Stratified lifestyles in urban China

Langyi Tian and Aurelien Boucher

Aug 2019

1 / 15 00:57

Rise of cultural capital and consumer culture in the urban area

- Uneven distributed cultural capital

- Class distinction switching from statutory characteristics to cultural characteristic, from institutional status to "quality" (素质)

- "Quality" and "culture" as shaped residence, education, leisure, consumption and the middle class in the post-Maoist China (Tomba 2010; Anagost 2008).

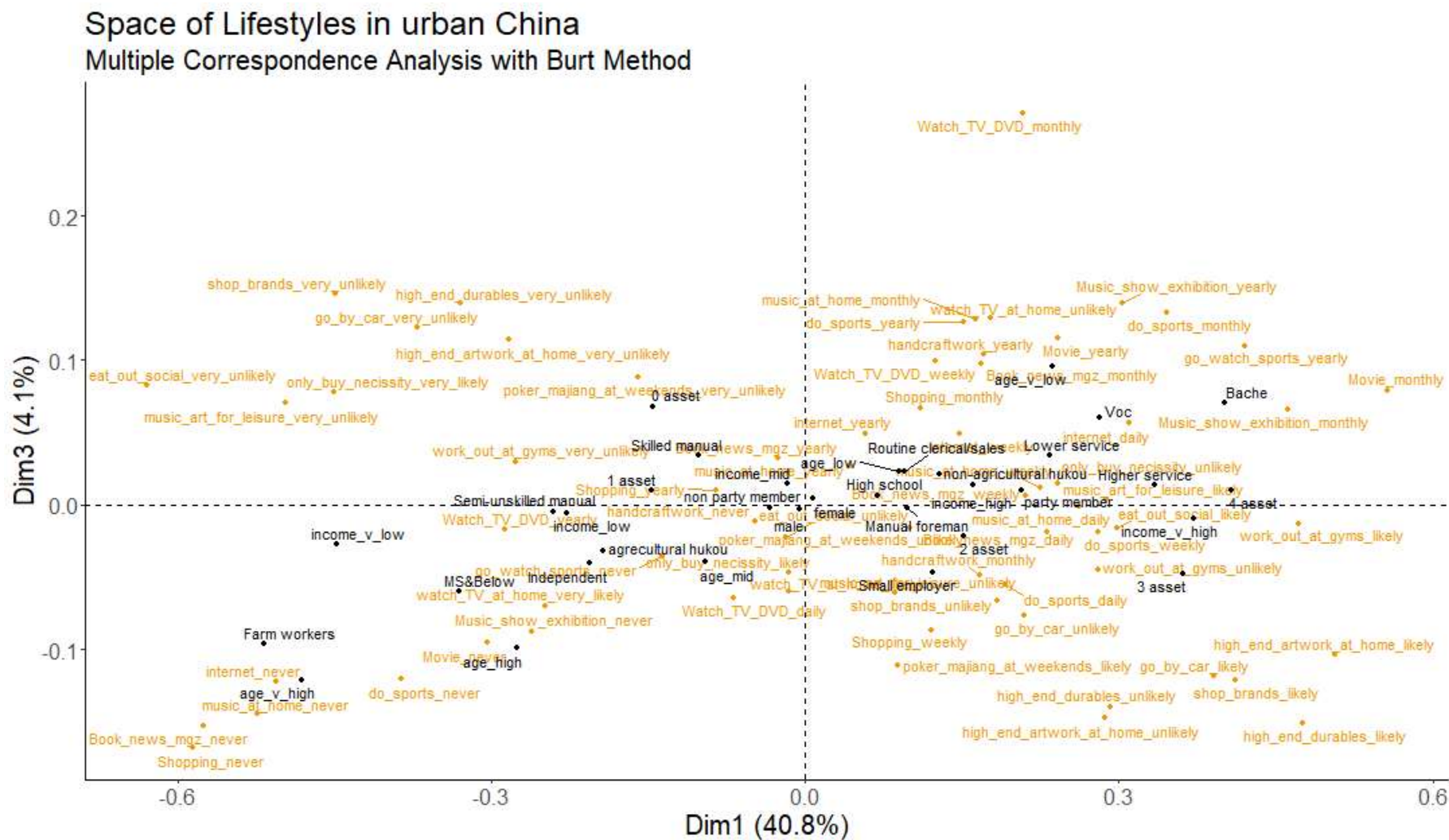# Approaching Social Class with an inquiry on lifestyle

