percent of the population), surpassing Russia (0,3 percent) (Credit Suisse 2021: 19, 21). In a city like Shenzhen, the lifestyles of the rich and glamorous are highly visible in the presence of luxury cars, high-end fashion outlets and expensive restaurants.

Beyond such lively experiences, adequate inclusion of top earners in statistical estimations of inequality substantially increases indicators such as the Gini (Li et al., 2020). The authoritative work of (Piketty et al., 2019) analyses household surveys and recent data on taxation: Their conclusion is that the share of the top 10 percent of wealth holders has increased to 67 percent of total wealth, whereas both the middle 40 percent and the bottom 50 percent lost, the latter now owning only 6.4 percent of total wealth. The rich concentrate in metropolitan areas such as Shenzhen. So, we would expect that inequality is salient in the minds of the millions of low-income migrant workers who toil on construction sites, work as guards in upscale business premises, or cater to clients in the kitchens of restaurants.

At the same time, however, when it comes to income (Kanbur et al., 2021) heralds the 'great inequality turnaround' in China. This diagnosis is also based on a meticulous analysis of a rich number of statistical resources, such as various types of household surveys which, for many years now, have been regularly undertaken at high standards. The data reveals that despite inequality remaining high, the trend of growing inequality of the 2000s has been fading out and has possibly switched to declining inequality, at least reflected in some indicators, but also supported by the debates about whether China has already passed through the 'Lewis turning point'. This is vindicated by the more detailed statistical analysis that shows that wage inequality has been declining for years now. An important observation is that the flattening of the trend has been driven by declining inter-regional inequality and a reduction of the rural-urban income gap, but at the same time, within-province inequality seems to persist or even grow. This shows that considering inequality on the national level is important, but may mask divergent trends in the regions, such as when comparing the Northeast with the South.

This research confirms that income inequality diverges from wealth inequality, a phenomenon that is widespread in modern welfare states. In China, wealth is mostly determined by the distribution of real estate, which during the boom of the recent decade manifested huge increases (Wan et al. 2021). Real estate is especially prominent in Shenzhen, reflecting the relentless growth of the city, and is, as said, a key element in the development of SCs. Meanwhile, the Piketty et al. (2019) research also confirms the income trends diagnosed by Kanbur et al. (2021). Beyond such statistical diagnosis, explaining inequality in China is challenging, since dynamical aspects of growth interact in a complex way with institutional determinants (Wu, 2019). Regarding the latter, the distinction between forms of property is as crucial as the system of household registration, which become manifest in different settings of regional economies with diverging trajectories of economic growth.

One special topic is less considered in the literature on inequality in China and stands in the focus of this paper: This is how people perceive and evaluate the evolution of inequality, which is important to assess conclusions drawn from statistical analysis for judging consequences for social and political stability. This depends much on the legitimacy of an evolving pattern of inequality and the degree of accepting certain individual positions. The latter is not just determined by the current status quo but by perceptions of the life cycle, such as expectations of future social mobility, by beliefs about attribution and causality, and the role of reference groups. Consider, for example, a migrant worker in China: Will she judge her position in terms of perceptions of inequality at her place of sojourning, or her native place, where she might invest in a house for the family? Will she expect to turn into an entrepreneur sometime, investing accumulated savings? Does she feel pride over having earned a proper income through hard work? And many other considerations.

Our study combines the case study perspective with a survey approach. That means, our survey covers many aspects that reach beyond standard approaches to investigating perceptions of inequality, mostly based on national-level surveys and other larger-scale samples. This is motivated by our interest in more detailed aspects of social structure in the Chinese context. Even more focused, we want to look at the conditions in urban villages. Obviously, there is a trade-off here, because this means that our results cannot generalize, while we gain more detailed information. In the context of urban villages, this applies for categories such as taking the household registration status into consideration or subethnic identity, such as the identity of 'native'.

Our key concern is perceptions. Indeed, data on objective inequality in urban villages are simply not available. However, we claim anyway that relying on such supposedly objective data would be misleading, given the prominence of migration in Shenzhen: For many migrants, what counts is their relative status in the native places, where they often invest in housing or even new businesses. Therefore, focusing on perception is not just a 'sour grapes' move, but probably a sound methodological approach (see next section). Our analysis proceeds on two levels. One level is the single questions which often are of their own interest, such as learning about what people believe makes them happy. The other is looking at differences between responses that relate to certain demographic characteristics, such as age, but also, as mentioned, social statuses such as subethnic identity or party membership. One of our central concerns is how the self-assignment of individuals to brackets of income and wealth influences other attitudes, such as on how wealth disparity affects society, or what people expect shareholding cooperatives to do about inequality.

Our report contributes to three distinct strands of research.

- The first is research on urban villages in China, which has attracted much interest, especially with reference to Guangdong province and Shenzhen. This research is mostly structural and institutional and rarely opens the vista on how people living in these places perceive their situation. Mostly, this would be the topic of 'thick' descriptions in anthropology and social studies. Our contribution also offers insights into attitudes, beliefs, and values, by combining more detailed data with a larger sample of 2500 individuals.

- The second is the literature on inequality in China. This is almost exclusively focused on measuring objective inequality. Perceptions of inequality have been invoked in the context of the 'social volcano' hypothesis that would just assume that growing inequality feeds social unrest, which has been rejected by various researchers. Critical studies use narrow indicators such as trust in local or central government which do not convey more concrete information about perceptions (Zhou & Jin, 2018). Our study offers the advantage to access information on the local level directly, thus avoiding all possible pitfalls of extrapolating national samples.
- The third is research on perceptions and inequality in general. As said, our mix of case study and survey means that generalization is difficult. Yet, on the other hand, our study may confirm certain results from other studies, thus contributing additional evidence. This is relevant because one aspect often mentioned in the literature is possible cultural differences in experiencing and judging inequality.

Our paper proceeds as follows. In section two, we overview research on perceptions of inequality and how these affect demand for redistribution. In section three we describe our field context and introduce our survey approach. Section four reports the main results, distinguishing between the total sample population and various subgroups defined by demographic criteria. Section five discusses the results of special interest. Section six concludes.

2. Perceptions of inequality: Current status of research

Perceptions of inequality in China were scrutinized in M. K. Whyte's (Whyte, 2010, 2016)) seminal work which showed in the early 2010s that the worsening of the income distribution was not reflected unequivocally in perceptions of inequality (for a related result comparing Hong Kong and China, see (Wu, 2009). One important reason was that in comparison with other countries, Chinese respondents expressed the belief that the poor were mostly responsible for their fate, or, that the income distribution mostly reflects divergent efforts and capabilities. Moreover, they mostly do not think that the economic system and policies are to blame. Correspondingly, the Chinese mostly do not think that the rich obtained their wealth by improper means. In general, the Chinese are also more optimistic than people in most other countries about prospects for advancement and social mobility. However, Whyte also reported that many respondents would prefer a more equal distribution of income and wealth, though not mainly achieved via redistribution from rich to poor. One important result was that respondents expressed concerns about unfair institutions, in particular the household registration system. In sum, Whyte's research clearly showed that the link between trends of statistical inequality and actual evaluation by people manifests considerable degrees of freedom, determined by values, expectations, and judgments of determinants of the relative economic performance of individuals and groups.

This result matches the rich literature on perceptions of inequality in economics, sociology, and social psychology. This starts out from the so-called Meltzer and Richard hypothesis that posited a simple causal impact of growing inequality on the demand for redistribution (Meltzer & Richard, 1983). This hypothesis has been refuted by many investigations, though without a clear result on an alternative general pattern (as an example, (Ashok et al., 2015); for an overview, see (García-

Sánchez et al., 2020). There are various intervening variables that may impact the causality between inequality and demand for redistribution. For example, for the US, Davidai (Davidai, 2018) shows, that the evaluation of statistical inequality is mediated by the perception of this pattern and the assessment of one's own position (which both may be biased) and the beliefs about social mobility and opportunity, combined with attributions of individual economic performance. One important corollary is that depending on perceptions of inequality, people tend to attribute success more to external (e.g., economic environment) than to internal (e.g., own skills) factors.

