Stories from Beijing

Memoirs of an Unpaid Intern

Andrew Heo
Fall 2017

Table of Contents

Foreword……..…(3)

Introduction……(4)

Dongcheng: China's Cultural Treasures……(6)

Xicheng: The Foundation of Modern China……..(9)

Haidian: Beijing's College Town……(12)

Chaoyang: Beijing's Internationalism……..(15)

Fengtai: Beijing's Inequality……..(17)

Conclusion……(20)

Foreword

If one word can describe the themes of my life over the past few years, it would be *wanderlust*. I describe wanderlust as the search for adventure, the love for the unknown. This drive has taken me to fourteen countries over the past two years. From the salt flats of Potosí to mountain monasteries in Cataluña, from the metropolis of Hong Kong to the catacombs of Paris; I've found funding to go abroad every three months, in hopes of experiencing the diversity of the human experience through immersion in different cultures. Though each country visited presented its own joys and challenges, I've come to develop a particular interest in East Asia. And perhaps no country in the world has captured my interest more in recent years than China, the emerging regional hegemon responsible for so many recent changes in the world.

China came to me as a bit of a paradox. Growing up in Korea, I inherited many cultural values shared by Chinese society. Yet although these two nations share a cultural root belonging to an ancient antiquity, they definitely developed distinct cultures, and have taken radically different trajectories in modern history. Thus China is to me at once a familiar society as well as an entirely foreign one. This, perhaps, is the appeal of China to me. As I explore its foreign culture and learn of its long history, I learn more about my own Korean culture.

Working in the US Dept. of Commerce in the Beijing Embassy this fall, I had the opportunity to explore China from the intersection of foreign affairs, international commerce, and cultural exchange. This memoir will provide an account of my observations and experiences as an intern in Beijing, as well as draw upon my three previous visits to various parts of China. Rather than providing a rigid research paper about Chinese politics and economics, however, I will provide a product that freely documents my personal process of understanding and experience of this city and country. I hope that the readers can join me in exploring a foreign place through the page,s and that they can gain a similar appreciation and understanding of Beijing and China.

Introduction

These days, it's hard not to read about China. It's been a hot topic in debates throughout society, from the recent presidential election to the waning of democracy in the world. And there's a good reason why China makes the headline for so many issues: it's huge. There has never been a country of this size to modernize so quickly and efficiently on its own terms. In a century, China has risen from its semi-colonized weakness to a global power of increasing importance. China's rise should come as no surprise; even Napoleon called it when he said, "China is a sleeping giant. Let her sleep, for when she wakes she will move the world." Its incredible production capacity can single-handedly ruin global industries, such as steel production. The wealth of the rising Chinese middle class, which is now more populous than that of the United States, has attracted thousands of global firms scrambling for market share. It is indeed a country on the rise in a global stage led by an increasingly inward-looking United States.

Most Americans, however, have not been to China. Most Americans also don't have passports or go abroad. Even the few who keep up with global politics only have a limited knowledge of China, mostly through its political or economic dimensions. The fact is, most of us know precious little about this country whose activities will likely be the defining story of the 21st century.

In this memoir I attempt to share my experiences with five particular aspects of Chinese society. The five metropolitan districts of Beijing fortunately offer great vantage points to explore each one. In Dongcheng, one can see the historic sites of Beijing and their role today. Xicheng is the seat of the government of modern China. Haidian is home to most of Beijing's universities. Chaoyang is home to many regional headquarters of the world's largest multinational corporations, as well as all of the embassies of Beijing. Finally, Fengtai is home to many migrants from China's outer provinces.

As a disclaimer, I would like to add that most of the facts stated in this memoir are from both my personal observations and interviews with various people, from local Beijing's to foreigners living in Beijing. As a result, some people may have interpreted the city differently, or may disagree with what I have written. This work is to present my perceptions and cultural analysis as a student exploring a new city, not a product of intense research.