- Depicting how classified and classifying cultural practice shape class distinction in China, and ultimately relate to the perceived social class

- Bourdieu: "Social class is not defined by a property (not even the most determinant one, such as the volume and composition of capital) nor by a collection of properties (of sex, age, social origin, ethnic origin—proportion of black and whites for example, or native/immigrants, income, education level, etc.) nor even by a chain of properties strung out from a fundamental property (position in the chain of production) in a relation of cause and effect, conditioner and conditioned, but by the structure of relations between all the pertinent properties which gives its specific value to each of them and to the effects they exert on practices".
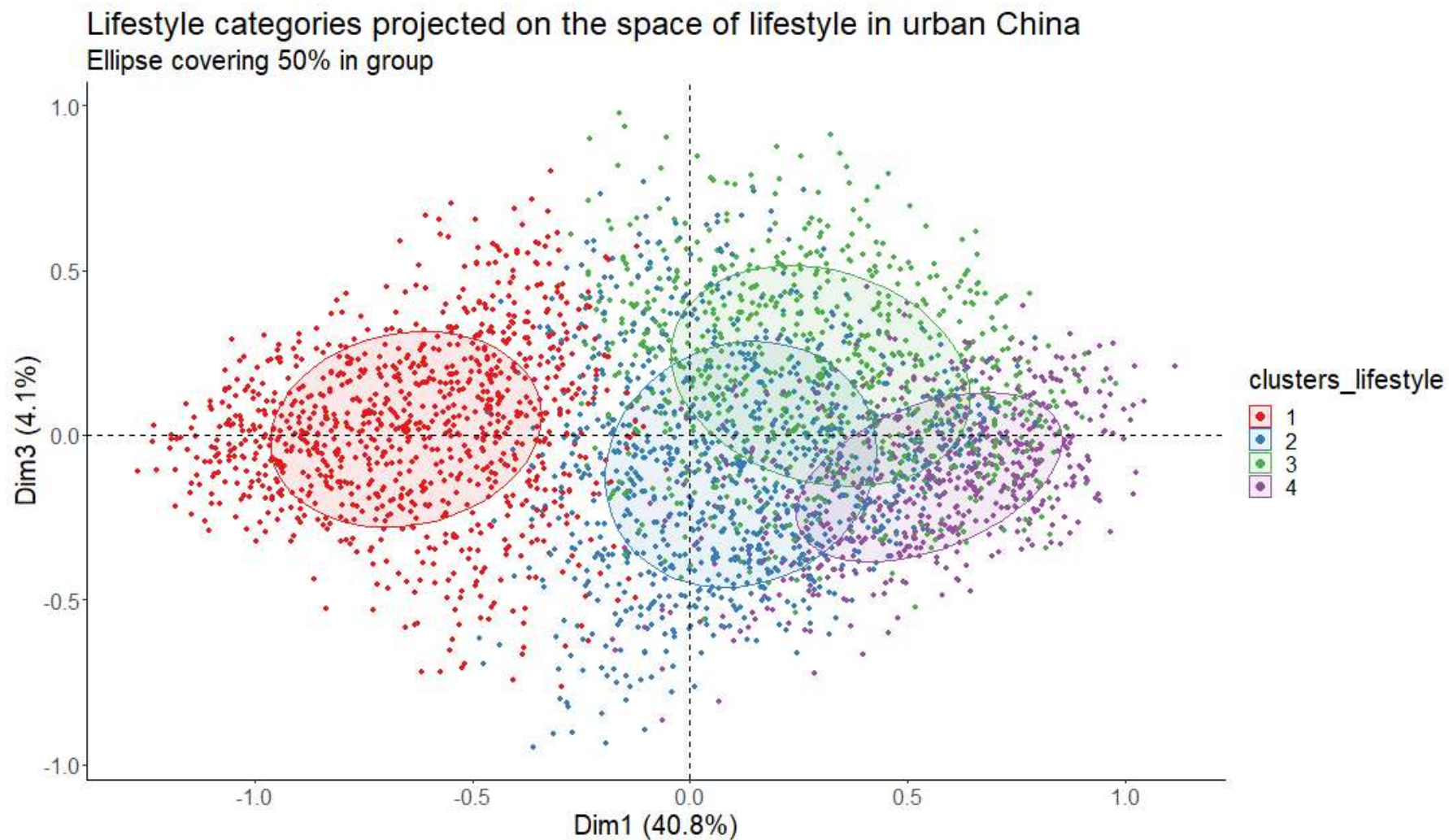
2 / 15