Overviewing these complex patterns in more detail:

- First, people may be simply ill-informed about the true inequality, with the corollary that improving information also affects their expressed policy preferences (Gimpelson & Treisman, 2018). This does not only mean that they do not know the statistics. Statistics is often not reflected in experiences that people have or may be difficult to interpret without being reflected in experiences (Schmalor & Heine, 2022). For example, researchers have shown that low-income individuals often underestimate the true extent of inequality. One reason may be that they do not experience this apart from the occasional views on luxury cars or celebrities, whose outfit still is far away from embodying their true wealth (the oligarch superyacht may be more telling). This is especially true when wealth accumulates rapidly because visible lifestyles may not be impacted at all, but, for example, invisible clout in politics.
- Second, even if people are aware of inequality, this does not say anything about how they judge this inequality. This was the message of the famous Deng Xiaoping formula that 'some must get rich first' and is salient in research about transition societies such as Russia where a so-called

'Hirshmanian tunnel' effect was observed, which is also the idea behind the 'American dream': People perceive inequality as a promise for their own future, and hence do not judge them as bad per se (Senik, 2008). In other words, what does inequality actually mean to people? In the widest sense, this includes how they feel about inequality: This is the link between inequality and well-being or happiness, and even specifically, health (Schneider, 2012). Many results point towards a negative correlation between inequality and well-being.

- Third, yet one key factor is how people causally attribute inequality, such as by expressing luck, corruption, or individual effort. This points to the perception of the wider context of inequality: Causal attribution is itself embedded into perceiving and judging systemic factors, which relates to their worldviews and ideologies (Arikan & Bloom, 2015). One such aspect is the general judgment of a pattern of inequality as being 'fair' (Alesina & Angeletos, 2005). This applies on a most fundamental level of social ontology, which is of cross-cultural relevance, such as the relative weight given to external or internal factors of success or failure, and more specifically on ideological stances such as emphasizing meritocratic values and political affiliations.
- Fourth, in this context researchers have highlighted the role of social status which is partly independent of measuring wealth in economic dimensions (Norton & Ariely, 2011) (Schneider, 2019). Social status encompasses many other factors such as education or local contexts: Inequality is often measured in non-local dimensions, whereas status is more contextualized and local. Status can even mediate the relationship between inequality and health. One important phenomenon often observed in the literature is that individuals may assign themselves to higher status ('middle class') than warranted by objective relative wealth (Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2017). This

has implications for the demand for redistribution, such as mimicking the preferences of higher-status individuals regarding taxation.

- Fifth, there is also a temporal contextualization in terms of economic conditions, when phases of rapid growth promise plenty of opportunity whereas protracted periods of depression foster pessimism and defiance, resulting in stronger demands for government support.

In sum, there are many reasons why we should not expect a simple relationship between perceptions of inequality and demand for redistribution. Generally, we should expect strong local effects, in the various senses of group-specific attitudes (such as migrants), place-specific phenomena (such as urban versus rural), or temporal slices (such as phases of rapid economic growth). All these aspects matter in the case of Shenzhen.

3. Survey design

3.1. Field sites

About half of the population of Shenzhen live in urban villages, a phenomenon of urban development that is clearly distinct from other irregular settlement types (O'Donnell 2021). After the Shenzhen special economic zone was created, migrant workers flocked into the area to work in factories initially set up mostly by Hong Kong business. This nucleus expanded with breakneck speed, soon beyond the borders of the original SEZ. Local farmers responded by investing into housing for migrants on the collective land originally devoted for their homesteads, but also for agriculture, partly illegally, partly circumventing legal restrictions. A key institutional feature became the shareholding cooperatives, basically villager-owned real estate companies with public functions, such as infrastructure provision (Po, 2008). Many of the more than 300 native villages in the Shenzhen area grew into urban villages, since 2004 institutionally recognized as urban communities *shequ*. Native villagers are now minorities in those communities, mostly about 1-2000 people, and tens of thousands, often more than 100,000, migrant inhabitants. The latter include individuals with different status of household registration, some eventually obtaining a Shenzhen *hukou*, but the majority without. Today, a large and growing group of second-generation migrants identify themselves as 'Shenzheners'.

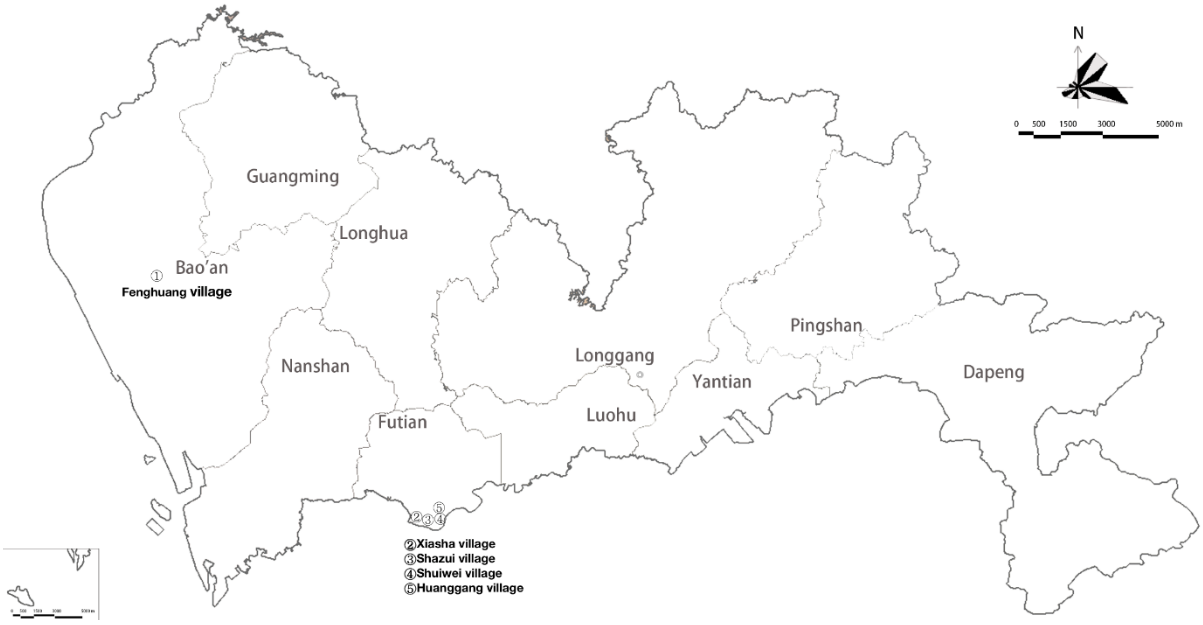
The shareholding cooperatives enabled local villagers to keep control of their land rights so that transfers to the municipality and developers were mostly very lucrative deals, turning many, though not the majority, into wealthy people (for the case of neighboring Guangzhou, see (Wong, 2015), (Kan, 2019). At the same time, the SCs took an active role in developing their areas, supported and obliged by the municipality, as a part of the deal that left control of the land to the villagers (Po, 2012). In the first stage, the urban villages developed in an irregular fashion, though different from shantytowns because of the strong role of villagers as landlords (that is, migrants would not set up their own constructions). Today, many urban villages are undergoing redevelopment, mostly in cooperation with large developers, and coordinating with municipal development plans ((Lai et al., 2017), (Tong et al., 2021).

As shown in the map, our survey selected five urban villages, four of them in the original SEZ areas, and one in the former rural districts, but now part of Shenzhen municipality. This selection was mainly motivated by the status of our research project at that time when we had already done fieldwork in Fenghuang and continued with related work in Xiasha. COVID-19 conditions posed serious challenges to survey work so sticking to familiar environments was reasonable where our research was already familiar to local people.

