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Growing city, resettled people and contesting rights

land expropriation and social integration of displaced farmers in Yinchuan, China

Growing city, resettled people and contesting rights: land expropriation and social integration of displaced farmers in Yinchuan, China

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Abstract:

Tens of millions of farmers in China have lost their rural land and been displaced involuntarily to resettlement communities in the city as a result of unprecedented urbanisation since the 1980s. Their integration into the host city remains an issue in contemporary China. This thesis aims to explore the underlying dynamics of urban expansion in China and focuses particularly on the long-term impacts of rural land expropriation on displaced farmers. It is based on a qualitative case study in a resettlement community in Yinchuan, a city in northwest part of China, and seeks to address the gap in research on the in-depth and subjective experiences of rural-urban migrants in an ethnic minority area of China. Semi-structured interviews with displaced people provide the main source of data, which are accompanied by the views and perspectives from a range of stakeholders as well as the analysis of government documents and media data.

This thesis not only provides an in-depth analysis of displaced people's experiences in integrating into the host city and contesting rights, but also enriches understanding of the social impacts of the capitalist production of space under the economic reforms in China. Findings reveal that urban spatial production was accompanied by structural injustice which negatively affected displaced population's social integration and social identity construction in the host city. However, rising rights awareness amongst displaced groups, from contesting material-based rights to public and political participation, indicates an emerging civil society and increasing level of social integration. The thesis contributes to the empirical understanding of their post-displacement lives, indicating the formation of social injustice from a spatial perspective and the development of social integration and civil society. This research has implications for urban policy making, social justice for marginalised groups, citizenship studies and civil society building in contemporary China and outlines possible areas for future research.

Author's declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: ....   DATE: ....

Covid-19 Statement

I confirm that my field trip and data collection has been completed by November 2019, therefore it was not disrupted by Covid-19 pandemic. The most significant impact of Covid-19 on me was not being able to access my office and the university library where I spent most of my research time before the pandemic. PhD research is already an inherently lonely one, not able to communicate face to face with my peers and supervisors in the last year makes this journey even more challenging. In addition, I've also missed the opportunity to present and further improve my study during the East Asian Social Policy Annual conference in July 2020 in Hongkong, which was unfortunately cancelled due to the pandemic. Finally, as an international student, I always find academic workshops useful to broaden my knowledge base and enhance my thesis writing skills, however, those workshops become difficult to attend due to limited space and high demand when changed to online.

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I would like to express my deep gratitude to the people who helped me during the completion of this thesis.

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List of Abbreviations

CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CPPCC	Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
HA	Homeowner association
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LAL	Land Administration Law
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PIS	Participant Information Sheet
RC	Residents' Committee
SA	Social Associations
SEZ	Special Economic Zones
SIR	Social Insurance for Rural and Urban residents
SIW	Social Insurance for Urban Workers
SOE	State-Owned Enterprise
WTO	World Trade Organisation
WRDS	Western Regional Development Strategy

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Research backgrounds

The 1990s were characterised globally as the 'decade of displacement', with an estimated 10 million people per year forcibly displaced as a result of development projects, such as dam construction, urban renewal and transportation and infrastructure programs (Cernea, 2003). As one of the main drivers for internal displacement, development-induced land expropriation for urbanisation has been a recognised international phenomenon in both developed countries, such as Canada (Scudder, 1996) and Japan (Furuyashiki and Nakayama, 2018), and developing countries, such as India (Abbas, 2016), Indonesia (Sholihah and Shaojun, 2018), Brazil (Muggah, 2015) and Ghana (Asante and Helbrecht, 2020) in recent years.

'Displaced people' (Cernea, 1996), 'forced migrants' (Roizblatt and Pilowsky, 1996) and 'resettled people' (Bartolome *et al.* 2000) are some of the commonly used terms to describe these groups of people who migrate involuntarily. In China, tens of millions of peri-urban farmers have been forcibly displaced and resettled by the government to facilitate unrestrained urban construction, such as building infrastructures and modern commercial, entertainment and residential areas. Therefore, the term displaced farmers in this research refers to rural household residents whose farming and living lands in rural areas have been forcibly expropriated by the Chinese government to meet the demands of urban development project, and who have then been resettled in government-funded residential areas in nearby city areas.

Research shown that the impact of displacement and relocation on affected populations can be diverse and long-lasting, and the different effects are determined by how resettlement is planned, negotiated and carried out (Stanley, 2004). While in some cases that involuntary resettlement lead to better living conditions, education opportunities, and healthcare coverage, it is important to note that the negative influences of such processes and the concomitant difficulties in integrating to a new economic, cultural and social context can be extremely challenging for resettlers (Tong et al. 2019). These impacts include the impoverishment of the relocated population (McDowell, 1996; Fernandes, 2000), restrictions on fully practising citizenship in terms of the economy, culture, identity and power (Castles, 2005), affective and

psychological outcomes such as grief, nostalgia and traumatic memory (Maria, 2017), and experiencing discrimination from the host population (Abbas, 2016), as well as encountering identity obstacles to full integration into the host society (Wang et al. 2015).

Development-induced displaced farmers in China have faced comparable challenges of displacement in terms of financial, psychological and social difficulties in social integration with migrants in other countries. These impacts are particularly prominent in China due to the country's breakneck growth and commitment to urbanisation since the economic paradigm shift from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented economy in 1978 (Deng et al. 2015). Currently, no other country in the world matches China's magnitude of displacement projects and affected population. Over a 25-year period from 1978 to 2003, around 4.7 million hectares of rural farmland were converted to urban use, and more than 52 million farmers being displaced between 1978 and 2010 as a result of urbanisation developments in China (Lian, 2016). And the number of displaced farmers continues to increase at a rate of 250,000 to 300,000 per year (Ong, 2014). In comparison to other developing countries that are also experiencing large-scale development programs, India's estimated displacement population was 20 million during roughly four decades since the 1970s, which is less than half of the number of Chinese citizens affected (Cernea, 2000).

In addition to the enormous displaced population in China, the compound impact of development-induced displacement have also been shaped by particular Chinese characteristics, including the one-party authoritarian political context, the market-oriented economy, and the unique household registration system. These factors distinguish the Chinese experience from that of other countries. In China's authoritarian political context, the central and local governments together have elaborated and reinforced a dominant discourse on the necessity of conducting land-centred urbanisation as a way of promoting a growth-first development agenda. In light of the fact that the state is the sole owner and supplier of the land in China, coupled with the tremendous interests generated from converting rural land to urban construction use, rural land expropriation is a feasible approach for facilitating urbanisation in China (Liu, 2019). While the land-based development strategy contributes to the economic advancement of the country, the displaced farmers are excluded from decision-making processes regarding their resettlement and

compensation, and they also struggle to voice their grievances over policy implementers' misconducts and unfair compensation due to the absence of efficient channels for them to be involved in such processed (Shin, 2011; Lian, 2016). Their rights to appropriate the land and their right to participate in decision-making are seldom recognised or achieved (Harvey, 2014).

Furthermore, the Chinese household registration system, known as the Hukou, shapes a rural-urban hierarchy through institutionalised discrimination against rural residents since the late 1950s. Essentially, the Hukou not only functions as an 'internal passport', which restricts population movement from rural to urban areas, but also provides better social welfare, housing, employment opportunities and educational resources exclusively to urban residents (Zhu, 2014). As a result, this urban-rural dual system perpetuates stereotypes and prejudices against the rural residents, and presents significant obstacles for rural migrants attempting to integrate into urban communities (Cai, 2011). Previous studies indicate that challenges in social integration can lead to difficulties in developing a sense of belonging in the city and can result in struggles with social identity cognition following resettlement (Huang et al. 2010; Tse, 2016). In this sense, the experiences of Chinese rural-urban migrants are comparable to those of international immigrants, as both groups face structural, cultural and identificational challenges when integrating into the host society (Wu, 2011; Liu et al. 2018).

With these backgrounds, the land expropriation and the displacement of rural people in China have aroused bitter disputes, conflicts and significant resistance among the resettled group. Their resistance takes various forms, including demonstrations, petitioning, sit-ins (Shin, 2013; Swider, 2015), class actions (O'Brien and Li, 2006), as well as 'everyday form resistance', such as refusing to pay property service charges, farming in public green land, or engaging in other behaviour deemed 'deviant' by the authority (Ying, 2007; Sun, 2014; Liu, 2017). While the soft, moderate and everyday forms of resistance are likely to be ignored, they can still be a powerful tool in fighting for equal rights and advancing social justice (Scott, 2008). The ongoing resistance continues to shape the economic and social status of migrants in the host city, and contributes to formation of social class stratification in the post-Hukou era. In this context, the resistance displaced farmers initiated and their social integration into the

host city are crucial research topics and policy issues which require careful examination.