Methodological considerations

- Bourdieusian theory can help produced heuristic assertions if and only if:

1. The space of consumption is stratified (practices are not randomly distributed but can be classified highbrow/lowbrow)

2. The Social Space is stratified

3. An imperfect but still globally verified "structural homology" exist between the two spaces

- Step before indentifying social classes through lifestye and consumption

1. Construct the space of consumption

2. Construct the social space

3. Verify the structural analogy

4. Produce stable clusters of individuals

3 / 15

Constrcuting the space: Multiple Correspondence Analysis

- Similar to PCA (dimensionality reduction) but on categorical variables

- Visualize relational between groups of respondents with similar profiles in a space

1. Create a table of dijunction with individuals in line and modality of answer

2. Diagonalize matrix to get eigen values and eigen vectors

3. Project on bidimensional space

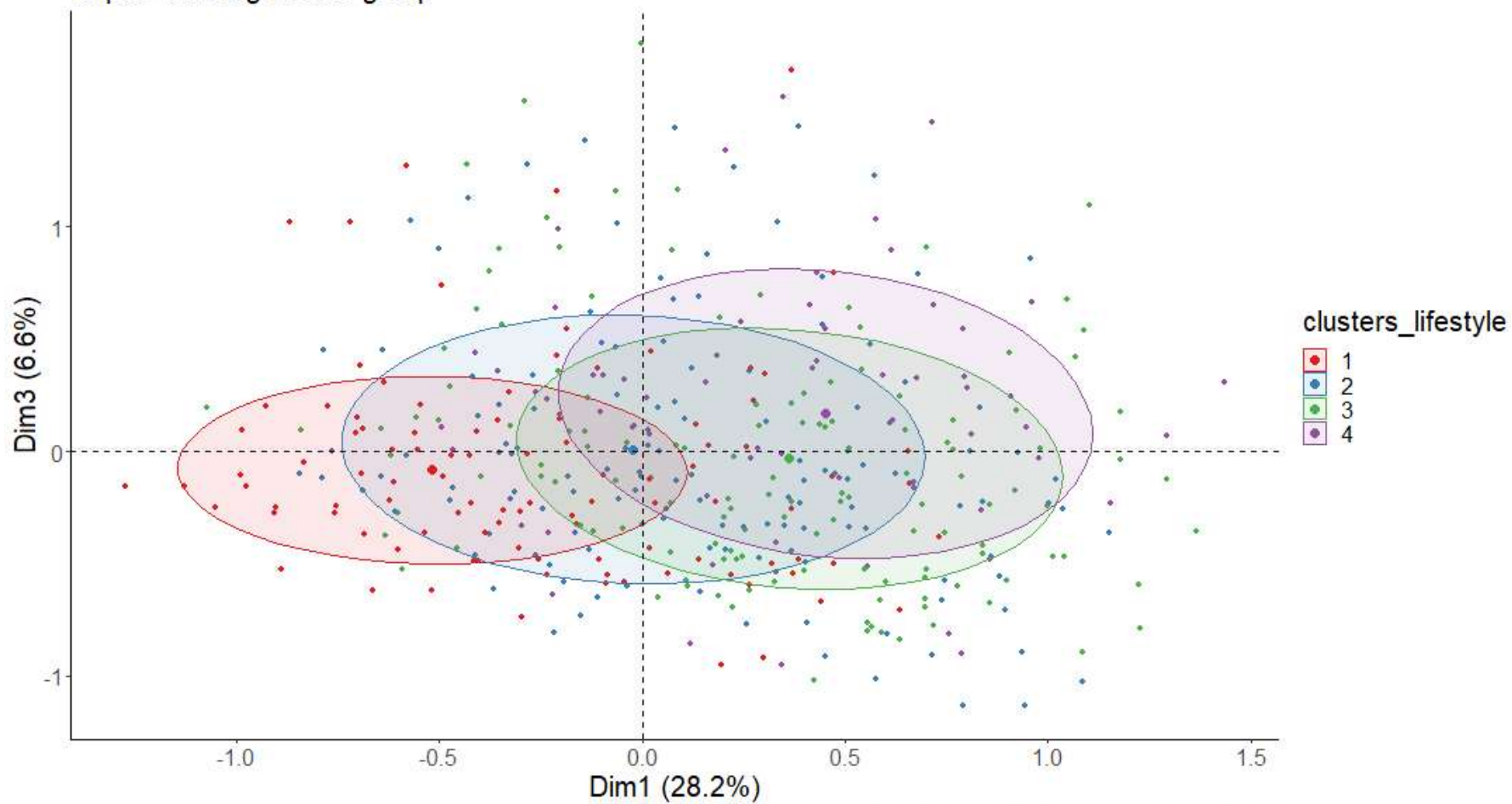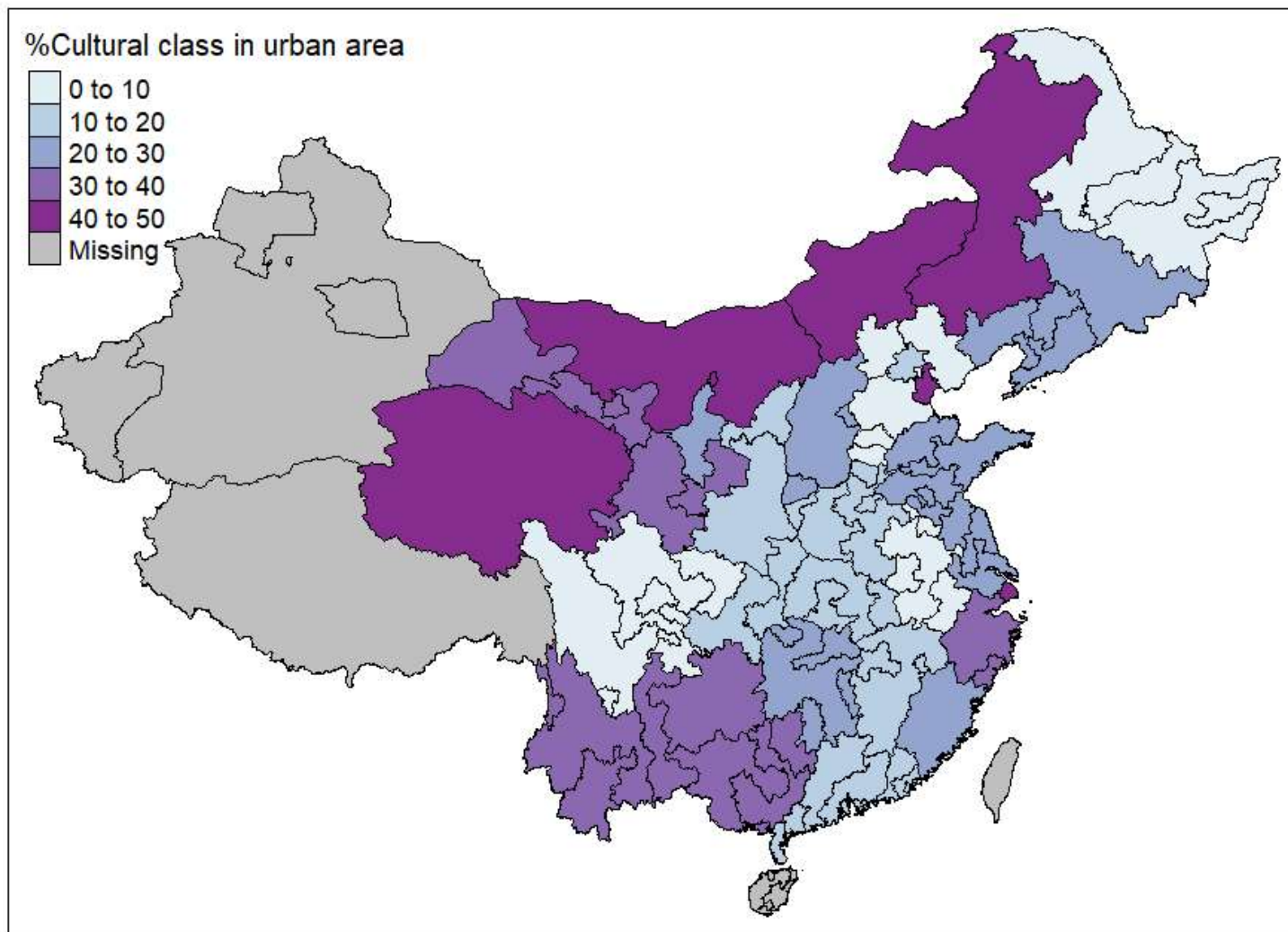4. Maximize the variance/inertia of vectors to determine dimensional axes