Table 1: Short profile of five villages

	Huanggang:	**Shazui**	**Shuiwei**	**Fenghuang**	**Xiasha**
Age	>700 years	>700 years	>600 years	>700 years	>600 years
Native villagers	1680 (natives)	~1500 (estimate)	1925 (hukou)	1886 (hukou)	3000 (Huang descendants)
Non-resident population	65,000	30,000	25,000	92,000	100,000
Main lineage	Zhuang	Ou	Zhuang	Wen	Huang
Area km²	0.5	0.23	7.8	9.8	0.35
Year of establishing SC	1984	1984	1992	1990	1990

Figure 1: Location of survey sites



3.2. Sample

In this setting, people of different social strata mingle, all of them pursuing the Shenzhen vision of rapid growth and opportunity. Given the nature of urban villages, the demographic structure differs from other areas of Shenzhen in the sense that the share of people is larger who have no *hukou*, driving demand on the vibrant market of small property housing where people buy residential units without obtaining valid legal title (Qiao, 2018). Naturally, urban villages attract more people with lower income, though with different socioeconomic background, both the migrant working in construction and the young professional just getting the first job at a high-tech company, with the latter moving out following the track of upward mobility.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of sample (percentages)

Sex	**female**				**male**		
	55.20				44.80		
Age	**<20**	**20-29**	**30-39**	**40-49**	**50-59**	**>60**	
	12.64	44.20	25.28	7.72	9.76	0.40	
Family status	**Not married**	**married**	**divorced**	**cohabitation**	**Married with children**	**Not married with children**	**other**
	57.48	25.2	7.2	2.8	6.4	0.4	n/a
Education	**illiterate**	**elementary**	**lower middle**	**upper middle**	**profe-ssional**	**Under-graduate**	**graduate**
	0.00	14.2	19.52	17.12	18.76	22.40	8.00
Residential status	**Immigrant with hukou**		**native**		**Immigrant without hukou**		
	32.28		28.44		39.28		
Political affiliation	**None**	**Democra-tic parties**	**Youth league**	**Party member**			
	45.64	5.2	25.36	23.80			
Subcultural status	**Chaoshan**	**Guangfu (Cantonese)**	**Hakka**	**other**			
	25.44	7.72	9.96	56.88			

Our sample has the following demographic profile (table 2). The sample consists of 2500 individuals, 500 in each village. In organizing the survey, we faced restrictions of COVID-19 regulations and experienced difficulties in approaching individuals in person. For example, it was not possible to get permission to sample households directly, employing a grid-based sampling method. Therefore, we adopted a flexible way to send student teams to interview people as part of their practical study (which motivated respondents to engage with the young people, despite general reservations). The students were trained and used portable devices to type the answers directly into the electronic questionnaire. The student teams approached people randomly at selected public spaces, such as near shopping malls or supermarkets, based on the assumption that people mix here with various backgrounds. Our choice of five different locations works enhances randomization. We defined two time slots for interviewing, noon from 11:00-13:00 and evening 18:00-20:00, when people mostly shop for daily needs or have a break from work.

We cannot assess how far our sample reflects averages for Shenzhen or for the districts to which the villages belong. The National Census of 2020 has data on the district level, but only for age and sex. The sample has a slight bias towards females, which differs from the opposite bias towards males in the census. Our sample is also younger than the census results. Both differences certainly result from the sampling approach: For example, elderly people may be less present at the interview locations, or females may tend to be more responsive to interview requests. The age distribution reflects the specific demographic profile of Shenzhen, which results from the immigration of mainly younger workers and institutional age limits of attaining residential status. For the same reason, we observe a high share of respondents who are not married. The sample includes a relatively high share of individuals with higher levels of education, which is characteristic of Shenzhen, especially in downtown locations. Regarding residential status, we notice a relatively high proportion of people with *hukou* and natives, the latter reflecting a focus on urban villages. We observe a relatively high share of individuals associated with the Communist Party, perhaps also reflecting the downtown area setting. Finally, given the entrepot nature of Shenzhen, the share of 'other' with regard to subcultural status is high, but we also notice the strong presence of Chaoshan people. Estimates of the Shenzhen total for subcultural groups vary but converge on about three million for Chaoshan and up to five million for Hakka.

3.3. Questionnaire

In designing our questionnaire (see appendix), we started out with the following general presumptions.

First, the perception of wealth differences as measured and perceived in quantitative terms is contextualized by general attitudes toward life and beliefs of what makes life worthwhile. This has been recognized in the rise of happiness research in economics. Accordingly, we included a question (No. 8) that focuses on beliefs about happiness. We narrowed this down to asking what respondents regard as indicators (No. 9) and factors (No. 10) of 'success', which is more focused on economic performance and societal status. Moreover, we included a question (No. 15) on what people regarded as outcomes of wealth in broader terms, thus closing the circle to happiness.

Second, we included a question (No. 14) inquiring about what people regard as determinants of changes in wealth in the past ten years. This question has implications for the degree of how far people might regard wealth as legitimate. On this, we include the 'Adam Smith question' (No. 19) asking whether people think that when businesspeople get rich, that this also contributes to the welfare of most other people.

Third, we ask what people expect from growing disparities of wealth for society at large (No. 16). This leads to questions about what should be done in terms of policies. Question 18 directly inquires about what people expect the government to do about wealth distribution. Question 17 explores the expected role of shareholder cooperatives in public policies.

After a pilot test of the first version of the questionnaire, we learned that because of the tense COVID-19 climate respondents were difficult to access and once willing to respond, were keen to end the procedure as fast as possible to stop contact. Accordingly, we kept the questionnaire as short as possible and employed indirect means to compress response time per question. During the pilot, we noticed that respondents were unwilling to spend too much time considering exact rankings about alternatives, so we employed a simple weighting scheme that allowed for multiple assignments (such as assigning a '5' as most highly valued to more than one option). We decided to present closed lists of alternatives so respondents would just quickly tick the boxes, without considering other thoughts.

In analyzing our results, especially when it comes to the multiple assignment questions, we simply divide three groups, the lower (1,2) and the upper (4,5) segment, and the middle (3). That means, we distinguish between the option that receives less than the middle, as a total of 1 and 2, and an option that receives more than the middle, as a total of 4 and 5. This is especially significant since for the total sample population, we often observe two distinct phenomena: First, the allocation is sometimes two-peaked, with a weak middle, but large numbers for the low and the top segment; second, this is different from constellations where one segment seems dominant, i.e. manifesting a single peak. For example, when asking for what happiness is, a fulfilled family life receives a double-peaked response, with 32.44 percent assigning low values and 45,6 percent assigning top position, whereas family support in explaining success is seen as a priority by 52,28 percent of respondents, receiving only 21,72 percent low valuations.

We regard the analysis of subgroups as the most informative in which we relate response patterns to demographic characteristics. The total sample often blurs significant differences across various subgroups, which are crucial for generalizations over structural and dynamic factors that influence perceptions of wealth and inequality.

4. Results

4.1. Total sample population

We included two questions where people locate themselves in the ladders of income and wealth (appendix, nos. 11 and 12). This is motivated by two considerations. First, we did not expect that individuals would be willing to give information about income and wealth status in the context of a non-official survey. However, this status certainly has a strong impact on their stances toward issues such as redistribution. Second, at the same time, we know that what matters is how people perceive and assess their own position. Therefore, we decided to inquire about their relative self-assessment. This aims at answering the following question: How do the individual perceptions of their own position impact stances towards wealth, opportunity, and policies?

Our question 13 is an important indicator for the presumed strong possible impact of perceptions on evaluative and attributive stances. We asked how large the share of the upper ten percent of wealth holders in total wealth is estimated, referring to the *shequ*. Although we do not know the true situation in Shenzhen, the result is in stark contradiction to the Piketty et al. data for China. Only about one-third of the respondents converge with the Piketty et al. result that the top ten percent own more than 60 percent of the wealth. A remarkable 24 percent think that the top ten percent own less than 20 percent. In other words, there is a strong bias in our sample population towards perceiving a more equal distribution of wealth than on the national level, which we presume corresponds to the true Shenzhen state.