I would like to thank the Rockefeller Center for Public Policy at Dartmouth College for providing both financial and academic support for my trip to China. I would also like to thank my supervisors at the embassy for guiding me through a successful internship. Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge my new friends in Beijing, who made my stay absolutely unforgettable.

Please direct all comments/questions to: andrew.n.heo.19@dartmouth.edu

Dongcheng: China's Cultural Treasures

东城 (dong chung)

Intro

For much of history, China has been the wealthiest, most powerful nation in existence. The two characters composing China's name for itself, 中国, literally mean *central kingdom*, reflecting what it has indeed been for many centuries. Although China experienced sweeping changes and reform over the past two centuries, and no longer is quite the center of the universe, the impressive relics of ancient cultural and political institutions remain throughout the country. Beijing, having been the capital of the Chinese empire for centuries, is home to some of the country's most iconic buildings. Most of these could be found in *Dongcheng*, the district that forms the eastern half of the old city.

Forbidden City

I spent many of my free days visiting these icons. Although visiting temples can be an activity that quickly gets boring, I consider some of these visits as the highlights of my trip. The scale and elegance of some of these buildings were testaments to the importance placed on Beijing for centuries.

The Forbidden City in particular stands out to me. This moat-surrounded complex of hundreds of buildings is perhaps Beijing's most famous icon. All the structures in the City served the royal family in some way, whether it be by housing them or their concubines or by serving a religious function. Since its construction in the 15th century until modern times, it served as the political and ceremonial center of China. In a strict society in which all authority came from the emperor, the importance of the Forbidden City cannot be overstated. It was remarkable that such a large, ancient complex of buildings, as well as many temples and shrines, remained well-preserved in the middle of the city.

Cultural Revolution

Within the finer details of some of these impressive monuments, however, are signs of a dark chapter in China's history. In sites throughout the country in past travels, I saw stone statues of Buddhas without heads, damaged walls, and statues with oddly fresh paint in old temples. Much of the damage, I found out, was due to the Cultural Revolution, a destructive

movement that swept the country in the 1960s. It began with Mao Zedong's declaration of a war on the "four olds": old things, old ideas, old customs, and old habits. The movement, which called for condemnation of "bourgeois values" among other things in a quest to modernize the country, spiraled quickly out of control and became an excuse for senseless violence. The Red Guards, or Mao's student paramilitary masses, wreaked havoc on society by killing millions of teachers and intellectuals and destroying the institutions of tradition, including temples. Many monuments that survived total destruction were often left badly damaged. Fortunately, some of China's political leaders recognized the senselessness in destroying national treasures. Premier Zhou Enlai, in particular, ordered the gates of the Forbidden City closed and sent troops to protect it and other monuments.

Today

Thankfully, this fervor that gripped society eventually faded, and many of these national treasures were restored and officially protected in the following decades. Today they are important sources of national identity and pride for China. Through lobbying efforts, China has dramatically increased the number of UNESCO-acclaimed heritage sites to 52, making it second to only Italy.

These beautiful buildings showcasing China's long history and rich culture have also become key tools in the government's efforts to build a strong national identity abroad. This was particularly obvious in my first trip to China two years ago, when I joined a cohort of American students to attend the modestly named World Internet Conference. The aim of this conference, hosted by China's Cyberspace Administration, was ostensibly to discuss internet issues and policy.

Among the attendees of the conference were several prime ministers, leaders of China's top internet companies, and Xi Jinping himself (the president of China). Although not many representatives of foreign firms were present in the 2015 conference, the CEOs of Apple and Google were among many to attend this year. We attended sessions in which we discussed topics ranging from startups in China to the role of youth in internet. There was also a tech expo, in which many Chinese firms showcased their newest products. This conference was not, as one would expect, held in Beijing or Shanghai or anywhere

particularly relevant for the Chinese internet. Rather, the venue was the ancient water town of Wuzhen, itself in the process of UNESCO recognition, famous throughout China for its traditional beauty.