Space of Lifestyles in urban China
Multiple Correspondence Analysis with Burt Method

Source: CGSS2013　5 / 15

Lifestyle categories projected on the space of lifestyle in urban China
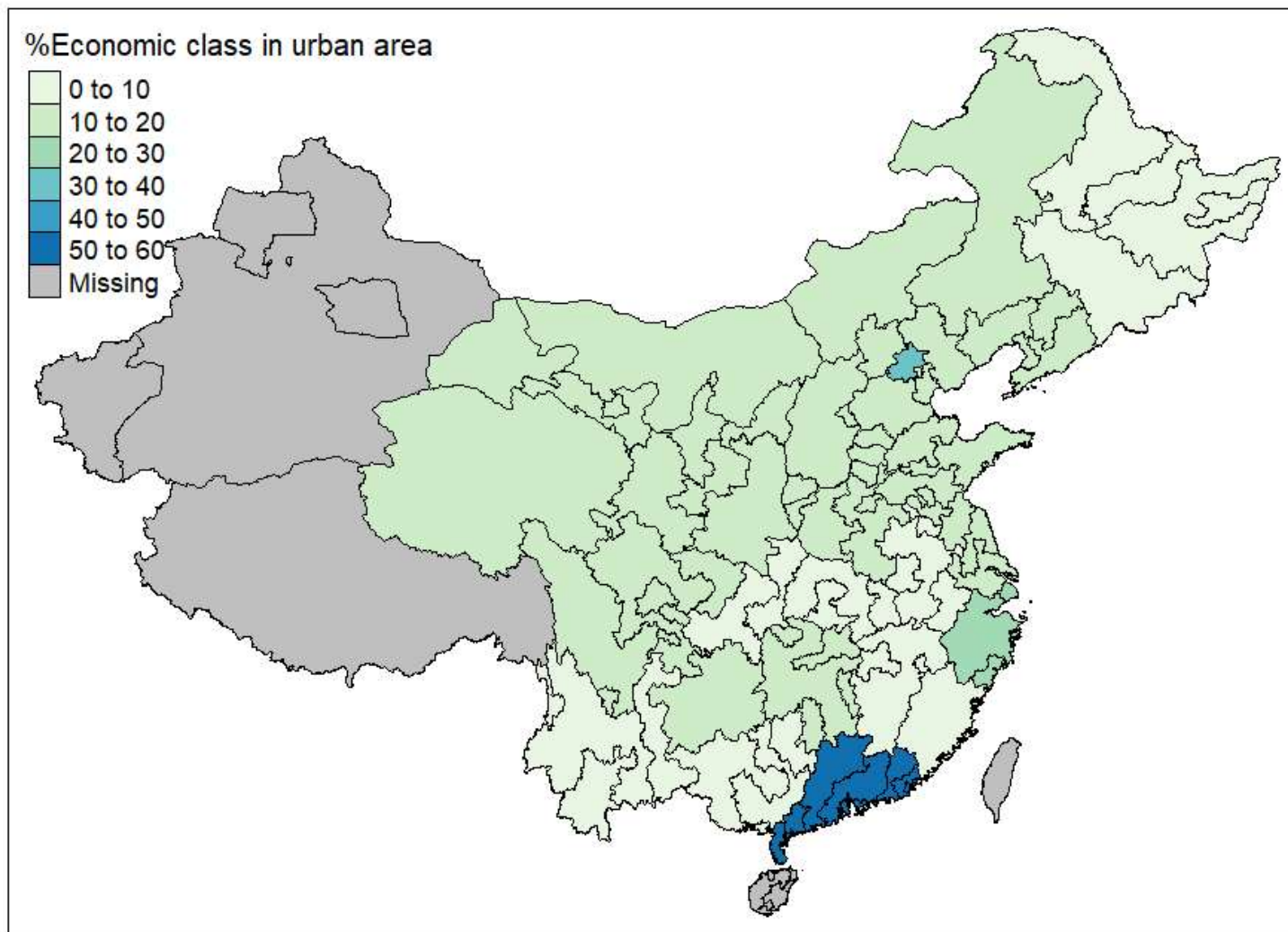Ellipse covering 50% in group