13. What do you guess is the share of the top ten percent of the wealthy in your *shequ* in total wealth?					
Share in total wealth	Less than 20 percent	20-40 percent	40-60 percent	60-80 percent	80 percent and above
Share of respondents	23,56	17.12	18.56	24.44	16.32

This result is partly matched by the results of questions 11 and 12. On wages, we observe the familiar statistical phenomenon that people tend to locate themselves in a better position in the perceived statistical distribution than in the actual distribution: If we cumulate the numbers for A-D, a total of 76,64 percent believe to belong to the top 50 percent of the wage scale, which is not possible in actual terms.

11. To which level in your *shequ* would you assign your own wage?

Bracket	Top 1 percent	Top 10 percent	Top 20 percent	Top 50 percent	Bottom 30 percent	Bottom 20 percent
Share of respondents	1.32	9.96	14.20	49.16	13.88	11.48

Interestingly, this is less pronounced when it comes to wealth, which apparently reflects the results of the Piketty et al. analysis showing a stark divergence between income and wealth distribution. 35.92 percent believe to belong to the top 20 percent of wealth holders, but at the same time 41.84 percent assign themselves to the bottom 30 percent.

12. To which level in your *shequ* would you assign your own wealth (real capital, financial capital and other assets)?						
bracket	Top 1 percent	Top 10 percent	Top 20 percent	Top 50 percent	Bottom 30 percent	Bottom 20 percent
Share of respondents	2.68	16.60	16.64	22.24	20.00	21.84

In the next section, we explore how the location in the brackets influences the responses. If we first look at the general response patterns, the following observations loom large.

What do people regard as 'happiness' (question no. 8)? In our alternatives we explicitly distinguish between materialist and nonmaterial values. 38.85 percent of respondents assign the top values to material wealth, and 32.7 percent the low values. 40.88 percent express a priority for a proper job. In comparison, 49.2 percent of respondents assign the top values to 'having belief and values', and 30.4 the low values. The preference for material wealth is also surpassed by the 43.44 percent who assign top values to leisure time. Hence, we diagnose a clear tendency towards less material aspects of happiness, although the distribution is split at the middle. Moreover, respondents value social conditions stronger that material wealth. This is salient in the strong valuation of family life: 45.6 percent of respondents regard a fulfilled family life as important for happiness and 46.84 percent appreciate a stable social environment.

54.36 percent of respondents put family life on the top position when it comes to assessing success (question no. 9), compared to 50 percent who see pecuniary indicators as most important. This is a close race, but we need to consider that when asked for determinants of happiness, personal success only receives 27.5 percent of top assignments (question no. 8). In other words, success is seen more in materialist terms, whereas for happiness non-material goals matter more. Interestingly, educational success is given less priority, with only 32.2 percent of respondents. There is a clear tendency towards strong valuation of social relations as an indicator of success, as distinct from mere fame: 51.4 percent express low appreciation of gaining people's admiration, which compares with 45.4 who give high priority to social relations and 45 percent for social status.

We also asked what the major outcomes are or what benefits can be reaped from material wealth (question no. 15, respondents choose 5 of 10 items). Interestingly, responses also tend towards less materialistic aspects. The top choice is commanding more social resources (63.44 percent), followed by a clear emphasis on family: 59.84 percent mention that wealth enables a better education for children, and a remarkable 55.6 percent think that wealth allows a better life for the parents. In comparison, luxury consumption is only mentioned by 33.56 percent of respondents, and 48.24 percent mention apartments and cars.

What do people think about future determinants of success (question no. 10)? Family support (52.28 percent) is clearly seen as one key factor. However, a whopping 59.52 percent of respondents think that 'self-improvement' is essential. Both are instances of single-peaked assignments, distinct from other choices. There are two choices with a weak middle, which are of interest. One is whether luck is a determinant of success: 45 percent go for the top assignment, 34.8 for the low assignment. The other is whether social connections matter: 50 percent believe so, but 30.44 give low priority as well. In sum, if we add the observation that for 49.4 percent a good job is important for success, whereas 42.84 percent give priority to the economic environment, we reach the general conclusion that respondents tend to identify internal success factors as primary, and external as secondary, if we include family into the 'internal' factors. This is also supported by the response pattern in question 14, asking for determinants of wealth in the narrower sense, as a component of success. Again, the emphasis on skills and individual ability stands out (67.84 percent), combined with hard work, compared to the economic environment (46.44).

We asked for social, economic, and political consequences of wealth disparities. To begin with, when asking for the outcomes of wealth, only 37.56 percent mentioned growing social divisions (question no. 15). Question 16 directly inquires about the consequences of greater wealth disparities, where declining perceived happiness of people received the strongest affirmation (59.48 percent), followed by inequality of education (54.72 percent). Accordingly, respondents also expected more social unrest (54.08 percent), while 49.04 percent also expected that the economic growth rate will increase.

Given such expectations, what are the opinions about necessary policies (question 18)? Although 55.12 percent of respondents go for more direct support for the poor, this is topped by the demand for creating more jobs (58.84), combined with more equal educational opportunities (53.52). In comparison, only 41.08 percent mention the *hukou* system, and only 42.76 percent the minimum wage. Taxing the rich is also less mentioned (42.24 percent). We also inquired about what people expect from the shareholding cooperatives. Again, creating jobs is a priority (58.72 percent) and education (55.16 percent), apart from their general role in improving living conditions (59.56 percent) and public infrastructure (54.92 percent). Interestingly, direct economic interventions are seen as less important, such as improving access to loans (44.84 percent) or sponsoring business opportunities (43 percent). A surprising result is that 50 percent of respondents think that shareholding cooperatives should take an active role in arranging marriages.

Overall, for the total sample, many observations are not strongly diverging. One reason is that aggregating over the demographic subgroups blurs important differences, which we will study now.

4.2. Subgroups

Our choice of demographic categories, apart from usual considerations, aims for gaining insights into the following questions:

- How does the self-assignment to brackets of wealth and income affect the preferences for policies?
- Are there differences in gender, family status, and across age groups in evaluating happiness, wealth, opportunity, and policies?
- How does the level of education affect individual stances, given the potential impact on expectations of social mobility?

- Does party affiliation matter for individual stances?
- Does the status as a Shenzhen resident impact individual stances?
- Are there subcultural differences across the key subethnic groups (minxi 民系) of the Shenzhen area, the Hakka (*kejia* 客家), the Chaoshan 潮汕, and the native Guangfu 广府 (Cantonese)?

In discussing the subgroup level, we start out from the last topic of the previous section because this seems most appropriate to diagnose whether various demographic characteristics make a difference in assessing the legitimacy of the status quo of disparities: The more this is put into question, the more respondents will demand political interventions. Specifically, we relate the perception of one's own position in the wage and wealth ladder with manifest demands. We continue our diagnosis with reference to other questions in considering the role of group statuses, such as political affiliation or subcultural identity, and look at personal characteristics such as age.

Policy preferences

Let us first look in more detail at the policy preferences. For highlighting the most interesting patterns, we form subtotals of questions 11 (wage ladder) and 12 (wealth ladder), in both cases confronting the two lowest brackets (bottom 20 and 30 percent) with the two highest (top 1 and 10 percent). For each policy choice, we look at the affirmative answers in the respective subtotal.

Considering how the government should intervene in the distribution of wealth, for the wage ladder we notice, remarkably, that taxing the wealthy is endorsed by both the 46 percent of the top bracket and close to 50 percent of the bottom bracket: there is no difference in stances towards redistribution. This is a bit different for the wealth ladder: Of those who perceive themselves to belong to the top wealthy bracket, only about 35 percent endorse higher taxes, compared to 48.4 percent of the bottom bracket. This picture is further accentuated when considering the question about poverty relief funds, which in the wage ladder is endorsed by 57.8 percent of the top bracket, but only 48.4 of the bottom brackets. For the wealth ladder, the values converge at 49.4 for the top and 47.9 for the bottom brackets. Similarly, enhancing the basic social safety net (the *dibao* system) is favored by almost 64 percent of the top wage ladder, but only about 40 percent for the bottom brackets; as for the wealth brackets, the respective numbers are 57.3 and 60.1 percent.