If this was the government's tactic of making attendees like China more, it certainly worked on me. I was immediately in awe at this town and spent most of the conference not in the conference but outside exploring. Thanks to the government's decision of closing the entire town to visitors for the duration of the conference, I explored the narrow streets and canals of the picture-perfect ancient town devoid of a single selfie-taking tourist to take me back to the 21st century.

Seeing leaders of countries and internet companies from around the world gather in a beautiful small town left an important, unstated message: that the image of modernization need not be necessarily be Western, and that China was determined to have a say in future decisions affecting the international cyber community.

Conclusion

The historical buildings of China will no doubt continue to serve important functions in political processes as the world demonstrates increasing interest in China. For visitors and ordinary people, however, they serve as important reminders of the ancient culture. The traditional magnificence of the Forbidden City, its scars from the Cultural Revolution, and its present-day place in the spotlight of the government's soft power efforts tell us a unique story.

Xicheng: The Foundation of Modern China

西城 (shee chung)

Intro

China today is a one-party state led by the Communist Party of the People's Republic of China (CPPRC). Although there are nominally two streams of power (the state and the party), the party has all the power and essentially is the state; China's army, for example, belongs to the party, not the state. The party controls more aspects of society than any governmental organization I've personally experienced so far. Party members sit on boards of China's biggest firms, private and public, and the party essentially has the final authority in most decisions. As the seat of the party, Beijing enjoys a status of unrivaled supremacy in China. And Xicheng, the municipal district in the center-west of the city right next to Dongcheng, is the home of the party and is at the center of it all.

Xicheng

To ride a bike through Xicheng is to observe some of China's modern history. In this neighborhood, one can find a continuation of neighboring Dongcheng's traditional *hutong* alleys, where longtime residents continue to live with their longtime neighbors. These buildings stand near ultramodern malls and skyscrapers, home to some of Beijing's wealthiest residents. At the heart of it all, however, are the impressively grand Soviet-style buildings of the CPPRC, where officials make decisions affecting all of China's 1.3 billion people. It is these buildings that give Beijingers pride in their choice of residence, and it is these buildings that give this city unchallenged authority in China.

Role in China

As the governing body of China, the CPPRC has led the country through the complicated process of modernization and arguably deserves credit for much of China's prosperity today. Under its often overly watchful gaze, China has made unprecedented progress in poverty alleviation, infrastructure development, literacy rates, economic growth, and others. The use of authoritarian rule to set national priorities and streamline the peoples' efforts and effectively assign the use of resources is not a new tactic. It has been the path to modernization of many countries, especially in Asia, including Korea.

The ideology of the CPPRC, like many other governing bodies, has changed over time. Different leaders have shifted its platforms, setting different trajectories for the nation. Three leaders in particular stand out in the history of the party for their legacy. Under Mao Zedong, the party worked to centralize its leadership in the aftermath of the devastating civil war and forced modernization and "forward-looking" ideologies throughout the country. Some of Mao's particularly disastrous legacies include the death of two million Chinese in the Cultural Revolution and the famine of the Great Leap Forward. Deng Xiaoping, Mao's successor, implemented sweeping changes that partially liberalized the Chinese economy by embracing some free-market policies. This opened much of China's potential and set it on its path for rapid growth. The CPPRC continued to oversee strong growth since Deng, and has recently entered a third chapter with Xi Jinping, in which it has started to utilize its status as a world power. As the current president of China, Xi has actively worked to assume positions of influence recently abandoned by the US under the Trump administration. Under his watch, Chinese foreign policy has shifted from "keeping a low profile" to "striving for achievement." He is, without a doubt, the most powerful Chinese leader in recent decades.

Xi Jinping

One of the reasons I decided to work in the fall as opposed to the traditional off-term of winter was that October 2017 was to be a politically important time in China. That was the month of the 19th Party Congress, a meeting of China's most senior leaders that occurs every five years, in which national strategies are set and the constitution of the CPPRC is amended. What made this one particularly important was the fact that the growing influence of Xi Jinping, China's leader since 2013, would be addressed.

