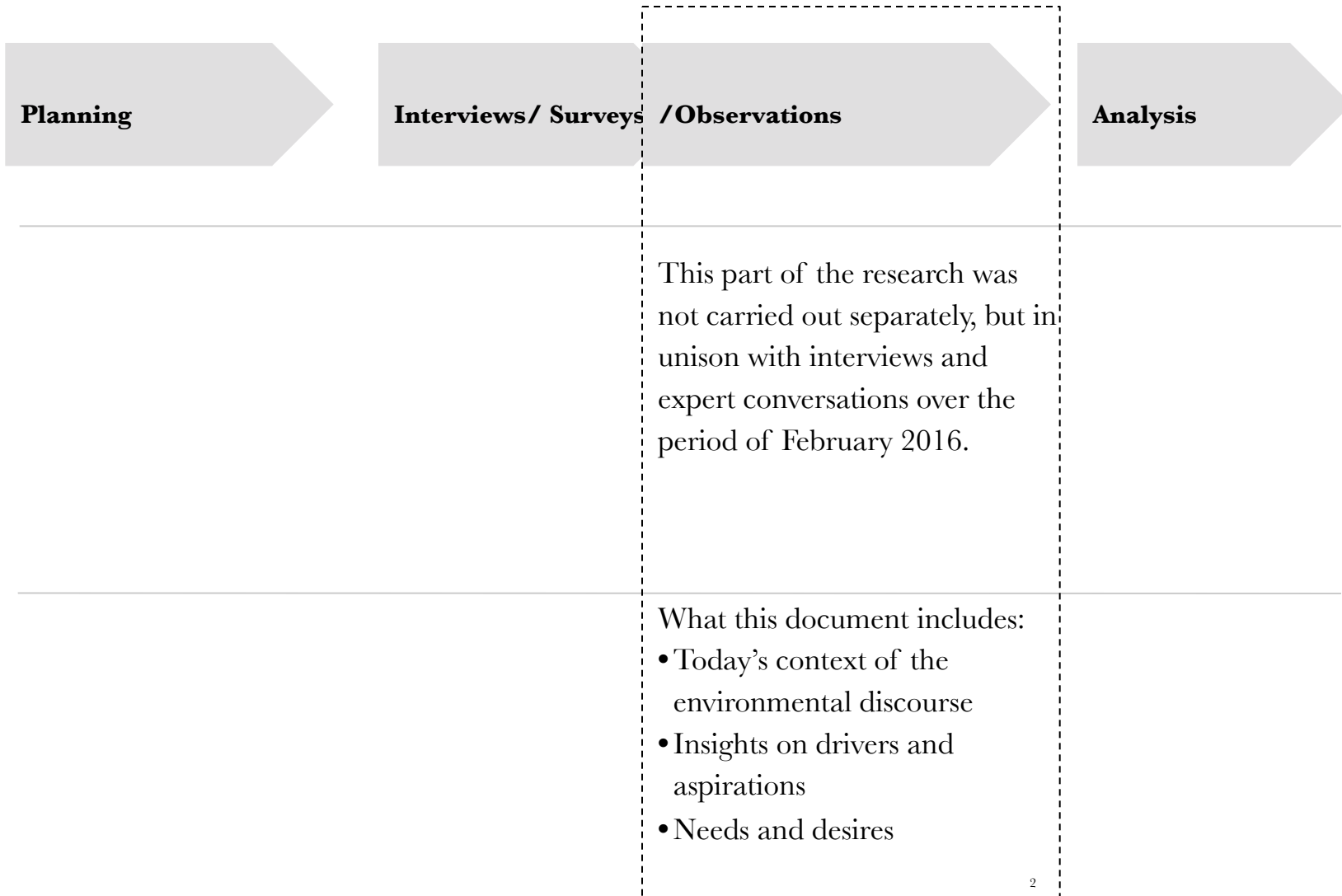




CASPI – Shanghai emerging observations

February 2016

Research components – Where this document fits in



How to read this document

This document provides a flavour of the observations emerging from our China research.