If we take the results together, we realize that a pattern emerges where in the wage ladder there is no stronger endorsement of redistribution from the bottom brackets, and sometimes even the reverse, which seems to reflect a paternalistic stance of the top bracket individuals. When it comes to the wealth ladder, the picture is closer to stereotypical expectations. Apparently, it makes a difference whether people think in terms of their position on the wage ladder as compared to the wealth ladder.

An interesting contrast emerges regarding jobs and minimum wages. On the wage ladder, more employment opportunities for the poor are endorsed by 68.1 percent of the top bracket compared to 49.4 of the bottom bracket. In comparison, raising the minimum wage is only favored by 35.5 percent of the top bracket and 50.3 percent of the bottom. For the wealth ladder, the numbers for creating jobs are 57.3 and 60.52, respectively, and on minimum wage, 51.2 and 43.1. Again, we notice greater convergence in the wealth ladder, whereas, in the wage ladder, a more conventional result emerges, with the richer individuals in favor of jobs, but less of lifting the minimum wage.

Let us add observations on what people expect from SCs. Many questions reveal no clear differences across the brackets. But most interestingly, in the wage ladder, 63.3 percent of the bottom bracket expect SCs to improve the environment for entrepreneurship, compared to only 25.5 percent of the top bracket. In the wealth ladder, the respective numbers are 32.4 and 54.6 percent. Better access to loans is endorsed by 37.6 percent of the top wage bracket and 58.4 percent of the bottom; as for the wealth ladder, these numbers are 34.2 and 53.7, respectively. Creating job opportunities is favored by both groups, in the wage ladder 58.2. and 64.5 percent; in the wealth ladder, 48.8 and 63.1 percent, respectively.

In sum, we get a clear picture. The bottom brackets don't reveal a particularly strong demand for redistributive measures but endorse all kinds of support for entrepreneurial activities and employment. There are even instances where the rich adopt paternalistic attitudes that are stronger than the demand on part of those who would mainly benefit. We can add observations on demand for public services. The top brackets in the wage ladder reveal stronger demand for public services of SCs than the bottom: For example, 64.2 versus 45 percent endorse medical services; or, 66.3 versus 50.5 percent for educational opportunities (for the wealth ladder, the numbers are less pronounced).

Finally, there is the 'Adam Smith question'. In the wage ladder, the share of respondents who agree that businesspeople profits also benefit society is almost the same in the top and bottom brackets: almost 45 percent of the top agree or strongly agree, almost 42.5 percent of the bottom; for the wealth ladder, the corresponding values are 38.4 and 37 percent. The difference is mainly in the share of people who are not sure: Remarkably, 31.6 percent of the top bracket feel not sure (40 percent for the wealth ladder), compared to 18.8 percent in the bottom bracket (24.2 percent in the wealth ladder). This difference translates to a much higher share of respondents in the bottom bracket who do not agree with the Adam Smith thesis (close to 38.7 percent in the wage ladder, and 40 percent in the wealth ladder). Hence, we conclude that despite a strong group in the bottom bracket who reject the thesis, there is also a group of the same size as in the top bracket who agree. This result can be complemented by considering the role of the level of education: Here, more than 50 percent of the respondents with the lowest level reject the thesis. However, again the share of those who agree is almost the same (27.3 percent) as on the highest level (23.5 percent); on the highest level, we add the 17 percent who strongly agree (compared with 8.7 percent on the lowest level). Roughly, beyond the lowest level, only one-third of respondents across all levels reject the Adam Smith thesis.

An interesting complementary observation is whether party membership (we include youth league here) makes a difference in policy preferences. The two groups rarely differ, only regarding direct support of the poor: almost 61 percent of party members endorse poverty relief funds, compared to 49.6 percent of others; similarly, 58.1 percent of party members favor *dibao* and only 43.7 percent of others. It deserves noticing that only 36.5 percent of party members think that abolishing the *hukou* system is a measure of tackling inequality, compared to 45.5. of others. On this question, the wage and wealth ladder response patterns are convergent: 39.4 for the top wage bracket, 46.3 for the bottom bracket; 52.3 for the top wealth bracket, and 44 for the bottom. A piece of complementary information is the response pattern regarding the Adam Smith question: a third of party members (including youth league) agree, similar to non-party members. Roughly a third disagree in both groups, compared with 61.5 percent of democratic party members who disagree. That means party membership does not differ from the majority views. This is also reflected in how party members assign themselves to the wage and wealth ladder, with no significant differences.

In a nutshell, all these observations reveal two larger patterns: First, a trend towards social paternalism on part of more privileged groups (economically or politically), and second, on part of the less advantaged groups a preference for self-reliant economic activities. Social status matters for policy preferences, but the less advantaged do not mainly see the responsibility of the government in dealing with inequality. Let us look at the impact of social status on response patterns from a broader perspective.

Social status and perceptions of own position

The data seem to show a society that mostly relates the distribution of wealth to effort and performance. We can check this in a different approach which explores whether social status correlates with how the respondents view their position in the wage and wealth ladder. One revealing result shows up when we consider how the level of education is reflected in the responses to questions 11 and 12.

As we would expect, in the wage ladder the bottom bracket (< 20 percent) is the largest for the group with only an elementary school education. However, the size of that group hovers at about 10 percent across all groups, hence there is no discernible impact on the level of education. On the other hand, there is a 'middle class' pattern in the sense that the share of respondents locating themselves in the 50 percent top bracket is increasing with the level of education. But those who locate themselves in the bottom 30 percent bracket include relatively high shares in the middle school and vocational education level (18.5 and 19.4 percent), compared with 29 percent of elementary school education. An intriguing observation is that the one percent top bracket is most visible in a low level of education (4.5 percent lower middle school).

The picture is more diversified in the wealth ladder. For example, the bottom bracket is led by the undergraduate degree group (32.1 percent), but still, 19.1 percent of the elementary school group express the same location. The middle-class effect is less pronounced: The share is highest on medium levels of education, and almost the same for the lowest (24.2 percent) and the highest (24.5

percent). The top one percent bracket is in line with the level of education, but again the bottom thirty bracket is spread evenly across the levels of education.

In sum, we do not see a clear pattern of relating education with the ladders of wages and wealth. This seems to indicate a society with relatively low barriers to social mobility in terms of economic indicators of status. Lowly educated people do not predominantly locate themselves in the lowest brackets, and often even see themselves in the top brackets. This is most evident in the bracket of the top twenty percent, which is filled on all levels of education, without a clear correlation, and 14.6 percent of the lowest level in the top twenty wage bracket and 22.5 percent in the top twenty wealth bracket, which does not depart substantially from the other levels of education.

Apart from education, a key question regarding the interaction between social status and economic position is the *hukou* system, including the more fine-grained distinction between native villagers and the rest of the population. Indeed, there are no respondents in the top wage bracket that have no *hukou*, which, however, is no surprise, because it is easy to get *hukou* if a person is wealthy. What is more remarkable is that the middle-class threshold is the same independent of registration status and that there is no significant difference between *hukou* holders and non-*hukou* holders as far as the share of bottom brackets is concerned. Clearly, the status of native villagers conveys advantaged, as their share in the top twenty bracket is the largest, and the share in the lowest, the smallest. This is also salient when considering wealth: More than fifty percent of native villagers assign themselves to the three top brackets. Interestingly, *hukou* in general makes no difference as respondents with *hukou* have the lowest share in the three top brackets. They also have a higher share in the two bottom brackets.