1.2 Research aim and research questions

This study is set against the backdrop of the tide of urbanisation in contemporary China. The aim of this research is to examine the long-term impact of land expropriation and displacement on Chinese relocated farmers. This aim seeks to gain a thorough understanding of the resettlers' life-changing experiences, their integration process into the host city and their practice to contesting rights from their own perspectives. Four research questions are put forward here in order to achieve this research aim:

- What have been the dynamics that have shaped urban spatial expansion in Yinchuan?

- How have displacement and resettlement affected the lives and sense of belonging of displaced farmers?

- What forms of resistance and social injustice can be identified by displaced people during the displacement and resettlement process?

- What roles have different agents played in promoting city newcomers' integration into the host environment?

This research focuses on the experiences of the farmers who were relocated to urban communities in the early 21st century. It takes into account both macro and micro factors and explores how different factors can be combined to generate further insights. The series of research questions not only contributes to the understanding of the long-term impact of land expropriation on a specific group of individuals in China, but also on the broader community and even on the country as a whole.

1.3 Methodology

In order to fulfil the aforementioned research aim and answer the research questions, a qualitative case study in a resettlement community in Yinchuan, an inland city in the northwest part of China, is conducted. Specifically, semi-structured interviews with displaced people provide the main source of data, which are supplemented by the

views and perspectives from a range of stakeholders. Also, these perspectives are triangulated with a vast array of secondary data, such as government documents, survey data, media reports and social media data.

Yinchuan is chosen as the research site for various reasons. Yinchuan is one of a Chinese city faces economic challenges and undergoing a remarkable scale of urbanisation to address this. The GDP in Yinchuan is ranked 24th among the total 26 provincial capital cities in China, but the urbanisation rate in Yinchuan has been at least 20% higher than the average rate of China since 2017 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019)[1]. This indicates the local government relies heavily on land-based finance which is grounded in transferring rural land to urban construction use to generate taxes and land conveyance fees as its main sources of local fiscal revenue (Wang, Krstikj and Koura, 2017). Nonetheless, to date, academic research falls short of addressing these issues and its impacts in the northwest cities in China. In particular, there is a lack of research on the urbanisation in Yinchuan itself. This research will begin to fill the knowledge gap in this area and become a reference point for others to expand upon.

Furthermore, Yinchuan is one of the five ethnic minority provinces in China[2]. More than a quarter of the total population in Yinchuan are Chinese Muslim: Hui people. Choosing both the Hui minority and the Han majority residents as research participants enriches the research content and highlights diversities in the integration processes. It could also offer the prospect of identifying ethnicity-linked factors that support or hinder integration into the host society.

The experiences and perceptions of the relocated population form the core of this research. I conducted 24 semi-structured interviews with displaced people in a resettlement community – Community A. All of the interviewees were recruited based

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[1] 'Urbanisation rate' in official government documents in China indicates the percent of the total population living in urban areas. This definition can be found on the official website of the State Statistical Bureau of China, and also in the academic literatures, such as Cai, Guonan and Yuan (2019) and (Gu, 2019).
[2] Five provinces in China are designated minority autonomous regions, which contain a comparably higher population of a particular minority ethnic group. They are Tibet (Tibetan), Xinjiang (Uyghur), Inner Mongolia (Mongol), Ningxia (Hui), and Guangxi (Zhuang) Autonomous Region.

on predetermined sampling criteria and were accessed through my personal contacts and informants' referrals. In addition, I employed purposive sampling to recruit eight key stakeholders, including a sub-district officer, two community leaders, two managers of NGOs, a manager of property management company and two managers of employment agencies, to examine the impact of displacement from different views and perspectives. The entire data were entered and coded using Nvivo 12. Thematic analysis was the main data analysis technique which guided the whole data analysis process.

1.4 Outlines of the thesis

Chapter 2 will discuss the theoretical framework of this thesis in more depth and will review relevant theories. It will start by critically reviewing literature on 'the production of space' (Lefebvre, 1991) as the background to land-centric urbanisation and as the root of social injustice in the spatial reconstruction process. Subsequently the chapter will move to analyse the 'the right to the city' theory and its legitimacy as a weapon to fight back against social injustice (Lefebvre, 1991; Harvey, 2012), with a particular emphasis on how land expropriation has undermined the right to appropriation and the right to participation of Chinese resettlers and impeded their integration into the host city. Finally, the chapter will explore the long-term and compound effects of displacement on displaced individuals by employing a framework of 'social integration' in migration studies (Heckmann, 2005). In this chapter, the suitability of a synthetic theoretical framework that integrates three analytical perspectives will be demonstrated. This framework will be used to examine the driving forces behind urban spatial production, the mechanisms that contribute to land-based social injustice, the social resistance that arises from spatial changes, and the overall impact of land-based urbanisation on migrants.

Chapter 3 will broadly introduce the economic, political, institutional, and social backgrounds of urbanisation which are closely related to the land-centred urbanisation in contemporary China. The chapter will firstly elaborate the role of the state and the market in constructing the land-centred urbanisation. Following this it will discuss the development of neoliberalism in China. The rest of the chapter will examine the existing land ownership system, land expropriation policies, household registration (Hukou) system and social welfare system in China, which exert influence on the rural-

urban migration in China. These factors will provide relevant contextual information to address the land expropriation process in Yinchuan and its social impact on displaced farmers.

Chapter 4 will introduce the methodology of this research, including its philosophical underpinnings, the research design, the data collection methods and the data analysis techniques adopted. The constructivist paradigm lays a solid foundation for carrying out qualitative research in a resettlement community in Yinchuan to provide a holistic picture and a deep and thick description of the social phenomenon at hand: development-induced displacement in China. Specifically, semi-structured interviews with displaced people will provide the main source of data, which will be accompanied by the views and perspectives of a range of stakeholders as well as the analysis of a series of secondary data. This chapter will also articulate the interview process in terms of its sampling, recruitment and conducting, as well as how thematic analysis will be used as the main data analysis technique guiding the whole data analysis process. Finally, ethical consideration, practical issues and the potential limitations of the research will also be examined.

Chapters 5 to 7 respectively will present my fieldwork findings in detail. Specifically, Chapter 5 will analyse a series of spatial policies, exploring the construction process of policy discourses on land expropriation and investigating displaced people's views on these spatial polices in the case of Yinchuan. This chapter will focus on the relations between state power, symbolic meanings and spatial practices. It will draw on a series of government documents, including the central and local level urbanisation planning policies, land expropriation policies, displacement, resettlement and compensation polices as well as mainstream local newspaper reports and my fieldwork interviews. I will elaborate how urbanisation discourses have been translated into local land expropriation policies and practices, and how a new system of meanings about space and social identity have been shaped, feeding into fundamental social injustices.

Based on interviews with displaced people and relevant stakeholders, Chapter 6 will delve deeper into the life experiences of the displaced farmers in a 15-year span after displacement in the city. The chapter will reveal the living, economic, employment, social and psychological changes of displaced individuals after their relocation to a resettlement community. It will also identify the different social integration status of resettlers by considering their age, gender, ethnicity, employment and household

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financial situations, and will point out the key factors that have promoted/hindered the displaced people's sense of belonging in the city.

Chapter 7 will explore the three waves of resistance taken by the relocated population throughout the land expropriation and resettlement process. Based on the interviews with displaced people, this chapter will identify the transformation of resettlers' activism from radical protests to everyday forms of resistance, and will delineate their rights awareness transformation from contesting material-based rights to participating in public and political decision-making. These two transformations demonstrate the circle of tension and relaxation of state-society relations under the authoritarian regime in China. They will also indicate a greater level of social integration, as migrants gain a deeper understanding of their citizenship rights and become more proficient in navigating the norms of modern urban society.

Chapter 8 will bring together my empirical findings and existing theories to respond to the research questions laid out in Chapter 1. This chapter will reflect the 'spatial triad' in practice and examine three misalignments between the central government, the local governments and the people amidst land exploration. These misalignments have not only led to disfranchisement and the disempowerment of migrants, but also have created structural marginality in re-building people's post-displacement lives and social identity in the host city. The analysis will then move to outlining the key factors that have influenced resettlers' social integration and will highlight the importance of employment status as a factor. The chapter will also reveal the rising rights awareness and the burgeoning active citizenship among the marginalised groups in the authoritarian regime context. The chapter will conclude by evaluating the roles of different agents in promoting civic participation and social integration in contemporary China.

Chapter 9 is the concluding chapter. It will summarise the key findings of the thesis by explicitly addressing the research questions. It will also suggest the policy implications of the study and outline possible future research areas.

Chapter 2 Theoretical framework

Introduction

In order to explore the underlying dynamics of urban expansion and its long-term impact on displaced people in China, a synthetical and holistic theoretical framework has been developed from the literature on 'the production of space' (Lefebvre, 1991), 'the right to the city' (Lefebvre, 1991; Harvey, 2012) and 'social integration' of migrants (Heckmann, 2005). Drawing on these three approaches facilitates a representation of the different stages and dimensions of the urbanisation process and its implications for displaced people. In addition, the synthesis of the knowledge streams provides an overall analytical framework through which to examine the motivations, rationales, processes and compound impact of land-centred urbanisation in China.