There was a noticeable tense air in Beijing in the days leading up to the Party Congress. The usually lax security guards in subway stations started taking their jobs seriously, my favorite street food stalls disappeared along with some restaurants operating without permits, and internet VPNs, foreigners' lifelines to the free internet, became noticeably slower. Embassies were busy making predictions of results, as they would affect their work.

The results turned out to be as consequential as people guessed them to be. The party voted to add a new principle to the party constitution: the "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era." This small lexical detail had huge implications. The only other leader to have the distinction of having a "thought" added in his name was Mao Zedong. Deng Xiaoping was posthumously awarded the lesser term of "thought", while

Xi Jinping's two predecessors weren't mentioned at all. It was a fitting coronation for a leader that's been cementing power throughout the past few years.

Conclusion

All this certainly made for an interesting week at the embassy. This event was a confirmation that China's trend towards increasing influence in global politics was to continue, and that Xi Jinping would continue to be the face of it. So far, he enjoys widespread popularity. It will be interesting to see his next steps for China, as its new unchallenged leader.

Haidian: Beijing's College Town

海淀 (hi dee an)

Intro

One of the first things I did in Beijing was to find a good social network of people my age. This search led me to Haidian, the municipal district encompassing the northwest of the city. As the home of most of Beijing's universities, among the most prestigious in China, Haidian had the youthful vibrancy of a college town. I spent much of my free time reconnecting with old friends and meeting new ones in Haidian's academic circles. Through many nights spent on friends' campuses and discussions of education and politics, I got acquainted with not only the daily life of a college student in Beijing but also the role of higher education in Chinese society. China's top universities, I realized, were not only centers of education for China's future leaders, but also important tools for its diplomacy.

Higher Education

I had the good fortune of meeting a local public high school student, John, through a free English practice program that I helped at every now and then with my roommate Cole, a student at Beijing Normal University from Georgia. *Higher education* was often the topic of discussion when I conversed with John. Perhaps the most interesting thing I learned was in our first conversation about higher education, when I realized that he was talking about high school. I was surprised to learn that, in this society famous for its emphasis on education, only education up to middle school was free. This, I realized, was a symptom of one of the biggest problems with higher education in China: high demand and few resources.

It's often the case that the sheer number of people in China makes the use of public resources, such as public transportation, something one must fight for. This was certainly the case for quality education in the context of the whole country. Many high school graduates find themselves without a university to attend due to a lack of space, and of the available universities, many are not considered reputable enough to qualify for many jobs. Entrance into the small number of reputable institutions becomes a more stressful ordeal with the National Higher Education Entrance Examination, or the *gaokao*. This 3-day test is the only criteria for entrance to universities. For students not preparing to study abroad, which is the vast majority of Chinese high school students, success on this single test becomes the sole

goal of high school. Students who fail to succeed on this test must try again the next year, or not go to college.

While there are a few vague merits to a test-only admittance system, the harms it imposes upon society severely outweigh any benefits. There is the obvious concern of mental health among high school students in this insanely competitive atmosphere. This system also exacerbates existing socio-economic divides, as high school quality varies by province and are often determined by the tuition. Many of the best high schools in Beijing, administered by its top universities, are extremely expensive. There is also blatant favoritism of students from provinces like Beijing and Shanghai. According to *The Atlantic*, Peking and Tsinghua Universities will take around 80 students per 10,000 Beijing students, and just two from the same number from the pool of students in Guangdong.

Peking University

Although I certainly would not have gained entry to Peking University if I were to have been a local high school student, I was fortunate enough to have made many friends studying abroad there. Spending time with them gave me the opportunity to experience the daily life of a student at China's top university.