Is differential registration status reflected in response patterns to critical questions such as question 16, asking for the expectations of consequences of growing disparities? 61.3 percent of migrants without *hukou* expect social unrest, but only 48 percent of native villagers do. Yet, 67.2 of the latter expect that people's happiness will decline, compared to 52.8 percent of migrants without *hukou*. Migrants in general (with *hukou* even more pronounced, 63.1 percent) expect more often more rigid stratification, matched with the stronger belief of native villagers that entrepreneurial motivation will intensify (52.7 versus 39.4 percent) and expecting more often higher economic growth (63.2 versus 43.4).

We learn that neither *hukou* nor education create substantial and systematic differences in response patterns regarding the assessment of wealth. We surmise that this further vindicates the conclusion drawn in the section on policy preferences: Both categories do not seem to impact strongly on how respondents locate themselves on the wage and wealth ladders.

Remarkably, a different picture emerges once we compare these results with the data for the different subethnic groups. Two observations loom large. In the wage ladder, more than fifty percent of Guangfu locate themselves in the top three brackets, whereas most of the other groups concentrate in the medium bracket. Hakka and even more so, 'others' have a relatively higher share of respondents in the bottom brackets. In the wealth ladder, however, this picture needs modification. Here, Chaoshan people and Hakka surpass Guangfu in their share of the top three brackets. The 'other' category fares worst in their share of almost fifty percent in the lowest brackets, although there are also high shares for the other groups. In other words, the middle-class effect is much less visible than in the wage ladder: Apart from Guangfu people (36.8 percent), all groups hover around only 20 percent.

A very interesting pattern emerges when we look at the Adam Smith question: A whopping 58 percent of Guangfu respondents reject this. In comparison, Chaoshan tend much more to be affirmative (in total, about 46 percent). The Guangfu status also reveals significant differences in other questions. A most interesting question refers to judging the consequences of growing disparities. Whereas the other groups expect growing educational inequality (61.2 percent of Chaoshan, for example), only 27 percent of Guangfu agree. A similar discrepancy emerges when considering expectations of social unrest: Only 32.5 percent of Guangfu mention this, but, for example, 56.1 percent of Chaoshan, matched by the observation that significantly fewer Guangfu people expect more rigid stratification of society (while also mentioning more often that the average wage will decline, 57 percent compared to, for example, 34.1 of Chaoshan). This picture continues: A remarkable 84 percent of Guangfu people expect a decline in people's welfare, whereas the other groups stay in the 50 percent range. They also significantly express more often the expectation that entrepreneurial motivation will strengthen, and that economic growth will accelerate. Both Guangfu and Hakka differ from others in expecting less often growth in material consumption.

The subcultural differences are also salient in the policy preferences. Regarding demands directed at SCs (question no 17), Guangfu respondents express significantly less often preferences for infrastructure and amenities, whereas they are in favour of offering more health services and facilities for the elderly (for the former, 67.9 percent compared to 51.6 percent of Chaoshan; for the latter, 62.2 percent compared to, for example, 47 percent of Chaoshan). Guangfu respondents mostly reject higher taxes for the wealthy (67.9 percent) but endorse poverty relief (58.9 percent) and expanding the *dibao* system (77.7 percent). Compared to others, they do not strongly endorse integration of rural and urban institutions (42 versus 61.1 percent of Hakka). Although in many other respects the subgroups do not differ substantially, these observations still suggest rather different social ecologies of the subgroups (see section 4).

Personal features: Age, gender, family status

Another important question is whether there are generational differences in basic attitudes toward wealth, success, and happiness. We look at the two groups younger than thirty years and elder than fifty years. On happiness, more younger respondents (38.4 percent) than older (29.4 percent) think that material wealth is not happiness, whereas the reverse holds for leisure time (35.6 versus 46.8 percent). 47.8 percent of the young regard leisure as very important for happiness. On appropriate work, differences are also evident, with 42.2 percent of the young versus 33.07 of the old deeming it as irrelevant. Remarkably, this difference is more pronounced when it comes to values and beliefs: Only 29.3 percent of the young deem it irrelevant, compared to 47 percent of the old. More than 54.5 percent of the young think that having values and beliefs is very important for happiness. If we consider that the two groups do not differ much in other respects, such as a stable social environment, the data appear to reveal a transition to post-material values.

There are also generational differences when it comes to assessing the consequences of growing disparities of wealth: more young than old expect growing inequality of educational opportunities (57 versus 38.2 percent). The same applies to expectations of social unrest (59.5 versus 35 percent). Interestingly, more old people 72.8 percent) than young people (58.9 percent) expect that overall happiness will decline, which matches with a smaller, though the discernible difference in expecting a hardening of social classes. At the same time, the younger, the more often respondents expect that disparities drive economic growth. A majority of old respondents (68.1 percent) expect that disparities will increase the divorce rate, compared to 42.6 percent of the young).

Considering how the two groups see indicators of success, the young still appreciate money and housing, with the same level of rejection, though a smaller, yet still large proportion of the young deem it as very important (45.5 compared to 57.1 percent). The generations do not differ in terms of other key conventional criteria, especially family and education, or social recognition and connections. In other words, on the one hand, the young generation still accepts the same criteria for 'success' as the old generation, but they tend towards post-material values showing a growing dissociation between 'success' and 'happiness'. In assessing these differences, we can also look at generational differences regarding the question of what will determine success in the next ten years.

The age groups do not differ substantially regarding the role of improving oneself, whereas family matters more for the younger ones, that is below forty years of age. At the same time, however, the share of those who deem family as not important is the highest for the youngest group (38.1 percent), compared to only 18.12 among the 30–39 year group. On the support of the unit, we observe again the trend towards decreasing significance with age. There are some distinct patterns, such as that the role of the economic environment is judged as not important (48.4 percent) by respondents in their forties.

Generational differences may relate to differences in family status, as in Chinese society the traditional pattern still holds sway regarding marital status and having children as the standard beyond a certain age. This is clearly manifest in the surprising observation that about 50 percent across all age groups and more than 50 percent of the unmarried express the view that shareholding cooperatives should engage in marriage brokering.

When considering factors of success, there is some impact on family status. Improving oneself is considered as very important for 68.8 of the non-married, but only for 37.5 percent of married with children. A similar but even more pronounced change can be observed when it comes to support by the 'unit', with 52.8 percent of the non-married deeming it as very important, but only 6.25 percent of the married with children. A whopping 50 percent of the latter even say that it is not important. Apart from the divorcees, the strong importance of family support is endorsed by all groups, with the non-married even leading the pack. This certainly reflects that 'family' traditionally includes a strong role of the parental part.

An interesting observation is that gender does not matter in many dimensions of the survey. One important observation is that women and men do not differ much in assessing their position on the wage and wealth ladders. Almost 30 percent of women count themselves in the bottom layer, compared to about 20 percent of men, but the numbers converge for wealth. Regarding opinions about future determinants of success, women and men display only a few and small differences. We observe some differences in other respects. Regarding past indicators of success, women (56.7) tend to emphasize money and housing more than men (42.45). This relates to the observation that more women (44.1 percent) than men (34.9 percent) regard material wealth as a factor of happiness (a larger difference than other factors). There is an interesting correlation in question 16 about the expected consequences of growing disparities: 60.2 percent of women expect that material consumption will further be accentuated, compared to 46 percent of men. Opinions on family, education, and most other items do not differ much, with minor exceptions such as on social status, where the sexes converge in the affirmative, but more women (34.2) than men (26 percent) regard this as irrelevant. In sum, gender differences appear to reflect the role of materialist values in the marriage market, with women tending to be more appreciative of the relative material status of partners.

5. Discussion

In trying to generalize our observations, we start from the fact that the subgroup level offers a much more differentiated and often clear-cut pattern than the total sample. This is what we should expect, as the groups often live in very different social ecologies. These can matter much more for the responses than the perceived individual position on the wage and wealth ladder. This is remarkable because the implication is that we cannot simply conclude from the income and wealth statistics on societal repercussions, such as demands directed at the government, or social unrest. This is accentuated by the observation that the wealth and the wage ladder results often do not converge. This is already true for the self-assessment. In both ladders, respondents perceive a much less unequal distribution than is commonly asserted by objective statistical analysis (however, we can only refer to other surveys and have no access to the local situation). This especially applies to the wealth distribution, which is, however, two peaked: The middle ground is larger in the perceived wage distribution. When pondering the reasons, it is worthwhile to look at the subgroup level. Most interestingly, we noticed that subethnic identity matters, where Guangfu respondents assigned themselves to the top league in wages, but significantly less so in wealth.