The first section of this chapter critically reviews the literature on 'the production of space' to explore the motivations of land-centred urban development, the mechanisms shaping unjust spatial patterns and social relations, and the root causes of social injustice. The dialectical conception of space initiated by Lefebvre (1991) was developed into three dimensions. The first dimension examines the 'spatial triad', which reveals the political nature of space. In particular, elucidates how dominant discourses and symbolic meanings are attached to space to produce specific social patterns which satisfy the social elite's interests and deprive those without power and capital. The next dimension focuses on the combined forces of space and capital flow to drive globalisation, and its impact on urban development in China. The last dimension elaborates on the formation of social injustice amidst Chinese land-centred urbanisation and highlights the strengths and limitations of applying the theories by Lefebvre and Harvey in the case of recent Chinese urbanisation.

Furthermore, the conflicts between 'conceived space' and 'lived space', as well as between exchange value and use value of space, result in fundamental social injustice and dispossession of people's 'right to participation' and 'right to appropriation', which led to a discussion around 'the right to the city' theory in the second section of this chapter (Lefebvre, 1991; Harvey, 2012). Specifically, this section explores the nature of the right to the city, why it is closely connected to the space and who has the right to the city. It also provides contextualised interpretations of the theory based on the context of urbanisation in China. Moreover, this section discusses the feasibility of

deploying 'the right to the city' as a discursive weapon to fight against social injustice and promote an inclusive and democratic society in China.

Finally, the impact of space production on displaced people also relates to nostalgic feelings, emotional trauma, a lack of a sense of belonging and social identity reconstruction, which are rarely interpreted as a loss of 'rights'. The third section of this chapter introduces the 'social integration' framework (Heckmann, 2005) as a necessary supplement to examine the complex, long-term and subject-related outcomes of displacement on the rural-urban migrants. Combining different arguments from both theories and empirical cases, this section starts with conceptualising 'social integration' and illustrating different dimensions of social integration in migration studies. This is followed by discussions of how and to what extent an international social integration framework is applicable to a Chinese internal migration case. This section ends with reviewing the contemporary research on the social integration of rural-urban migrants in China.

2.1 The production of space: Land-centred urbanisation and social injustice

'The production of space' is an overarching analytical framework that links the three constituting topics of this thesis: spatial production, rights to the city and social resistance. Space plays a crucial role in urbanisation, not only because it is the manifestation of the modern city and urban life, but also, more importantly, because it facilitates capital accumulation and works as a political instrument to maintain comprehensive state control (Lefebvre, 1991). The space production in the process of urbanisation has multi-dimensional impacts on residents – more than merely a change of landscape. It buttresses social relations that benefit the groups who possess power and capital and disfranchises those people who do not (Lefebvre, 1991; Purcell). In this context, the public rebels and launches various social movements to fight back against unjust spatial patterns and their attached social injustice in order to claim 'the right to the city' (Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 2000; Harvey, 2012). Therefore, 'the production of space' framework is a starting point to examine the formation of social injustice, the conflict relation between the state and the people amidst urbanisation as well as people's actions to fight for rights.

2.1.1 Lefebvre's dialectical conception of space

Henri Lefebvre was arguably the first scholar to rigorously conceptualise 'space' in sociological research, which was developed on decades of work that examined the fundamental role of space in the experience of practical social life (Zieleniec, 2018). His work on the production of space provides a different spatial approach to understanding the complexity of urban development, and offers a socially and politically constructed planning theory that incorporates and promotes an inclusive space for diverse value and practice. In Lefebvre's (1991) words, the production of space is to create the potential of 'reimaging and re-making the city as an œuvre'[3] (Lefebvre, 1991: 157).

Essentially, Lefebvre (1991: 85) regarded space as a product to be used and consumed and as a means of production. It reveals a transformation from 'the production in space' to 'the production of space' (Zhang, 2001). In his view, space is socially produced, and such a process encompasses all practical social activities which are entangled in urban space and everyday life, ultimately leading to a point which reproduces the relations of production (social relations) (Zieleniec, 2018). Social relations, in Lefebvre's words, 'are concrete abstractions, have no real existence save in and through space, and their underpinning is spatial' (Lefebvre, 1991: 404).

Lefebvre's comprehensive analysis of 'the production of space' lends itself to understanding the relationship between space, social relation and social change, and offers a dialectic reasoning that goes beyond spatial or geographic analyses of space (Buser, 2012). Lefebvre (1991: 286) argued 'space is permeated with social relations: it is not only supported by social relations but is also producing and produced by social relations.' Here, space is not merely a container, but is a social product and a contested target that is associated with reshaping social relations between people themselves and reproduction of a certain ideology, which inevitably creates structural social injustice and different forms of social inclusion and exclusion (Purcell, 2002; Gárriz Fernández, 2011).

To elaborate on the production of space and its impact on the creation, structure and people's experience of everyday life, Lefebvre (1991: 45) expanded the understanding

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[3] An *œuvre* is closer to a work of art than to a simple material product (Lefebvre,1991).

of space with three dialectically related dimensions: the 'representations of space', the 'representational spaces' and 'spatial practices'.

The notion of 'representations of space' refers to an abstract space which takes a dominant position as it is 'tied to the relations of production and to the order which those relations impose' (Lefebvre, 1991: 33). This space is a 'conceived space' which builds on social elites' imagination, rather than people's practical experience (Lefebvre, 1991: 38). It is conceptualised by politicians, scientists, architects, cartographers and urban planners to seek exchange value to meet hegemonic interests (Buser, 2012). In other words, it is a mental construction of space which creates ideas about its representations; it is often materialised in the form of signs, codes, knowledge or meanings of space which shapes the public's understanding (Purcell, 2002). For instance, urban planning in China is one of the most straightforward interpretations of the 'conceived space' by the state.

The idea of 'representational spaces' refers to the 'lived space' of inhabitants and users (Lefebvre, 1991: 39). It is a passively experienced space, which is socially produced through the space users' analyses of symbols and images, such as codes and spatial discourses (Zieleniec, 2007). This space mutates over time and indicates some popular meanings, such as a sacred place, a centre of power or an exalted site (Marcuse, 2009). In the meantime, artists, writers and poets deploy counter-discourses and put great effort into creating new meanings and perceptions about the space. In practice, different actors launch social movements to claim their rights in this space.

'Spatial practice' refers to a 'perceived space' which connects daily routine with urban reality (Lefebvre, 1991: 38). Spatial practice always mediates between 'representations of space' and 'representational space' (Purcell, 2002). This juxtaposes the spaces of imagination and everyday life, and can only be reflected in and evaluated by the empirical experience of perceiving and using the space (Soja, 2000). For example, the daily life of Chinese residents who moved from shabby rural housing to an urban residential building in a gated community can be used to define 'modern spatial practices' under the government's dominant discourse of urbanisation.

Of the spatial triad, the 'representations of space' is one of Lefebvre's key arguments in understanding the rationales of (re)producing space and providing insights into the

relationship between power and space. As Lefebvre (1991: 39) stated, 'representations of space' is a dominant space in any society as 'what is lived and what is perceived are decided by what is conceived'. 'Representations of space' not only produces the material city and shapes residents' perceptions of the city, but also rebuilds social orders and social relations between residents (such as the formation of social class and gentrification in the city as Wu (2010) stated). Consequently, space has become a domain where bureaucrats and social elites compete to define modern spatial patterns through discourse, symbolic meanings, and objectified representations by using their power and knowledge, in order to design and commodify space to their ends (Olds, 1995; Sun, 2014).

Lefebvre (1991) was aware that space is not neutral and in addition to the spatial triad, his dialectic analysis also emphasises the political nature of the space in that space is political and ideological, and shaping space is a political process. For instance, 'representations of space' not only shapes the public's perception of space, but also shapes people's perceptions of themselves, which reinforces the biased spatial pattern that social elites have created. The dominant discourse and symbolic meanings on the patterns of spatial segregation (such as rural villages versus urban cities, and high-end commercial housing versus government funded resettlement communities) constantly cultivate and reshape individuals' identity cognition (He et al. 2010).

Such discursive construction leads to the transformation from spatial stratification to identity stratification, which reinforces the prevailing but unjust meanings attached to race, class, gender and sexual orientation in life (Gottdiener, 1994). Harvey (1990, 2014) further elaborated on the political nature of space by regarding space as a social entity filled with political control, administrative power and ideology. He argued that 'spatial and temporal practices are never neutral in social affairs, instead, they always express some kind of class or other social content and are more often than not the focus of intense social struggle' (Harvey, 1990: 239). Seen this way, the formation of social class stratification can be explored from a spatial point of view.