Peking University, established in 1898 in the Qing Dynasty, predates modern China. As the first institution of its kind in China, it has been an important center of student movements throughout China's tumultuous 20th century, and certainly has an important place in Chinese history. Mao Zedong learned Marxism in its halls and worked part-time in its libraries; many other co-founders of the communist party are also alumni. Its campus features traditional buildings that serve as a reminder of its long history. Peking University's importance in Chinese society was highlighted on its 100th anniversary, which was celebrated in the Grand Hall of the People, one of China's most important governmental buildings, in the presence of China's top politicians.

To save money, I routinely ate at Peking University's huge cafeterias with my friends. Meals were heavily subsidized, and I would pay about a fourth of the price I would pay for a meal elsewhere. I frequently walked around the beautiful campus filled with traditional buildings with friends on the weekends, and sometimes worked in the libraries. As a friend of foreign students in Peking University, I had access to many of the school's unofficial social functions.

Foreigners studying Abroad

One thing that struck me in my interactions with study-abroad students in Beijing was their sheer number. Universities throughout the city hosted thousands of students from all over the world, from Kenya to North Korea.

Another thing I noted was that very few of them were actually paying for their education in China. Most of the students I met had their expenses paid for by Chinese government scholarships for one-year language or general studies programs. Students in competitive master-degree programs such as the Yenching and Schwarzmann scholars were also common.

Although this could just be a result of the kinds of people I ended up spending time with, I saw China's generosity in scholarships as a way to spread its culture and language as a diplomatic tool to complement its rising political and economic status. A deep understanding of Chinese language and culture is arguably uncommon; hosting thousands of students from all over the world was an effective way to change that.

I witnessed the fruits of this effort in Peking University's international culture fair, where international students set up booths with presentations of their culture, complete with food and drinks. This entirely student-led effort also featured cultural presentations. This was probably my first time seeing something like this that was done not in English. It was truly interesting to see groups of students from all over the world presenting their cultures in Chinese.

Yet this all also highlighted one of China's many contradictions. While thousands of foreign students got an all-expenses paid entrance to China's top institutions for year-long programs, millions of students from rural provinces lacked access to quality higher education at all. It was a prioritization of reputation abroad over the needs of the poor that I came to recognize as a recurring theme.

Conclusion

Regardless of issues of political priorities and societal problems, I saw in Haidian an important step in China's development: the increasing numbers of academic exchange between China and the world. China has long been noted as the upcoming superpower. I believe that the world will be in need of people who understand China on a deeper level, as the world encounters new problems based on China's rise.

Chaoyang: Beijing's Internationalism

朝阳 (chow yang)

Intro

For a country so frequently on the political radar of countries around the world, China is often surprisingly provincial in its culture. Compared to cities around Asia, such as Seoul and Bangkok, where people are in many ways living a globalized lifestyle, Beijing has often demonstrated a lack of cultural integration with the world outside. Here, an Asian person conversing in English on the subway with white people (i.e. me and my coworkers) will never fail to draw many looks of genuine confusion. People often take unsolicited pictures of black and white people walking on the streets. It is rare to find someone who speaks English proficiently in any establishment.

All this, however, is occurring in increasingly lower frequency as the character of Beijing changes to live up to its role as the capital of a country assuming an active role in world affairs. Beijing is interacting more with the outside world, and foreigners are immigrating in search of opportunities. Although Beijing has a long way to go before it can be compared to the likes of New York and Hong Kong in terms of *internationalization*, it is increasingly a city that foreigners can call home. Nowhere was this more evident than in Chaoyang, the district composing the entire eastern half of the city. As the site of international business, diplomatic compounds, and China's largest airport, Chaoyang serves as an important connection to the international community. In many ways, Chaoyang is one of China's many dynamic gateways for new ideas and culture.

Chaoyang

Every weekday morning, I joined the hordes of businessmen coming out of Chaoyang's many subway stations to go to work. As I worked in a particularly international area of Chaoyang—the diplomatic compounds—some of my fellow commuters were not Chinese. On days where I got to work earlier than usual, I saw kids of many different ethnicities entering the school busses of international schools. I spent many nights at Chaoyang's Sanlitun nightlife area, where many foreigners gathered for drinks.