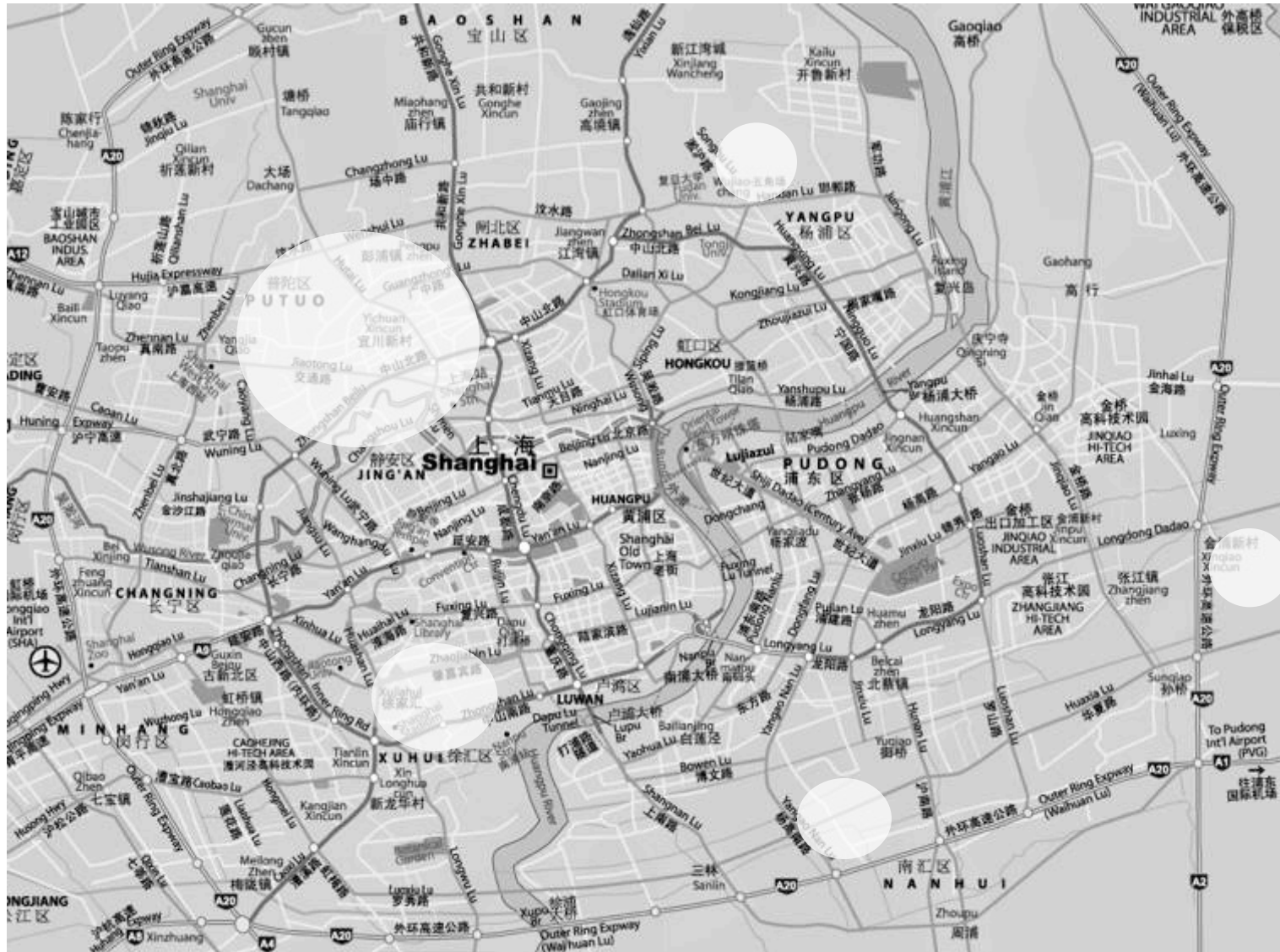
These observations are initial insights that should provide a context to the interviews and surveys conducted in Shanghai, February 2016.

Further reflection time and analysis means these initial insights are liable to be reframed.

Goals:

- To provide a general understanding of where the environmental discourse is at
- To give a context to interviews and surveys conducted in February 2016, Shanghai
- To provide an understanding of the aspirations and desires that govern people's lives
- To provide inspiration for opportunities in which to create and drive more environmentally friendly behaviours

Research locations



Residential buildings we visited



Traditional Longtang houses are communities of interconnected lanes. The number of Longtang houses fell by 60% between 2000 and 2008



Rural houses are found in peripheral pockets of the city. Traditionally components of communities, they are now often seen as standalone houses as communities are dismantled.