Lefebvre's dialectical conception of space provides an approach by which we can understand the space production in China and Chinese development ideologies that are part of how space is represented. Politicians and investors in China intend to (re)produce a homogeneous, instrumental and ahistorical space in order to create the

exchange value of space, to facilitate the mobility of capital and to promote and buttress the exercise of power in a similar way to the West (Mcgee, 2009). This is exemplified by the contemporary urban megaprojects constructed in China, where great similarities can be identified between construction projects, such as Lujiazui Central Area in Shanghai and Canary Wharf in London. Both are homogeneous large-scale, mixed-function (re)development projects comprising commercial, retail, industrial, residential, leisure and infrastructure uses based on the uniform images by multiple agencies. The designs of these spaces aim to facilitate global capital flows and to symbolise and reorientate a global imagery of what a city is and how it looks (Olds, 1995).

2.1.2 Globalisation, uneven capital flow and neoliberal space production

As neoliberal global capitalism sweeps the world, cities and new urbanisation projects are becoming increasingly subject to the design, planning and implementation strategies of capital that shape and evolve their form to meet their own needs (Zieleniec, 2018). Building upon the production of space theory by Lefebvre (1991), Harvey (1978, 2014) linked urban space transformation with capital accumulation. In his re-examination of classic Marxism, he addressed its limitations in addressing the role of space, and overcomes this by integrating a spatial dimension into Marx's theory of historical materialism. Specifically, Harvey (2014) explored the role of 'space-as-process' in examining the capitalist production process by using capital accumulation as the key driver. He argued the accumulating nature of capital inevitably leads to the diminishing of profits, which ultimately brings the capitalist economy into crisis. In such a crisis, measures for mitigation vary but include spatial restructuring and the dispersal of capital, which, in turn, create a novel spatial form through which capital accumulation can continue (Harvey, 2014; Majumder, 2022).

Harvey's (2003) further development of the spatial dimension of Marx's theory was well illustrated in his three-circuit analysis. The primary circuit refers to investment in basic commodity production. Capital over-accumulation and diminishing profits of the primary circuit inevitably leads to overflow to the secondary circuit, which incorporates investment in fixed capital, such as property development (Harvey, 2003). When production exceeds real demand, capital is channelled into the tertiary circuit, which is the investment in science and technology and social expenditures (Harvey, 2003). Urbanisation and its accompanied 'production of space', with its large-scale spatial

reshaping and huge investment in infrastructure, industry, housing and technology upgrade, is funded through these circuits to absorb surplus capital and labour.

This cycle repeats again and again to help capitalist countries get out of crises. For example, the urbanisation in the US during the post-World War II period was to avoid the over-accumulation crisis in the primary circuit. Similarly, the real estate market boom in Europe in the 1980s was the shift in capital to avoid the crises of unemployment and surplus capital, resulting in the famous redesigning and reconstruction of Paris (Harvey, 2003; Beauregard, 2016). In addition, it has been observed that the role of suburbs plays an increasingly important role in the new wave of urbanisation in facilitating capital accumulation. As a result, city peripheries are growing larger to beat increasingly intense interregional competition. For instance, in the US, some suburbs are now located up to 100 miles from the historic city centres (Walker and Schafran, 2015). In China, since the Reform and Opening-Up reform, expropriating peripheral land as urban construction use is one of the characteristics of urban expansion (Zhang et al. 2016).

Moreover, this unrelenting pursuit of profit encourages the mobilisation of capital and leads to greater globalisation. Consequently, foreign geographic locations and developing countries are then another outlet to absorb the surplus from the developed countries. The urbanisation process of China, as one of the most active participants in globalisation in the past few decades, has been greatly facilitated by the inflow of global capital inflow (Harvey, 2005; McGee et al. 2007). In the past few decades, under the combined influence of globalisation and market-oriented economic reform, China has become a relatively open centre, attracting capitalist dynamism and leading to unprecedented economic growth which has been ongoing since the 1980s (Harvey, 2005). Like the common neoliberal approach in Western countries which is hinged on the superiority of market processes, China is considered to be following a similar neoliberal path during its economic reform period (Harvey, 2005; Lee and Zhu, 2006; He and Wu, 2009; Wu, 2010, 2016; Zhang and Bray, 2016; Weber, 2020).

Like the 'space-as-process' that Harvey (2014) noted in the capitalist world, land-centred urban (re)development in China is a crucial component of spatialised capital accumulation. Under the dominance of the 'growth-first' development strategy, China has applied a series of spatial-related actions with neoliberal characteristics to facilitate market-oriented reform and boost the national economy, including for

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example, the commodification of the land and housing (Wu, 2010; Lin, 2014; Siciliano, 2014), the expropriation of rural land for urban redevelopment and the facilitation of private and foreign investment for these urban redevelopment projects (He and Wu, 2009; Mcgee, 2009; Lin, 2010) and the building of cyberspace and new public spaces shaped by the internet and communication technologies (Puel and Fernandez, 2012; He and Lin, 2015). Urban (re)development with special interests in land reshaping, or to use Harvey's (2014: 155) term, 'spatial fix', creates consumption as well as substantial tax income and land conveyance fees, which are considered as the most efficient ways to boost the local and national GDP in China. Also, these practises are similar to the capital flows in three-circuit as Harvey (2003) described in capitalist countries – the circuit of 'primary capital' absorbs surplus value from labour, the circuit of 'secondary capital' channels capital flows into fixed assets, and the circuit of 'tertiary capital' applies the investment in science and technology industries.

The global spread of neoliberalism affects Chinese urban development in at least two ways. On the one hand, capitalist urban development is characterised by a pattern of uneven development. The uneven flow of capital manifests its impact not only on a global scale, but also amplifies regional differences and inequalities within each country (Harvey, 1996). This is evident in China in the regional development imbalance between inland cities and coastal areas. The establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZ) in coastal cities started in the 1980s and these zones benefit from free market-oriented economic policies, while inland cities in western China began to achieve large-scale capital flow after the initiation of the Western Regional Development Strategy (WRDS) in the early 21st century (Chu and So, 2010). This development gap indicates that every stage of capital development is related to 'a distinctive, historically specific geographical landscape in which some places and scales are systematically privileged over and against others as sites for capital accumulation' (Lee and Zhu, 2006: 45).

On the other hand, neoliberal development projects contain 'the creative destruction' of existing political compromises and institutional arrangements through market-oriented reform initiatives, as well as the construction of new infrastructures for capital movement, the market-oriented economy and commodification (Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Lee and Zhu, 2006). In China, a series of regulations facilitating capital flow and capital accumulation have formed within the burgeoning market

economy, and inherited institutions have been reconstituted to open up opportunities for urban development projects, which has brought tremendous changes to the urban landscapes in China (He and Wu, 2009) (the development of neoliberalism in China will be analysed in Chapter 3, 3.1.2)

Although it is possible to identify some of the trappings of neoliberal reasoning, there is still examination required as to whether the market-oriented reform in China equates to the neoliberal development path in the West, especially considering the strong state intervention on market operations within the socialist context in China (Sigley, 2006). One of the main elements of neoliberalism is market regulation instead of state intervention (Moody, 1997; He and Lin, 2015). Under the impact of state intervention in China, privatisation and deregulation are only partially realised, and social redistribution and public investment are in action to relieve social conflicts (He and Wu, 2009). The role of the state is not diminishing (which is a primary characteristic of orthodox neoliberalism) but instead it remains deeply involved in shaping, steering and controlling market operations and land-centred urbanisation (Wu, 2010).

The Chinese development path represents the possibility of synergy rather than antagonism between market and state power (Massot, 2020). Weber (2020) insists China has been integrated into global neoliberalism given its economic growth but it does not pursue a neoliberal economic policy because the state exerts control over the direction of the economy, and the Chinese government does not pursue 'the core policies of full-fledged price, trade, and financial liberalisation and privatisation' (Weber, 2020: 1).

In this context, the term 'socialist market economy', a concept the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) applied to the Chinese discourse to define its development path, is more like a Chinese Marxist ideal with only domestic significance (Sigley, 2006). To link with the wider capitalist world, 'partial neoliberalism' (Liew, 2005), 'neoliberal-looking market-oriented economic reform' (Duckett, 2020: 524), 'neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics' (Harvey, 2005: 120) and 'China's engagement with neoliberalism' (He and Wu, 2009: 297) are some terms that distinguish the Chinese market-oriented economy from the neoliberal paradigm in capitalist countries in light of the role of the state in market operations.

Although all of these terminologies imply the uniqueness of the Chinese urban development path, 'neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics' (Harvey, 2005) is at the centre of any discussion, as this term provides comprehensive explanations from the political, economic, social and demographic perspectives of why the Chinese path is distinctive. The unique Chinese characteristics Harvey (2005) described – relying on foreign direct investment to keep the power of capitalist class ownership offshore, constructing restrictions to foreign portfolio investment, relying on state-owned banks instead of other forms of financial intermediation and keeping state-owned enterprises – are all practices which maintain the state control over the market operation and prevent capitalist class formation, and which distinguish the Chinese development strategy from orthodox neoliberal counties.