Source: Bootstrapped hierarchical and K-means Clustering clustering based on CGSS2013
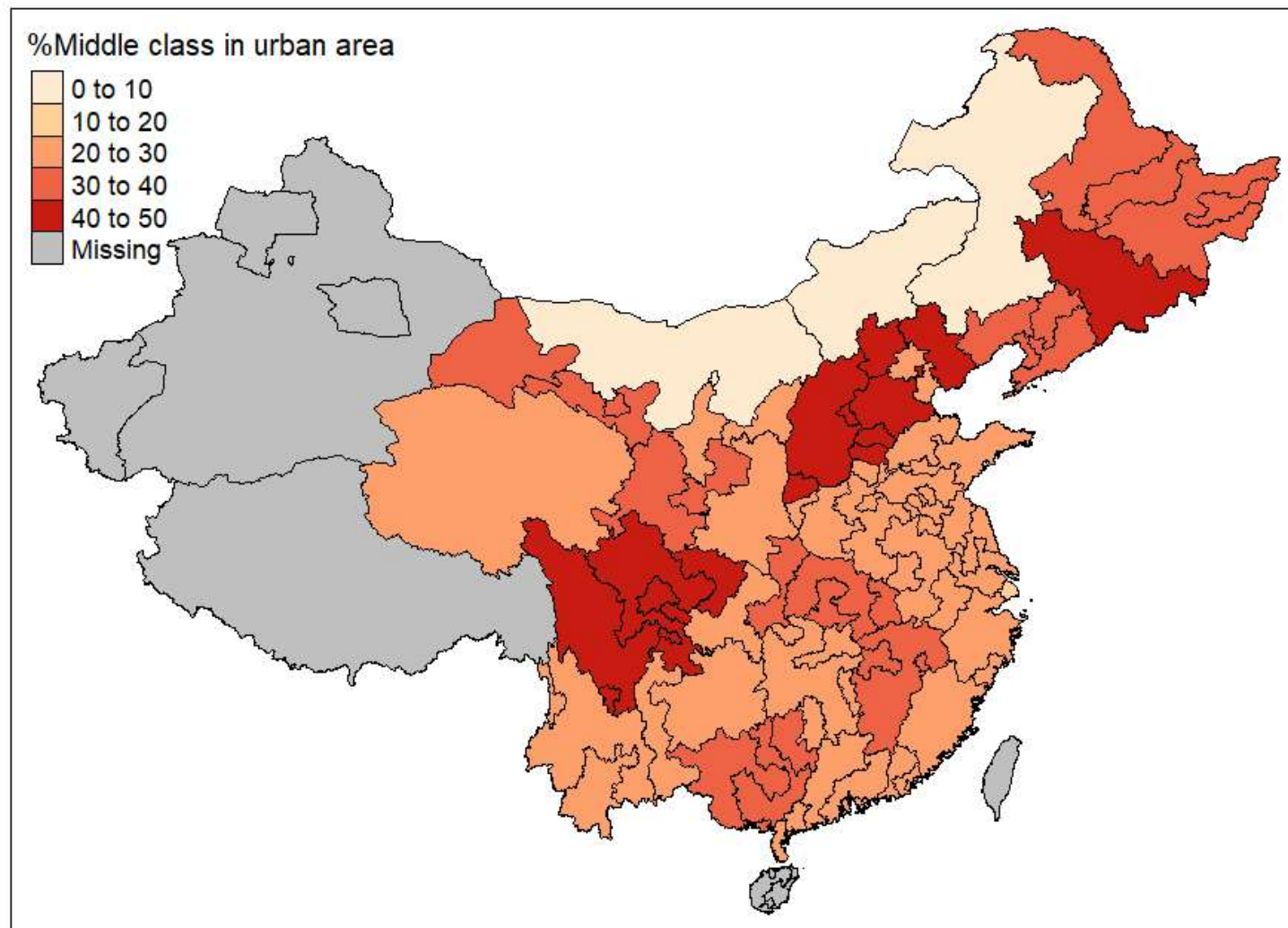
6 / 15