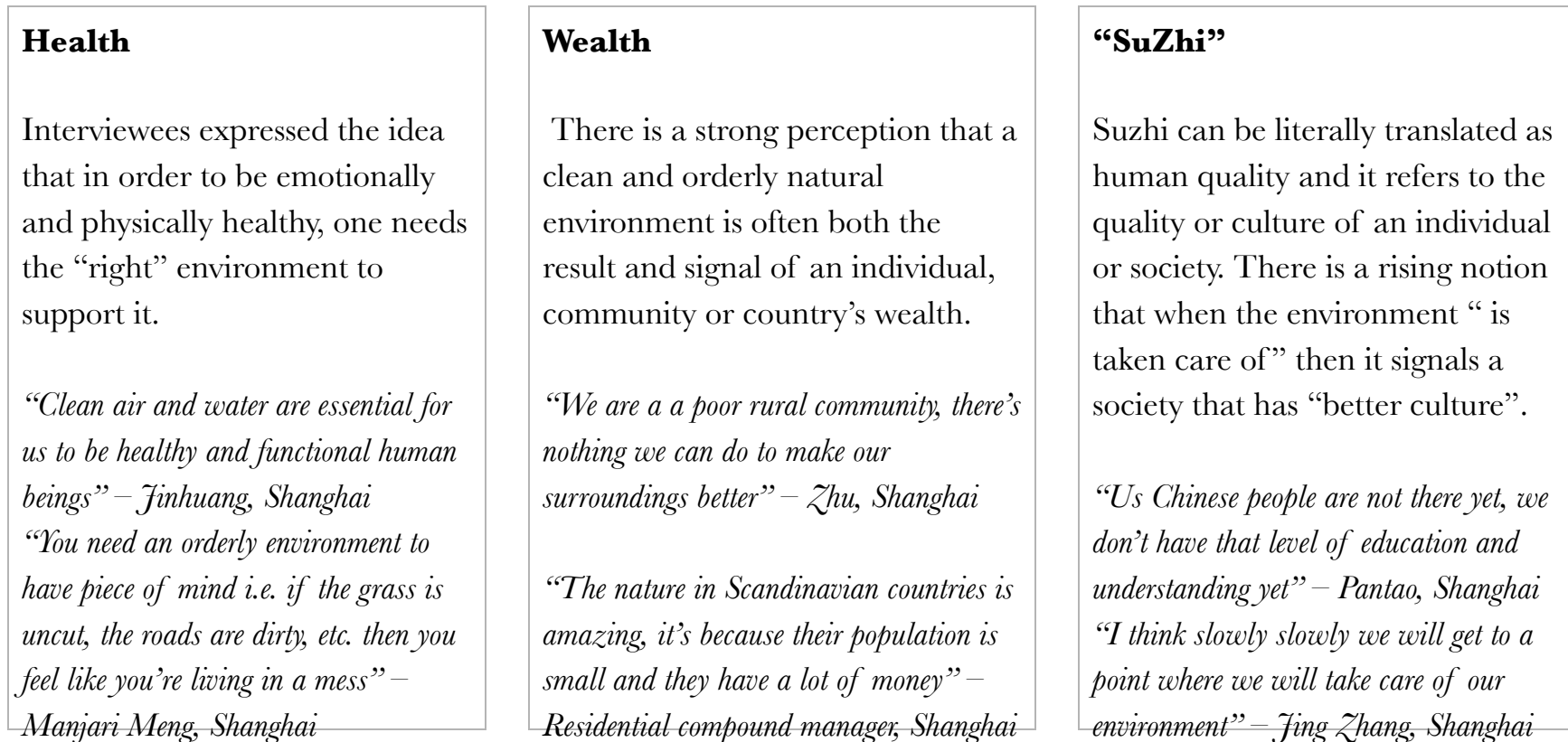
Modern residential blocks are on the constant rise in Shanghai and elsewhere in China.



Farms and communes run by young ex-urbanites

The idea of a “good” environment (环境) is directly linked to being healthy, wealthy and cultured

Environment



There is strong concern over the faith of our environment with air pollution being the biggest source of worry

Whilst there is general concern over the condition and faith of our environment, interviewees specifically mention water and air as resources that are being depleted and polluted.

“Those that can, are leaving the country or sending their children abroad. I have friends and myself included that are trying to do the same thing. It’s unlivable here” – Jing Zhang, Shanghai



An increasing number of international and grass root environmental groups are intervening



“Our events a couple of years ago would only have 10 – 20 people, they are now attended by hundreds” – Nitin, Green Initiatives Founder.



Some residential compounds are adopting experimental projects to become more environmentally friendly. The Liangcheng community in Hongkou district, North East Shanghai, has been part of an “upcycling” project where waste is recycled into new products with a different purpose than the original one.