More importantly, Harvey (2005) highlighted the massive labour surpluses in China as one of the crucial factors that distinguishes the Chinese path from the neoliberal template, and this factor has not been analysed in the aforementioned terms. He stressed, to maintain social and political stability, China has to absorb surplus labour through 'debt financing infrastructural and fixed-capital formation projects on a massive scale', such as the construction of subways and highways system (Harvey, 2005). However, the already realised over-accumulation of fixed capital and the gradual depression in urban investment requires China deviate from neoliberal orthodoxy and maintain its control over capital and the exchange rate (Harvey, 2005: 141). Therefore, China has developed a particular kind of market economy which incorporates neoliberal elements with authoritarian centralised control.

2.1.3 Space production and social injustice amidst urbanisation in China

The production of space theory by Lefebvre (1991) and the three circuits of accumulated capital model by Harvey (2003) provide valuable insights for examining the social injustice resulting from the urbanisation process in China. Figure 2.1 shows the 'double-engine mode' which combines state power and capital force in shaping and reshaping space to promote Chinese urbanisation.

Figure 2.1 'Capital - State Power - Space' Model
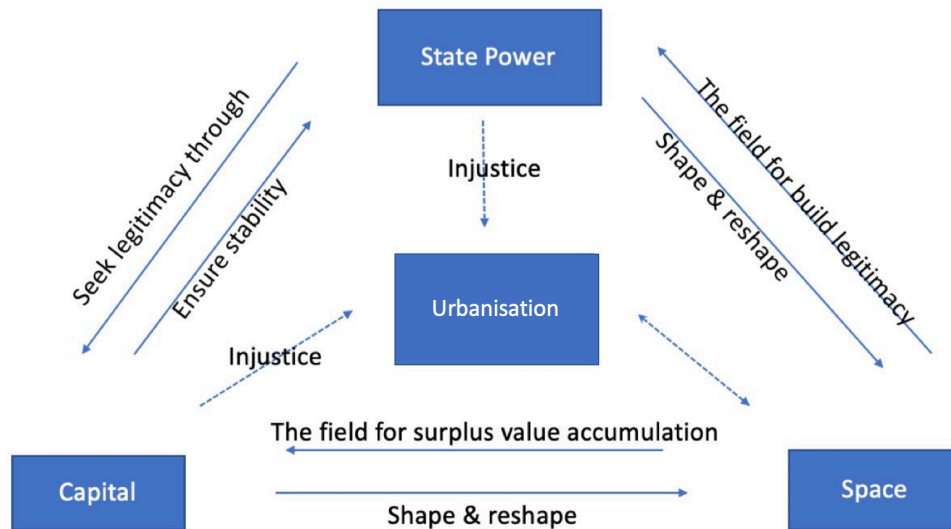
Source: This model is developed by author based on the theory of Harvey (2014).

Figure 2.1 indicates that injustice rests on capital-driven urbanisation in China as the purpose of capital accumulation is to create exchange value, rather than any notion of use value, which results in spatial exclusion and social marginalisation (Harvey, 2014). The pursuit of maximum profit makes capital flow more towards mega commercial housing projects rather than towards low-rent housing, which leads to less well-off groups being excluded as they are unable to afford any accommodation in the city. At the same time, the by-products of urbanisation, such as gated communities, close surveillance communities and exclusive VIP malls are pushing the poor to the fringes.

From the social class perspective, capital circulation enlarges social injustice in a way of shaping social class stratification. The transnational and hypermobile characters of capital reinforce the unjust spatial patterns that social elites have created, such as the high-end and low-end housing stratification in China, which contribute to a sense of deprivation and unfairness among the less well-off group (Olds, 1995; Marcuse, 2014). It echoes Harvey's (2014) argument about capital etches on the spatial forms of cities and creates or intensifies conflicts between the rich and the poor.

Although space plays a crucial role in contributing to the economic advancement of China, it is also a tool for injustice in Chinese urbanisation. To some extent, urban expansion is a spatial product of the market-oriented economy under the 'growth-first' development strategy in China (He and Wu, 2009). Urbanisation with large-scale spatial reshaping and huge investment in infrastructure has been taking place to cater

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for creating the exchange value of space and for the accumulation of capital from modern city construction. Therefore, making capital flow through the 'three circuits' is only a temporary solution to tackle intractable political and economic problems resulting from primitive capital accumulation, which ultimately leads to social injustice (Soja, 2000; Harvey, 2003).

In addition to the capital-led injustices, the state's power has further shaped unjust social relations during the urbanisation period in China. As shown in Figure 2.1, the state seeks legitimacy through capital because the Chinese government considers promoting economic development as a way of reaffirming its political legitimacy (Qian and He, 2012). In fact, high-speed economic growth has boosted public confidence in the authority and contributed to overall political stability in China, and such achievements in the economic and political spheres largely depend on the Chinese land-centred development strategy, such as rural displacement to make room for building urban megaprojects (Duckett, 2020). As Lefebvre (1991) noted, space is a social product, and every society produces a specific spatial pattern to buttress its (re)production of social relations (Elden, 2004). The unjust social relations in China, including prioritising the interests of the people who have power and capital while disenfranchising rural migrants in a political, economic and social sense, as well as the legacy of the Hukou system, which institutionally deprive rural farmers to serve urban residents, all indicate that state-led domination and oppression of a specific group of people has occurred.

As discussed above, Lefebvre's dialectical conception of space can be applied to the Chinese context and offers a useful spatial perspective to examine the relationship between capital, state power and space. Much like the waves of space production observed in the West driven by the surplus capital, a strong capital push in the past decades has seen unprecedented urban expansion in China, which reveals the dominant position of 'conceived space' led by the state, in contrast with the subordinate position of 'lived space' for the general public (Wu, 2000). Taking the development path of the Pudong New area in Shanghai as an example, under the market-oriented reform, the Pudong New area has been transformed from a rural village to a remarkable international business centre within just a decade. 'Chinese Manhattan' is an objectified 'conceived space' encapsulating the expectations of the Chinese government and of domestic and international investors alike (Yeh, 1996).

Also, the word 'Manhattan' indicates a well-developed city which shapes the public's imagination about modern life. However, when the requirements of the privileged class have been duly rationalised, naturalised and finally realised, ordinary residents' living space is ignored. Nearly all of the 52,000 households (approximately 169,000 people) who live in the 4km^2 area in Lujiazui (centre of Pudong, Shanghai) were removed forcibly and resettled in the outskirts of Shanghai under unchallengeable government power (Olds, 1995). In this way, social elites' expectations are prioritised and urgently fulfilled, whilst displaced people's claims are considered insignificant and non-negotiable. In this context, Lefebvre's spatial triad provides a powerful paradigm that highlights the huge gap between the conceived space and the lived space, which leads to a dispossession of people and to irreconcilable conflicts between the state and the public.

However, the limitations of applying Lefebvre's analysis to Chinese cases cannot be overlooked. Although the space production process in China echoes Lefebvre's dialectical conception of space from the space transformational process point of view, the very different political and cultural contextual environment of China distinguishes itself from a capitalist context in the original theory. It is recognised in this thesis that those differences require careful recognition when applying Lefebvre's ternary spatial theory to examining the practical social issues originating from the space production process.

The urban spatial change in China is not a purely capital-driven process as stated in the original theory of the production of space, so it is crucial to re-identify the role of the state in this thesis, which is absent in Lefebvre's analysis, in shaping specific spatial patterns in China. Under the Chinese authoritarian political context, the state plays an overarching role in manipulating capital and space to its ends. Highly centralised power and rigid administrative hierarchies, as well as the state-controlled land ownership system in China, provide solid foundations for the state to commodify space and conduct large-scale rural land expropriation in order to facilitate rapid urbanisation (Hamnett, 2020).

Moreover, all-encompassing state control allows the manipulation of 'conceived space' in China. Discursive construction is used as a common method to rationalise government spatial interventions (Plyushteva, 2009). Coherent and ostensibly profound meanings are assigned by the government to shape or even change people's

perception of space whilst also legalising the government's spatial interventions. For instance, the Chinese government not only portrays a hopeful blueprint for the resettlement community to encourage rural residents to accept displacement in the process of urban development, but also, at the same time, stigmatises village dwellers' current rural living conditions as an outdated and unreliable lifestyle which needs to be updated urgently (Sun, 2014). The construction of such policy discourse helps to rationalise and legitimise local government's land expropriation actions and shapes the public's conception about what urban life and modern city should be like.

In addition, from the cultural point of view, the patriotic enthusiasm and spirit of utter devotion rooted in the collectivism of the socialist historical context facilitates the Chinese government's attempts to use discursive constructions in order to smooth land appropriation action (Wilmsen, Webber and Duan, 2011). This is an important factor to consider when examining Chinese people's rights-defending activism in the space production process, while absent in the capitalist context and Lefebvre's ternary explanation of space.