I worked in Chaoyang every day, at the Foreign Commercial Service (FCS) office in the American embassy. As a division of the International Trade Administration of the US Dept. of Commerce, the FCS was tasked with the responsibility to help American companies do

business in China. This included helping them navigate the tough local legislation as well as secure business opportunities. Part of my work included visiting these companies' Beijing offices, such as Caterpillar, for meetings.

Most of the largest foreign companies with operations in China have a large Beijing office, mostly in Chaoyang, to serve the booming local market. Beijing is generally regarded as one of the biggest consumer markets in China, with an increasingly wealthier population. The foreign companies meet the growing market demands for quality goods, because local brands are often distrusted.

Besides access to the market, however, Beijing also offers proximity to the central government. This is an extremely important factor in a country whose government is notorious for being protectionist and having high barriers for foreign companies. Starting a business or opening a local branch in China is a very complicated process that often looks little like doing the same thing in more open countries. Permission to continue operations is contingent on remaining on the good side of the government. It is thus essential to establish a government relations office in Beijing, especially for the big companies who seek government contracts.

Despite the logistical hurdles and frustration that often comes with doing business in China, more and more companies are pouring in to capitalize on the increasingly wealthy, ready-to-spend, huge population.

Conclusion

China's economic ties to the world have brought in not only goods and services but new ideas, cultural practices, and culinary preferences. Especially with widespread use of smartphones and internet, new ideas quickly spread around the world. As is common in countries that developed in recent decades, such as Korea, the lives of China's youth are more closely aligned with those of their counterparts in other nations, more than those of China's elderly.

Yet though the changing lifestyles of China's population is a country-wide phenomenon, it is most evident in the wealthy eastern seaboard. Many people from China's poorer provinces cannot afford to travel abroad or purchase many foreign brands popular in wealthier regions. Thus fluency in foreign languages and cultures as well as choice of clothes is an effective measure of one's status in society. The East's cultural integration with the world makes it an increasingly different place from the China's West. As cities like Beijing and Shanghai become richer, this cultural divide between China's classes may worsen.

Fengtai: Beijing's Inequality

丰台 (fung tai)

Intro

Sitting in the square by the grand gate of the Beijing West Station, one could see thousands upon thousands of people hurrying to leave the capital, or entering it from every corner of the huge country. This train station is a microcosm of China's diverse society, made of 56 recognized ethnic groups who speak hundreds of dialects and languages. Railways are the true veins of China, connecting all of its major cities to its far frontiers, from the southern port of Hong Kong to the western highlands of Tibet. In China, all roads lead to Beijing, the center of its supernetwork of railways. The epicenter of this enormous network is the industrial district of Fengtai, in the south-west of the Beijing municipality.

While many of the trains' passengers enter the capital with plans for a short-term travel, some have come with hopes of a better future. Beijing is a top destination for migrant workers from the impoverished inner provinces seeking to relocate to the country's wealthy eastern seaboard, the source of most of the country's tremendous wealth. Of the millions of these workers who reside within the borders of the municipality of Beijing, many have settled in the district of Fengtai due to its lower cost of living.

Migrant Workers

Beijing's migrant workers, like migrant workers in cities throughout the world, play unglamorous yet essential roles in the local economies. They form the base of the economic structure in Beijing, filling the roles that richer Chinese and Beijing natives will not do. Underappreciated and discriminated against, migrant workers are the cooks, waiters, construction workers, taxi drivers, and the maids in Beijing's society.

Migrant workers and *Beijing native* are actually also technical terms based on the *hukou* system of household registration. People are automatically registered in China's *hukou* system based not on their place of residence or birth, but by the location of the parents' *hukou* at the time of birth. It often becomes the case, then, that one's *hukou* location is their family's hometown, where their grandparents and great-grandparents resided. A child born in Beijing to migrant workers with an inner-province *hukou* will have the inner-province *hukou* as well.