Verifying Structural homology: lifestyle categories projected on the social space
Ellipse covering 50% in group

Source: Bootstrapped K-medoid clustering on CGSS2013

7 / 15

%Cultural class in urban area
- 0 to 10
- 10 to 20
- 20 to 30
- 30 to 40
- 40 to 50
- Missing

%Economic class in urban area

- 0 to 10
- 10 to 20
- 20 to 30
- 30 to 40
- 40 to 50
- 50 to 60
- Missing

%Lower class in urban area
- 0 to 10
- 10 to 20
- 20 to 30
- 30 to 40
- 40 to 50
- 50 to 60
- 60 to 70
- Missing
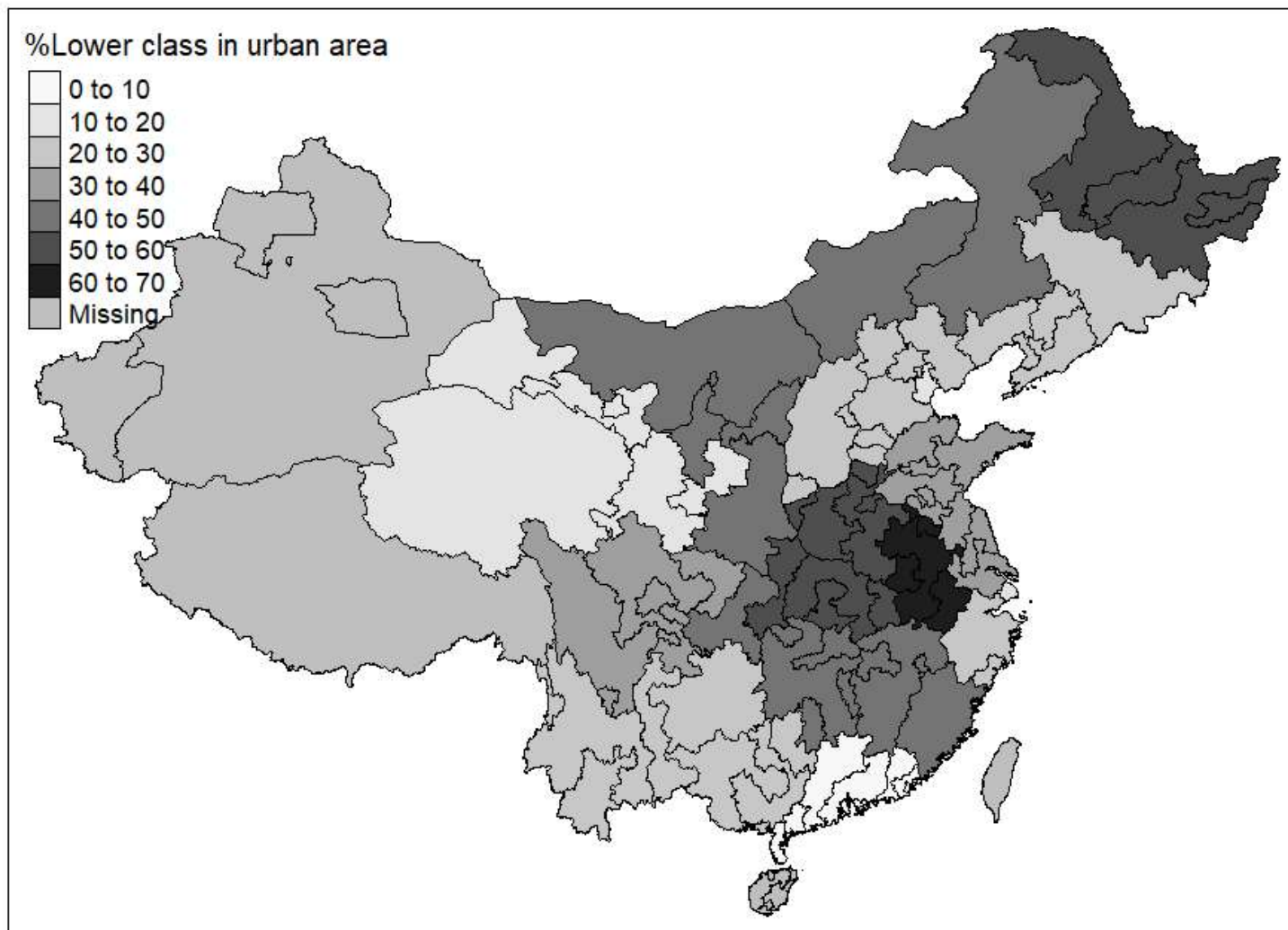
An exploratory class model