2.2 The right to the city: Dispossessions and people's counterattack

The concept of 'right to the city' is closely related to the concept of space and its production. During the economic and political restructuring dominated by the neoliberal ideology and its profound impact on urban space (re)production, it has been found that social justice and better social integration is not promoted, but ironically the already existing social and geographical exclusion is reinforced. In this context, 'the right to the city' becomes an appealing concept to examine spatial and social inequality as well as to promote the empowerment of urban residents, especially for economically, politically or socially excluded groups. As Purcell (2002) highlighted, the right to the city entails the pursuit of heterogeneous urban space that meets the complex and multiple needs of urban dwellers, and thus is widely explored for its potential to contribute to a renewed urban democracy. As a necessary theory to reflect the production of space and its impact on everyday life, 'right to the city' provides a well-recognised framework to examine the unjust social relations highlighted in the previously proposed space production model and provides a tool to promote the right of the displaced farmers in their new life in the host city.

2.2.1 Space and 'the right to the city'

The term 'the right to the city' was first introduced by Lefebvre as the title of a book in 1968, and it reflects his concerns about the lack of working-class power in Paris in the late 1960s, when this group was being expelled from the city centre (LeGates and Stout, 2020). Ever since, this slogan has been adopted by the marginalised, the poor, individuals and groups around the world who feel excluded from aspects of city life. Over the decades, 'the right to the city' concept has been interpreted by different scholars in both theoretical (Lefebvre, 1991; Dikeç, 2001; Purcell, 2002; Busà, 2009; Marcuse, 2009; Plyushteva, 2009; Attoh, 2011; Harvey, 2012) and practical terms as a method with which to fight against unjust spatial patterns and the accompanying social relations (Gotham and Brumley, 2002; Ng et al. 2010; Shin, 2011; Kuymulu, 2014; Sun, 2014). The concept is also a crucial policy agenda which has been proposed by various international organisations, including UN-HABITAT, UNESCO and the World Bank, in order to facilitate social justice and an integrated society (Purcell, 2014).

'The right to the city' cannot be understood in isolation from Lefebvre's interpretations of urban space. Lefebvre regarded the city as the best soil to cultivate the urban, so he uses the concept 'the right to the city', as accessing and appropriating city space is crucial for 'envisioning, calling forth, and achieving a truly urban society' (Purcell, 2014: 150). According to Lefebvre (1996: 158), the right to the city is 'a transformed and renewed right to urban life for those who inhabit the city' (Lefebvre, 1996: 158). In his conception, the right to the city is closely related to urban space, it is those who live in the city and who contribute to the urban lived experience that endows them with the right to the city.

The right to the city involves two principal rights: the right to participation and the right to appropriation (Lefebvre, 1991). These two rights are explicitly spatialised in Lefevbrian analysis. 'The right to participation' holds that all urban inhabitants should be involved in any decision that contributes to the production of urban space (Lefebvre, 1991; Purcell, 2014). Here, participation is not procedural participation in existing structures of urban governance; instead, it relates to political activism that transforms the social process that shape capitalist urban space and its power relations (Kuymulu, 2014). To achieve this right requires urban inhabitants increasingly coming to produce and manage the space by themselves. The collective nature of rights will be realised when everyone acts as capable manager of the urban issues and engage in active

participation in urban building; consequently, the current city planners, officers, developers, architects will become redundant and urban dwellers will regain the control of the city (Purcell, 2014).

'The right to appropriation' refers to the right to access, occupy and use space, and to create new spaces which meet people's needs (Lefebvre, 1991). Lefebvre (1991) argued that the development of industrialisation breaks the vivid *œuvres*, and the exchange value of space suppresses the use value of space, which results in some groups being alienated from urban space. When space itself becomes an object of production and a tool of governance, the justice of rights fades away (Kuymulu, 2014). Therefore, the right to appropriation is not related to being physically present in existing cities, but to radically reconstruct social, political and economic relationships and to cultivate new urban spaces against spatial marginalisation and exclusion in any form (Purcell, 2014; Marcuse, 2014).

Lefebvre's approach to 'the right to the city' has been interpreted as a summary of all traditional rights (Attoh, 2011). It includes 'the right to information, the rights to use multiple services, the rights of users making known their ideas on the space and time of their activities in urban areas; the rights to the use of the centre' (Lefebvre, 1991:34) and 'the rights to freedom and of individualisation through socialisation' (Lefebvre, 1991:174). It is not a singular right, but rather a cluster of rights within all social classes. Harvey (2003, 2012) elaborated upon Lefebvre (1991)'s discussion and interprets the right to the city as one of the broad human rights, which is different from the rights that are built around individualism or property rights under the development logic of neoliberalism. He agreed with Lefebvre's radical views that the rights are used to 'make the city different by changing ourselves and vice versa' (Harvey, 2003: 939). Thus, the right to the city is a command over the distribution of urban surplus and privatisation, and could be finally achieved by both democratic management and democratising the space of the city (Harvey, 2012).

Lefebvre's arguments about the right to city and those of many scholars were concerned with active urban citizenship and provide insightful ideas into how an ideal city might look (McCann, 2002). He did not view the right to the city as an incremental addition to existing liberal-democratic rights, instead, he regarded it as an essential element of a wider political struggle for revolution (Purcell, 2014). Moreover, this concept offers a radical path which challenges the existing governance of the state

and capitalism (Lefebvre, 1991).

The openness and breadth of the concept has led many researchers to hone and develop unique meanings of the concept pertinent to their particular interpretations in different contexts. Some researchers connect the right to the city to national citizenship and regard it as a fundamental ingredient of a new model of urban citizenship (Dikeç, 2001; Purcell, 2003). Some scholars regard political rights as the fundamental aspect in the right to the city framework, for example, the right to practice autonomy (Phillips and Gilbert, 2005), and the right to cope with police ruthlessness, surveillance and state overreach (Mitchell and Heynen, 2009). Some emphasise socio-economic rights, such as the right to housing (Marcuse, 2008), the right to transportation (Bickl, 2005) and the right to natural resources (Phillips and Gilbert, 2005).

Although these interpretations of 'the right to the city' facilitate the reframing of urban politics, there are still some fundamental differences between Lefebvre (1991)'s original conception and the most contemporary initiatives. In Lefebvre (1991)'s unitary theory of space, he tried to describe the city as a totality, rather than focusing on specific areas of the city or particular aspects of urban life as urban planners do (Mlicka, 2007). The rights he addressed are rooted in daily lives, and within this he highlighted people's agency, that is, their capacity to manage their own lives. He viewed such a life as a complex whole, rather than in fragments, such as income, gender, race or class status (Purcell, 2014). In this way, his holistic view of space is narrowed down or materialised by the researchers, who tend to focus economically or politically on the space and its attached rights.

Furthermore, the original framework raised by Lefebvre aroused various critiques. On the one hand, he raised a radical proposal for overturning both the state and capitalism. Even though he advocates socialism, it is an idealised and unrealisable type which is different from existing and historical socialist regimes, such as those enacted in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China (Purcell, 2014). The socialism he proposed is more related with 'anarcho-syndicalism' 'libertarian socialism', which propose a clean break with state and capital control on the basis of collective self-governing (Purcell, 2014: 145). However, this radical proposal is not applicable within the existing institutional system (Shin, 2013).

On the other hand, the 'capaciousness' of rights in Lefebvre's theory seems to be everything and nothing at the same time (Purcell, 2014). His abstract theory lacks clarity about the rights' forms and what urban residents should specifically participate in; the rights are too abstract to be applied to a practical context (Sun, 2014; Kuymulu 2014). In addition, the inconsistency and incompatibility of the rights arouses ambiguity (Attoh, 2011). For example, the right to own private cars is contrary to the right to a clean and sustainable city. The right to ask for a high-quality house conflicts with the right to ask for more public leisure parks. His theories have not answered these practical questions. Therefore, Purcell (2002) argued that Lefebvre's theory raises more questions than it answers.

2.2.2 Who has the right to the city

Within the broad research on 'the right to the city', scholars have divergent views on whether the right of the city is collectively or individually based. Few researchers have held the view that the rights should be prioritised for individuals (Dworkin, 1978). Most scholars have agreed with Lefebvre (1991) and Harvey (2012) that the right to the city is a collective right for residents. Lefebvre (1991) argued it is people's everyday experience of inhabiting the city that entitles one to the right to the city, rather than one's nation-state citizenship, so the right to the city belongs to all city dwellers. Harvey (2012) indicated that a socially just city would provide equal opportunities for self-realisation for every resident in a city. Therefore, regardless of the person's place of origin and their nationality, all groups in cities should have access to the right to the city, including, for example, homeless people (Phillips and Gilbert, 2005; Van, 2005), immigrants (Dikeç, 2001), internal migrants (Gárriz Fernández, 2011), racial minorities, disabled people and those who are deprived of basic material and existing legal rights (Marcuse, 2009).

This non-exclusive place-based definition of the right to the city is of paramount importance in the context of Chinese development-induced migrants. Consistent with this placed-based perspective, if land is the most valuable asset of cities and land policies focus on all inhabitants, not only on land developers and original city dwellers, but also the newcomers as well as someone who would be affected by the outcomes of the spatial policy, then should all have access to the right to the city and should benefit from the spatial change process.