Originally designed in the 50s to keep cities from being overwhelmed by migrants, the *hukou* lives on today as essentially an internal passport system. To live without a Beijing *hukou* in Beijing is to subject oneself to a vast range of discomforts. For one, non-Beijing *hukou* people cannot easily access many of the city's public services, including low-rent housing, and health care. Migrant children cannot access the city's public education system, and instead attend "black schools", which are often unlicensed.Migrants are also not allowed to purchase cars. As one would expect, it is nearly impossible to obtain the Beijing *hukou* registration. A frugal life in Beijing, however, is often better than an impoverished one in rural provinces. And so migrant families stay.

Migrants, out!

Their existence in Beijing, however, is precarious. As people whose claims to life in the capital are illegitimate in the eyes of the law, they understand that there is legal ground for their eviction at any time. Their low status in society often makes them the subject of discrimination as well. However, a far greater threat than social discrimination are government policies.

In November, during my stay in Beijing, one of the largest, most widely-publicized eviction cases happened. A fire occurred in a poorly maintained warehouse-apartment just south of Fengtai, killing 19 migrants, including 7 children. Instead of leading to a government recognition of the plight of migrants, this tragedy in fact made their situation worse. Immediately after the disaster, the city government announced a citywide fire-safety inspection, which was in fact the official excuse for mass evictions. Thousands of migrants throughout the city, including many in Fengtai, had their water and electricity cut off and were given a few hours to leave. The fire was a suspiciously timely event for the government, who had made official plans to cap Beijing's total population to 23 million by 2020. Considering that there are nearly 22 million Beijingers today, meeting that goal would require further eviction of migrants, who have the least power to defend themselves.

Fortunately, this did not go unnoticed in press reports throughout the world. In a rare but powerful sign of solidarity, more than a hundred Chinese intellectuals signed a public petition to urge the municipal government to stop the moral disaster. In it, people recognized the hard work and sacrifice made by the migrant workers, as well as Beijing's obligation to show them gratitude.

Although the government has not made an official statement regarding the outrage, it has waged a silent battle to cover its abuses. Government censors actively blocked many local

news reports and social media posts, and have silently continued with the evictions anyway. As is too often the case in China, the public anger is likely to subside without any material changes to show for itself. Life moves quickly in Beijing, and it is easy to forget events, especially if the government works hard to remove any mention of them online.

Conclusion

As Beijing becomes wealthier and space is placed at ever increasing premiums, it is plausible that the routine eviction of society's most vulnerable would be a common event. It is a sign of the increasing stratification of society, where the rich and poor, the *hukou*-recognized and unrecognized, live in two different worlds. For the sake of future societal peace and order, it will be vital for the government to make structural reforms that address the plight of migrants and the problems of societal stratification at its core, instead of shoving their symptoms out of sight. Migrants, after all, have been vital members of Beijing's history and continue to add to its vibrancy today.

Conclusion

The five districts of Beijing—Dongcheng, Xicheng, Haidian, Chaoyang, and Fengtai—each add unique dimensions to Beijing's dynamic society. It is the city's combination of so many experiences that make it a particularly fun place to visit, as well as to gain an appreciation for what China has become today. Beijing's transformation from an ancient capital to a thriving modern metropolis parallels the incredible growth of China itself; this country once bullied by foreign powers is now asserting its wealth and power to the world.

As the world shifts its eyes to China, however, it is important to remember that China consists of more than a big economy and a tough government. It is also important to remember that China is more than just Beijing and Shanghai. It is a huge country with a long, vibrant history, with a dynamic culture featuring hundreds of peoples and languages. Each region represents a different experience, and together form the diverse society of China.

The writing of this memoir was a rewarding experience, primarily by helping me to always approach a new situation with curiosity, as well as by helping me to always think deeper about each new experience. I hope that you have learned something about Beijing from this work, and I hope that you venture out to experience it yourself.