The distinction between the subethnic groups identified in the survey can be roughly described as follows:

- Guangfu people are historically the dominant native group with a migration history reaching far into the past. Local elite families mainly were recruited from them, and many families were landowners before 1949.

- Hakka moved to the region much later, which resulted in marginalization, eventually culminating in the Hakka wars of the 19th century. Therefore, Hakka still form distinct villages and *shequ* communities up until today.
- Chaoshan mostly migrated to Shenzhen after 1978, hence did not belong to land-owning groups. However, they were very successful entrepreneurs, eventually dominating areas such as real estate or electronics trade.
- The 'other' group includes immigrants from all over China, mostly arriving after 1978.

It is important to notice that the category 'native villagers' include more Guangfu and Hakka relative to non-villagers.

Now, given these differences, it is straightforward to explain why the wage and wealth ladder self-assignments differ. Guangfu, as the majority population with a long standing in the region, tends to dominate employment in corporations and government, also building on many regional networks, especially including Hong Kong. After collectivization in the 1950s, they lost their landed wealth and other assets. However, this is different from the 'native villagers', who retained control of collective land, including lower stratum Guangfu in recent times. This is what transpires in the data, as native villagers classify themselves as wealth holders. In contrast, after 1978 the Chaoshan people accumulated new wealth in entrepreneurial activities. We also need to consider that when inquiring about wealth, respondents may also include property held at their native places: A Chaoshan immigrant may classify him- or herself as below top wage earners, but still may own substantial real estate at the native place, accumulated and invested by savings over the decades. The Guangfu/others distinction matters much for the perception of wealth, as we have seen. Guangfu have a distinct view on wealth disparities, since they emphasize more the inherent stability of the prevailing institutional structures (for example, they expect much less impact on educational inequality and incidences of social unrest), while regarding a stable social environment as less important for happiness than other groups. Guangfu also pay more attention to stable employment as a factor of happiness, and they appreciate attaining a recognized social position.

Another important insight emanating from our discussion confirms Martin K. Whyte's results. This is partly reflected in the self-assessment: Although we do not know the true distribution of wealth and wages, we get the familiar, probably even pronounced result that people's perceptions cannot match with any true distribution, as the aggregate result is biased towards the higher brackets. If people see themselves in a better position than warranted, this has real consequences on their behaviors. We diagnosed the clear pattern that the bottom strata in urban villages endorse various kinds of policies that would improve the environment for business. This reflects optimism about the opportunities for climbing up the socioeconomic ladder.

We have also seen that generational change is underway, with the young tending towards post-materialist values. However, at the same time, we also recognize that the young keep loyal to key values such as regarding family that are endorsed by the elder generation. This also explains different expectations regarding the consequences of economic dynamics for society: The elderly are more pessimistic as far as general societal conditions are concerned, presumably because traditional structures are threatened, for example, as possibly transpiring in the assessment of disparities and people's happiness.

An intriguing observation on post-materialism emerges when we consider the native villagers as a distinct group. Native villagers differ substantially from immigrants, both with and without *hukou*, in displaying a pronounced stance towards post-materialism. When it comes to the meaning of 'happiness' (question 8), more than fifty percent of villagers think that material wealth is unimportant, compared to 24.6 and 29.5 of the others. Similarly, only 26.7 percent regard leisure time as unimportant, compared to 46.0 or 44.1 of the other groups. Having beliefs and values is seen as unimportant by only 19.6 percent of villagers, but 32.5 and 35.4 percent by the other groups. This picture is confirmed by judging the indicators of success (question 9), where villagers treat money and real estate much lower than other groups ('unimportant' is chosen by 24.5 percent, compared to 34.1 and 48.6 percent of others. But this difference is also similar when it comes to family life. Interestingly, there are also distinct differences regarding social factors. Native villagers do not emphasize social status and recognition but treat social connections ('guanxi') as a priority ('unimportant' only 11.8 percent, compared to 41.2 and 30.4 of others).

In sum, what emerges is a complex interaction between social ecologies, perceptions of wealth, and values that defies simple categorizations. Perhaps the distinct results for the villagers reflect the fact that they have occupied higher levels of wealth distribution via their privileged access to land, less dependent on employment. In general, immigrants tend towards a more performance-oriented and materialist approach to wealth and success. Yet, other factors seem to run orthogonal to this simple distinction, for example, age, where the young combine post-materialist stances with a traditional conception of family and society.

6. Conclusion

Our study is only a first step towards a better understanding of wealth disparities in urban villages. Shenzhen is a special case, though featuring general characteristics shared by other places, such as business dynamics and domestic immigration. However, the peculiar role of urban villages and the regional migration pattern, in the long run, create a truly distinct environment. Many of our results point to the need to dig deeper using qualitative research; the hybrid nature of our survey may be a drawback for reaching more substantial insights on motivations and values, especially when it comes to issues such as social identity. On the other hand, we also learn that improving the representativeness of the sample (even concerning Shenzhen) would not necessarily strengthen the validity of our results, The reason is the contingency and contextuality of individual perceptions as embedded in group-specific local structures. As Zhou and Jin point out (Zhou & Jin, 2018), for assessing social dynamics, minority positions may often matter essentially, if those groups are more ready to mobilize or have an impact on society.

Our study vindicates key insights of the general literature on perceptions of inequality and demand for redistribution. There is the standard result that many individuals judge their position as better than warranted by objective data, which is reflected in a complex picture regarding the preferences for government intervention: The poor do not seem to be unequivocal supporters of redistribution. At the same time, social status matters. An intriguing result of our study that introduces new aspects in the general debate is, that straightforward indicators of status do not have the expected strong impact on perceptions, such as education or party affiliation as indicating socio-political status. Instead, the highly localized and historically contextualized status of subethnic identities is more salient. This points to the need to historicize research on perceptions of inequality, as is also salient when comparing East and West Germany (Schneider, 2012).

One important aspect cannot be scrutinized by our survey, also emphasized by Zhou and Jin: Demand for redistribution is influenced by attitudes towards the government. If people do not trust the government, they may not expect beneficial outcomes of enhancing redistributive interventions. In the Chinese case, the fractal nature of this effect is significant, displaying differences between central and local government. In our case, this is intricate because 'local' is an ambiguous category. Mostly, 'local' would refer to Shenzhen municipality vis-à-vis central government, but we add the distinction between municipality and SC. In future research, the confidence of local residents in those various political entities warrants attention.

Certainly, we cannot generalize our results even for Shenzhen, let alone China. In fact, we just explored what the 2500 individuals we interviewed think, evaluate, expect, and hope regarding inequality in their local context. Yet, the general demographic characteristics of our sample reflect the social conditions in urban villages, and so we get a rare glimpse of their life worlds.

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Appendix: Questionnaire

问卷编号：________

哈尔滨工业大学深圳校区社会实践

尊敬的居民：

您好，我们是"哈尔滨工业大学深圳校区"暑期社会实践团队。本次调研是想了解居民在社区的生活情况，为深化社区改造提供客观依据，丰富深圳城中村相关理论，希望各位居民朋友能够予以支持。本次调查资料只做研究之用，对于各位的回答，我们将严格保密。请您根据自己的实际情况如实填写。

谢谢您的合作！

哈尔滨工业大学深圳校区社会实践团队

2021 年 5 月 05 日

第一部分

0. 您住在哪个社区？(you are from which shequ?)

A.凤凰村 Fenghuang B.下沙村 Xiasha C. 皇岗村 Huanggang D. 沙嘴村 Shuiwei E. 沙嘴村 Shazui

1. 您的性别？ Your gender?

A.男 male B.女 female

2. 您的年龄段？ Your age?