Therefore, building a collective identity across the lines of different social groups is key to addressing the issue around of exclusion from the right to the city. A shared group consciousness and collective identity is far more than individual access to resources and goes beyond a frame of individualism, as the existing system is founded on the exploitation of the many by the few and has produced unjust spatial patterns and formed unequal social classes (Attoh, 2011). In practice, privatisation and individualism hinder collective rights that promise social justice and harmony. Gated communities, exclusive golf clubs, VIP shopping centres and private hospitals are examples of ways of excluding most people from accessing resources. These spatial patterns are the manifestations of unjust social relations created under the neoliberal paradigm (which has even infiltrated Chinese state socialism in this study as well). These unequal spatial practices run against the collective nature of the right to the city and disrespect the life to appropriate space for economically vulnerable groups, breaking the right to democratically manage urban resources (Dikeç, 2001). Thus, advocating the collective needs of all city inhabitants to shape an ideal spatial pattern is crucial to breaking the unjust social relations within (Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 2009).

Based on this ideology, the right to the city framework provides a reformist platform for reducing social exclusion, discrimination, and inequality. Harvey (2012) called for active collective struggle for building a new urban society. To claim the right to the city in his view is to reclaim the 'shaping power' over the process of urbanisation, which is a process of redistribution of the capital surplus that is controlled by the few (Harvey, 2012).

The collective nature of the right to the city can be a weapon as well as a solution for addressing the social exclusion, disempowerment, and social injustice that marginalised groups experience. Firstly, the right to the city is not a God-given or constitutionally conferred right, but is rather the result of collective political struggles (Lefebvre, 1991). Thus, the public has the legitimacy to appropriate space and participate in decision-making processes. Secondly, the democratic distribution of goods, appropriation of space and access to political participation must be seen within a unified framework of reconstructing the social system and reversing the dominant geometries of social power (Qian and He, 2012). For another, as the right to the city is collectively owned by all those living in the city (Harvey, 2012), a collective citizenship and a shared identity across the lines of various marginal groups can be

built to facilitate equal social relations and can reshape the existing spatial patterns which exclude specific group of residents.

2.2.3 'The right to the city' as a weapon to fight against social injustice in China

As discussed in 2.1.3, the domination of abstract conceived space and subordination of lived space create manifold social injustices. Under the backdrop of market-oriented economic reform, the exchange value of space has constantly run roughshod over the use value of space. And this process is exemplified by a large group of rural people involuntarily migrating to urban resettlement communities because of government-led development projects. Migrants' right to appropriate rural space has been destroyed by land appropriation decisions, and there are insufficient laws to ensure migrants can freely choose where to live. Their right to participation has also been denigrated as Chinese displaced farmers have neither been involved in the decision-making process of resettlement, nor been given any systematic support to ensure they have a say in negotiating compensation (Keqin, 2009). In addition, institutional channels to appeal the misconduct of government agents during the displacement and resettlement process are absent, further hampering displacees' right to participation (Shin, 2011).

In response to the unjust land appropriation projects, both radical forms and soft forms of rights-defending actions have taken place by displaced farmers, such as marching, 'sit-down' strikes outside government offices, occupying the 'nail houses'[4], as well as refusing to pay property management fees in resettlement community or occupying public space for private use (Shin, 2013; Swider, 2015). The last two types of actions are also regarded as 'counter-cultural behaviours', which are similar to everyday forms of peasant resistance identified by Scott (2008) in his Malaysia case. These behaviours can be seen as soft forms of resistance and silent protest against the government's unfair displacement decision (Ye et al. 2013).

Existing studies have examined grassroot rights-defending activism mainly through the lens of citizenship theory, contentious politics and social movement study (Herold, 2011; Zhu, 2014; Cress and Snow, 2016; Darling, 2017; Fu, 2017; Islar and Irgil, 2018;

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[4] Occupying the 'nail houses' refers to residents' refusal to relocate and continuously live in their original houses after being informed of a land appropriation decision by the government.

Qian, 2020). Although these frameworks offer rich insights for understanding the mechanisms, processes and consequences of grassroots grievances and social resistance, these perspectives overlook the role of the 'spatial factor' in shaping conflicts between the state and the people. Specifically, unjust space production actions and uneven spatial patterns create hardships and grievances of marginalised groups and exclude them from the rights to the city.

Therefore, Lefebvre (1991) and Harvey (2012) provided a crucial spatial lens to understand rights-defending confrontations resulting from land-centred urbanisation in China. Although their theories are based on an anti-capitalism viewpoint, significant parts of their framework are also pertinent to China's socialist marketisation context. Starting from a spatial point of view, the production of space theory has explained the construction of unjust social relations underneath the current spatial patterns shaped by the urbanisation of China in the previous section (see 2.1.3). The right to the city framework, which is based on breaking unjust space production and reshaping the social relations bond to the existing spatial patterns, sheds light on analysing the land-centred right-defending activism amidst Chinese urbanisation.

The strengths of applying 'the right to the city' concept in China's context are two-fold. On the one hand, the breadth of this concept provides a universal framework for analysing the rights practices of marginalised groups shaped by different reasons, such as development-induced displaced farmers. Furthermore, 'the right to appropriation' and 'the right to participation' provide applicable frameworks to examine the citizenship practices of displaced farmers. In particular, the weak understanding of the collective nature of rights can be used to explain why deprivation and disfranchisement constantly occurred amidst the urbanisation in China.

On the other hand, the right to the city framework challenges the underlying mechanism that creates the deprivation of marginalised groups in China. In 1992, the introduction of the land leasing system in China marked a significant shift towards the widespread use of private capital in urban land development projects. This shift in development strategy has led to an era of rapid urban (re)development projects, such as the Pudong district development in Shanghai, the gentrification projects in Guangzhou, and the WRDS projects in northwest regions of China (Deng et al. 2021). Essentially, this surge in land-based development has unleashed a huge stock of land for value extraction, which resulted in a clash between the land's exchange value and

use value. This has been a significant challenge for individuals affected by such projects (He, 2012). In this context, the right to the city theory provides a reformist approach to address the social injustice that has arisen from the land-centred urbanisation in contemporary China.

However, the cases in China require nuanced localised interpretations based on the classical theories. Just as Feenberg (1995) stated, we can always find alternative modernity because there is never only one way to define the right to the city. The limitation of applying the right to the city framework in rights-defending activism cases in China lies in: the scope of rights is somehow limited in the Chinese context because national citizenship is hindered by the household registration (Hukou) system in China, which breaks the universal and collective nature of the 'rights' as Lefebvre (1991) and (Harvey, 2012) stressed. The Hukou system not only creates intended spatial segmentation between rural and urban space, but also divides Chinese people into urban and rural groups, where rural residents have fewer rights in terms of housing, employment, education and social welfare than urban residents (Huang, Guo and Tang, 2010). Such spatial and identity segregation goes against the fundamental principle of justice based on 'the right to the city' which confers equal opportunities for self-realisation for everyone (Harvey, 2012)

Furthermore, due to the influence of the Hukou system, state-authorised conception of rights is deeply rooted in the public mindset (Lin, 2018), which is irreconcilable with what Lefebvre (1991) insisted about the principle of the right to the city: the right is collectively owned by living in the city. Therefore, it is necessary to develop localised interpretations of the right to the city framework to examine the impact of the Hukou system in China.

In addition, a gap between the Chinese notion of rights and the original concept of rights in 'the right to the city' framework, which potentially limits the understanding of the original theory. Selden and Perry (2003) noted rights-related activism in China is essentially economically-oriented rather than politically-oriented. In other words, grassroots social resistance in China has been characterised by an ambiguous political direction, and protesters rarely make any claims for political freedom, instead, they strive for economic interests, such as claiming subsistence, welfare and monetary compensation (Ying, 2007; Sun, 2014). The economically-centred notion of rights narrows down the original meaning of rights in 'the right to the city', which regards the

rights as a complex whole rather than specific domains of life.

Moreover, in terms of the forms of social resistance, Chinese marginalised groups are inclined to fight for rights in a negotiated non-confrontational way by arousing the attention of central authorities within the existing political system, rather than trying to directly compete against or threaten the state control of the Chinese Communist party (Perry, 2008; Shin, 2013). This is different from the slogan of radically challenging the fundamental unjust social relations underneath specific spatial patterns, or even overturning state control as 'the right to the city' requested (Lefebvre, 1991).

Numerous explanations illustrate the formation of current Chinese rights conception. On the one hand, a historically developed state-society relationship in China explains why Chinese pro-rights activism has been co-opted by or absorbed into the current political regime and the leadership of the Communist Party of China, rather than challenged it (Lin, 2018). In the planned economy of the 1950s to the 1970s, collective farming systems and communal living experiences, in which the peasantry shared resources and worked as part of a centrally controlled unit, largely shaped citizens' notion of membership and the collective. Chinese people tend to regard their rights as being derived from their collective membership or as state conferred rather than nature given at birth (Nathan, 1985; Perry, 2008). Thus, the state-authorised rights conception makes Chinese people tend towards a strong sense of obligation to uphold the state and the Party. Furthermore, the authoritarian regime maintains a sharp vigilance towards potential forces which may look to overthrow its power. The government restrains collective protests or demonstrations against them using police detainment (Fu, 2017). Therefore, resisters are intimidated by the state, they know how far they can go without incurring the violent wrath of a vigilant authoritarian state.