There are numerous WeChat groups that bring environmentally conscious people together in order to exchange knowledge and tools on how to become more environmentally friendly.

New communities formed by young ex-urbanites are learning and adopting a more environmentally sustainable lifestyle e.g. Chongming Island’s communes.



Renewable energy is where the biggest investments are going

China is world's largest investor in renewable energy

By: Emma Rumney | 31 Mar 16

China blazed ahead of the rest of the world in terms of investment in renewable energy last year, spending a total of \$103bn, or 36% of the world total.



An increasing number of houses in the countryside are installing solar panel systems



Houses we visited in the countryside and on Chongming Island had solar panels. According to a report from GTM Research, China is home to a quarter of

the planet's new energy capacity from solar panels. "The time is right now for solar power on rooftops in China because the cost of putting a system on the roof is becoming much more attractive" (Source: SCMP "China's rooftops hold key to propelling solar power into mass market")

In march 2016, China's State Grid proposed a \$50 Trillion global electricity network to tackle pollution.

Local governments are using media to “educate” citizens on environmentally friendly habits



Regional Zhejiang channel broadcasting a short educational program on the benefits of separating rubbish (e.g. plastic, glass, wet waste etc.) and using the recycling bins usually found in residential compounds.



Message board in a traditional lilong residential compound informing residents on recycling.

However, it is difficult to be environmentally friendly in the age of abundance and convenience

New is always best

Shanghai is in its era of newest, latest and shiniest. The “old” represents the past, whilst the “new” signals for progress. The idea of “reusing” and “recycling” is thus not in tune with the current aspirations.



Accessing the world with a fingertip

Online-to-Offline dominates the market and is transforming lifestyle and consumption behaviours. Food delivery is one example of how eating habits are changing and leading to a huge increase of packaging



Waste means hospitality (and wealth)

Gifting choice and abundance to friends, family and colleagues signals hospitality. This means, for instance, ordering excessive food and drinks during banquets, or purchasing more than what is needed as a way to show respect and hospitality.



In addition, being environmentally friendly is (often) not seen as an individual responsibility...

“I know I should be doing all these things, like saving electricity, water, recycling and so on, but the feeling is that If I’m the only one then there’s no impact” – Lulu, Shanghai

Recycling bins in a large residential compound in Changshou rd., North Shanghai. During the visit, they were mostly empty. The residential compound manager explained residents preferred using the common bins found on each floor because “that’s what everyone does”



... nor is it seen as aspirational



Environmental issues cannot be a topic of conversation

“When I’m with friends, we want to talk about positive and happy things. We would not talk about things like environmental problems because it’s negative” – Lulu, Shanghai

Environmentally friendly behaviours can make you look cheap

“I’d like to be able to do it, but it would just be too embarrassing to bring your own mug or tupperware on a date or work related occasion. They would think you’re cheap” – Veronica, Shanghai

On the other hand, we have also seen young and old adopting environmentally friendly behaviours for non-environment related purposes

Adopting vegetarianism for health reasons

It is increasingly popular to see restaurants offering Vegetarian deals and calling for healthier lifestyles. Chain restaurants like “Pure & Whole” and Wattz offer “Monday vegetarian” 2 x 1 deals.

“Last year I started with being vegetarian one day a week, this year I’m doing two days a week and next year I want to do 3 or 4 days a week (...) I think it’s healthier and it makes me feel better” – Li Li, Shanghai

Learning from religious values

Young urban professionals that seek to mitigate day-to-day stress, have started adopting Buddhist values to live a happier life.

“My mom is a very devoted Buddhist, but I never paid too much attention to it whilst growing up. Now at the age of 31, I’m finding myself learning from her. Things like minimising meat consumption or learning to be together with nature for example” – Ying Fu, Shanghai

Marking my identity

Many interviewees talk about making changes to their lifestyle and adopting more environmentally friendly behaviours as a result of understanding that these would be coherent with their other aspirations and identity e.g.

“The host family I stayed with taught me a lot such as giving back to the community and being content with less material possessions. After coming back to China, I no longer ordered so much food or bought so many clothes” – Veronica, Shanghai

Sylar, who volunteers for green initiatives, talks about English learning events as the biggest reason why he started engaging with environmental activism. Green Initiatives enables him to feel part of an international community that cares for others



Speaking a language that focuses on selfhood and wellness can therefore help people adopt more environmentally friendly behaviours

Thank You!

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