- K-medoid clustering with flexible dissimilarity calculation for all types of variables

- Little statistical assumption compared with LCA

- Bootstrapped result to ensure cluster robustness

- A set if input variables on economic resources (income, asset), cultural resource (educational credential), occupational status (EGP coded occupation), institutional advantage (hukou and party membership), and lifestyle (first two dimensions returned by MCA)

12 / 15

A three "class" model: lifestyles

1. Urban proletarian class: the taste of necessity

   ○ 73% of people declare that they are likely or very likely to purchase only living goods apart from particular needs.
   ○ 77% of the proletarian think they are unlikely or very unlikely to have dinner outside at celebration occasions
   ○ 89% of theme declare being unlikely or very unlikely to often shop at popular malls
   ○ 72% of them had never gone to the cinema to see a movie and 37% never do reading in the past year

2. Urban working class: parsimonious consumptions

   ○ 53% in this group watch movies in cinema several times a year
   ○ 89% have some readings in the past year.
   ○ 81% had listened to music at home sometime in the past year.
   ○ Majority still restrained to take a car when going out, or valuable durables and high-end artwork at home

3. The dominant class: consumers with suzhi

   ○ More than half disagree with the idea that they do not buy goods beyond necessary, have the habit to have a meal and social at restaurants.
   ○ Nearly half somewhat or strongly agree that they often visit popular shops, and mainly rely on the car for transportation.

13 / 15

A three "class" model: socio-economic profiles

1. Urban proletarian class

   ○ Though all residing in the urban area, 87% of individuals in this group do not possess an urban hukou. 84% of people without an urban hukou are in this group as well.
   ○ Only 9% of them own degree above high school
   ○ household income medians at ¥40,000 per year
   ○ Semi-unskilled manual, skilled manual, independent and farm worker account for 73.2% of the proletarian class

2. Urban working class

   ○ 87% in this group hold an urban hukou
   ○ Finishing high school (32.2%) and a non-negligible amount of graduate (12% of bachelor and above, and 18.8% of vocational school graduate)
   ○ This class median income is 50% more than the urban proletarian class
   ○ Composed by middle class aspirant and established worker, lower and a few higher service

3. The dominant class

   ○ 91% of urban hukou, 25% of Party members
   ○ 71%of them hold a vocational or bachelor degree
   ○ the median household income reach ¥96,500
   ○ 41.6% of higher service, 23,7% of lower service

What's next?

- Account for geographical variation, local neighbourhood and culture, etc.

- Measurement of lifestyle: health habit, housing condition, leisure and travel, etc.

- A multi-ladder model