A.20 岁以下 B.20-29 岁 C.30-39 岁 D.40-49 岁 E.50-59 岁 F. 60 岁及以上

3. 您的婚姻状况？ Your family status?

A.未婚 not married B.已婚 married C.离异 divorced D.同居 cohabitation E.已婚有子女 married with children F.未婚有子女 not married with children G.其他__other

4. 您的学历？Your education?

A.文盲 illiterate B.小学 elementary school C.初中 lower middle school D. 高中/中技校/职高 higher middle school / technical middle school / vocational high school

E.大专 College F.大学本科 Bachelor G.研究生及以上 Postgraduate

5. 您的身份？ Your residential status?

A 外来移民(有户口）migrant with hukou B 本地村民 native villager C 外来移民(无户口) migrant without hukou

6 您的政治面貌是？ Your political affiliation?

A 无党派 None B 民主党派 Democratic parties C 共青团员 Youth league D 党员 Communist party

7 属于哪类群体？ Your group?

A 潮汕人 Chaoshan B 广府人 Guangfu (Cantonese) C 客家人 Hakka D 其他 ________other

第二部分

8.您觉得什么是幸福？What is happiness? （**请在您认为的重要程度下打勾，**1-5 重要程度逐渐提升，5 最重要）

因素 重要程度	1	2	3	4	5
A 拥有财富					
B 更多的休闲时间					
C 合适的工作					
D 稳定的社会环境					
E 拥有信仰和价值观					
F 美满的家庭					
G 平等的社会					
H 做一个成功人士					

9.您觉得过去十年，具有以下哪些因素可以称为成功？In the past ten years, which

items define ‘success’?（**请在您认为的重要程度下打勾**，1-5 重要程度逐渐提升，5 最重要）

因素 重要程度	1	2	3	4	5
A 有钱有房					
B 家庭美满					
C 有高学历					
D 当领导					
E 有朋友					
F 有社会关系					
G 有社会地位					
H 被很多人崇拜					

10.您觉得在接下来的十年，什么可以帮助成功？In the coming decade, what will help to be successful?（**请在您认为的重要程度下打勾**，1-5 表示重要程度逐渐提升，5 是最重要）

因素 重要程度	1	2	3	4	5
A 关系					
B 家庭支持					
C 好的工作机会					
D 社会环境					
E 经济环境					
F 创业精神					
G 团队的支持					
H 运气					
I 自我的提高					

第三部分

11.您觉得您的工资属于您所在社区的哪个层次？ To which level in your shequ would you assign your own wage?

A 前 1% ☐ B 前 10☐ C 前 20☐ D 前 ☐% ☐后 30% ☐后 20%

12.您觉得您的财富（固定资产、金融资产或其他形式财富）属于您所在社区哪个层次？ To which level in your shequ would you assign your own wealth (real capital, financial capital and other assets)?

A 前 1% ☐ B 前 10☐ C 前 20☐ D 前 ☐% ☐后 30% ☐后 20%

13.您觉得您所在社区前 10%的富裕阶层的财富占整个社区财富的比例是多少？What do you guess is the share of the top ten percent of the wealthy in your shequ in total wealth?

A 前 20% B 20-40% C 40-60% D60-80% E80%以上

14.在下个十年社区的人变富是由哪些因素决定？In the coming decade, which factors will determine the increase in individual wealth?（您认为的 5 个因素）

A 能力/才能 Skills, capacities **B** 运气 luck **C** 投机取巧 smart grasp of opportunity **D** 勤奋工作 hard work **E** 社会关系 Social connections **F** 更多就业机会 more job opportunities **G** 国内外经济环境 the domestic and international environment **H** 疫情影响 The pandemic **I** 科技发展 Technological change **J** 政策影响 Political factors

第四部分

15.您同意下面的观点吗？财富越多，意味着？On which you agree: More wealth means what?（您认为的 5 个选项） Choose 5 items

A 拥有更多的社会资源 Command more social resources **B** 拥有更多房子车子 Own more money and cars **C** 拥有更多存款 Have more savings **D** 越健康 more healthy **E** 给孩子提供更好的教育 Provide better education for children **F** 可以让父母有更好的生活 Provide better life for parents **G** 可以奢侈消费 Enjoy more luxurious consumption **H** 可以有很多时间做想做的事情 Have more time to do what one wants **I** 可以违规而不受惩罚 Break rules without punishment **J** 可以有更好的婚姻 Enjoy better marriage opportunities **K** 更显著的社会分

化 more significant social divisions

16.如果财富分化越来越严重的话，您认为会对社会产生什么影响？（您认为的 5 个影响）If wealth disparities grow, what are the consequences for society? (Choose 5 items)

A 教育的不公平 Unequal education **B** 社会动荡 Social unrest **C** 全民幸福感下降 Decline of people's sense of happiness **D** 阶层固化 more rigid stratification **E** 更强的创业动机 Strengthen entrepreneurial drive **F** 更高的经济增长 higher rate of economic growth **G** 更自由的市场环境 More open markets **H** 更极端的物质消费 Intensification of material consumption **I** 更高的离婚率 higher rates of divorce **J** 更低的平均工资 Lower average wage

第五部分

17.您觉得社区股份合作公司应在哪些方面提供更多支持？(您认为的 5 个选项) Which kind of support should shareholding cooperatives lend? (choose five items)

A 公共基础设施（公园、公厕等） Public infrastructure (parks, public toilets etc.) **B** 生活环境 amenities **C** 商业合作机会 Business cooperation opportunities **D** 创业环境 entrepreneurial environment

E 工作机会 job opportunities **F** 学习机会 educational opportunities **G** 医疗设施 health services **H** 养老设施 facilities for the elderly **I** 借贷便利 better access to loans **J** 婚姻嫁娶 Marriage brokering

18.您觉得当地政府应该在财富分配方面做出什么努力吗？（您认为的 5 个选项） Which efforts should government spend on wealth disparities?

A 提高富人纳税额 Increase taxes on the rich **B** 提高贫困补助金 Increase poverty relief **C** 给相对贫困人口创造更多的就业机会 create more jobs for the poor **D** 提高城乡低保补助 Increase dibao payments **E** 创造同等的子女就学机会 Equalize educational opportunities for boys and girls **F** 提高最低工资标准 Increase minimum wage **G** 城乡公共服务一体化 Integrate urban and rural public services **H** 提高基础设施投资 Increase investment in infrastructure **I** 扶持创业企业 Support establishment of business **J** 取消户口 abolish hukou

19.有人说商人获得高额回报是合理的，因为他们的生意使多数人受益。您认为？ Some people say that it is reasonable for businesspeople make more profit because their business creates benefit for most people. Your opinion?

A 强烈不赞同 B 不赞同 C 不确定 D 赞同 E 强烈赞同

Sonderforschungsbereich/Transregio 294

STRUKTURWANDEL DES EIGENTUMS

Motivated by our empirical research on an urban village in Shenzhen, China, the paper introduces the distinction of three modes of appropriation: property, possession, and ownership. In the land regime of urban villages, we observe significant family resemblances with conditions in Late Imperial China, which we characterize as 'state-centred legal pluralism'. In state-centred legal pluralism, customary law co-exists with state law, with significant deviations, including illegality; yet the state recognizes customary law as a legitimate concern. A similar constellation characterizes the urban villages, such as in the so-called 'small property housing' phenomenon. Our three-modal approach explains the complex institutional dynamic of forms of appropriation that emerge under state-centred legal pluralism In particular, we distinguish between statist property and contractual property, resulting in the inversion of the classical Polanyian approach to embeddedness: contractual property (without legal property title) is embedded in structures of social capital (kinship groups and the associated shareholding cooperatives) and thereby enables market exchange by contracting, whereas statist property (with legal title) manifests social and political orders beyond the market. We track the current evolution of modes of appropriation, which result in the emergence of a capitalist real estate sector based on state ownership of land, after nationalization of formerly collective property, with shareholding cooperatives as one of the key players.

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