On the other hand, socioeconomic security has been granted a central priority in Chinese political discourse, which has resulted in a divergent understanding of the 'rights' in the Chinese context (such as resisters claiming socioeconomic rights in the spate of land conflicts) as contrasted with Western understandings of rights (such as emphasising individual inalienable rights to life, freedom and property as Locke (1960) indicated in the circumscribed role of government).

The economic-centred rights conception among Chinese sourced from the state asserted the 'moral economy', which emphasises that centralised power is legitimated

by its provision and protection of Chinese people's rights to subsistence and their livelihood (Perry, 2008). This 'moral economy' notion can be traced back to Confucianist thinking over 2,000 years ago and is deeply rooted in Chinese subsistence economy, and still influences people's conception of rights in China today (Perry, 2008). 'Confucianism legitimated the right to subsistence and made it central to ruler (state)-subject (society) relationship' (Lin et al. 2021: 171). Exchanging political support from the people for economic security and prosperity from the state illustrates the proactive role that the Chinese state constantly plays. It also shapes the public's conception of rights' (Lin et al. 2021; Perry, 2008). This can, in part, explain, why Chinese displaced farmers demanded economic rights more than political rights during the land expropriation process (Sun, 2014).

Taking all the above into consideration, the original right to the city theory needs localised interpretations which chime with China's political, socioeconomic and cultural context when examining the rights-related activism amidst Chinese urbanisation processes. As a socialist country with strong authoritarian power, the radical revolutionary pathway suggested by Lefebvre (1991) for addressing claims for the right to the city is perhaps not applicable to the Chinese specificities. Instead, a moderate and long-term reform, with special emphasis on collective rights and inclusive participation in political decision-making (Lefebvre, 1991; Harvey, 2012) provides a more practicable approach in the Chinese case. Just as Dikeç (2001: 1790) stated, 'it is urban political life which is to be changed, not the city per se'.

2.2.4 'The right to the city' as an agenda to promote an inclusive and democratic society in China

Democratic participation, decision-making and social relations each play a significant role in 'right to the city' debates (Attoh, 2011; Harvey, 2014). So, when adopting 'the right to the city' theory in China's context to address spatial-related social injustice, we also need to investigate the development of democracy in China.

Whether democracy existed in China depends on how we define it. The Chinese understanding of democracy diverges from Western normative interpretations, such as regarding democracy as a commitment to fairness, justice, and 'concerns over the outcomes of democratic practices' (Bell and Staeheli, 2001: 179); or considering both the procedure and outcomes of democratic management, including inclusive decision-

making, exerting collective power and expanding collective action to conceptualising and shaping urban space (McCann, 2005). Also, Chinese 'democracy' differs from liberal democracy which is instead characterised by the separation of powers, competitive elections of top leaders and a multi-party political system.

Chinese politicians insist China is holding deliberative democracy because the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) contains multi-party consultations under the CCP's leadership. The normative deliberative democrats allow for different opinions, open access to information, rational deliberation and inclusive participation in their processes of decision-making, while in comparison to China's situation, the general public cannot fully access such a mechanism, and the members of the CPPCC are usually selected from the privileged class, also, the CPPCC *per se* does not have any law-making powers (Leib et al. 2006). Thus, the construction of such a system is far from realising democracy in terms of both inclusive and equal procedural participation and on final decision-making (Ngeow, 2014).

In this way, a range of scholars have criticised democracy in China as merely a fiction and propaganda. For example, He (1996) considers Chinese-style 'democracy' as a formalistic democracy, which intends to conduct paternalistic power instead of encouraging any public control or accountability over the government. Lee (2010) critiques the way the CPPCC has shaped Chinese democracy as being more like a consultative one, rather than a deliberative one. Sajor and Ongsakul (2007: 197) indicate that in many transitional countries, including China, 'institutions for participatory planning and for equitable negotiations in conflict situations are non-existent or undeveloped to date'. However, Bo (2010) notes that although China has built a legitimate government with asserted 'democracy', it does not mean that the legitimate government is the outcome of any democratic process. Besides, Leib et al. (2006) argued the 'deliberative democracy' that the Chinese government asserted can be skewed in favour of Communist party members or someone who is loyal to the party disciplines. Under these circumstances, people's right to democratic participation has been largely suppressed and deprived (Zhu, 2014).

Therefore, 'the right to participation' that Lefebvre (1991) and Harvey (2014) highlighted should be re-emphasised here to further address the social injustice which results from spatial production and to promote equal and inclusive civil participation in China. For China, the interpretation of 'participation' cannot be simply translated as

including all inhabitants to exercise full influence on decision-making (Purcell, 2002), because this explanation is still an abstract, vague and unpractical slogan which lacks a substantive explanation of what kind of decision-making the public should be involved in.

The 'policy-as-discourse' and 'what's the problem represented to be (WPR)' approaches from Bacchi (2000, 2009) can be used as supplementary explanations in addition to 'the right to participation' theory in terms of specifying what kind of political participation Chinese citizens should be involved in to challenge fundamental social injustices. Bacchi (2009) challenged the traditional perspective of regarding public policies as being responses to existing problems 'out there' awaiting solutions. Instead, she argues that policy is shaped and created as a political process and the policy discourses include implicit representations depicting 'problems' the policymakers intended to address. In this way, the choice of specific representation is always advantageous for some groups but disadvantageous for others. That is to say that, not only the policy per se could be unjust, but also the way the policy problem is discursively shaped adds to the injustice. Therefore, democratic 'participation' in spatial-related decision-making in China should not stay at the level of welcoming or rejecting a policy initiative, but at the level of participating in the actual constitution that shapes the issues (Bacchi, 2000).

In addition to 'the right to participation', the collective nature of rights should also be highlighted when constructing a Chinese-style democracy. In practice, the Chinese government has already taken some participatory governance measures when making policies to alleviate public dissatisfaction during land interventions, such as public hearings. However, protests against the government's urban expansion projects have still constantly happened. This is because public rights have not been taken seriously as a collective right. The intention for urban expansion is to still benefit a small group of social elites, not for the common interests. The development of civil organisations, NGOs and social alliances could be an effective way of facilitating the political participation of the public (Shin, 2013).

2.3 Social integration: the impact of space production on migrants

'The right to the city' theory has been proven as a starting point to examine the dispossession that displaced people have experienced, but the theory is insufficient

for understanding all consequences of displacement for the affected population. For example, emotional trauma, losing personal relations, lacking the sense of belonging and the ensuing identity crisis, tend not to be interpreted as a loss of 'rights', but significantly affect displaced subjects (Maria, 2017). Therefore, the social integration framework offers a necessary supplement to study the complex outcomes, especially the subject-related influence of urban space production and the consequent displacement of the rural-urban displaced people. Beyond this, as a continuous and long-lasting process, the social integration framework provides an angle with which to assess migrants' experiences over a long period of time and examine the long-term impacts of their migration (Penninx and Martniello, 2004).

2.3.1 Conceptualising 'social integration' in migration study

How and to what extent migrants incorporate into the host society is a major theme in migration studies in Sociology. Many concepts have been used to describe the process of migrants being incorporated into a host society, including social inclusion (Boswell, 2008; Cabannes and Raposo, 2013; Silver, 2015), social adaptation (Sonn, 2002; Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore, 2018), social incorporation (Pries, 2003; Brettell, 2005), social integration (Beresnevičiūtė, 2003; Ager and Strang, 2004; Heckmann, 2005; Ager and Strang, 2008; Hamberger, 2009; Loch, 2014; Craig, 2015), social assimilation (Gordon, 1964; Portes and Zhou, 1993; Dustmann, 1996; Alba and Nee, 1997; Parker, 2005) and social absorption (Wu, 2000). Each concept has its own distinct focus and has been applied to different contexts. For example, assimilation is understood as a unidirectional process whereby migrants erase their background and completely accept the culture, structure and politics of the host society (Gordon 1964; Castles and Miller 2009). Similarly, social adaptation is also a one-way journey for migrants in coming to terms with their new surroundings, and thereby can be seen as representing an early stage of 'assimilation' (Budyta-Budzyńska, 2008).

Compared with other notions, social integration is an umbrella term that contains some common characters of the rest concepts (Boswell, 2008). For example, social integration indicates the holistic process of newcomers adapting to a new society, while social assimilation only suggests an end stage of integration (Heckmann, 2005). Furthermore, social integration is a fundamental concept in functionalist theories which defines a mode of relations (Beresnevičiūtė, 2003). Therefore, the foundation and the breadth of the concept makes it the most appropriate term to be used in studying the

broad range of social participations of internal migrants in this research.

'Social integration' is a crucial concept stemming from immigration study, and attracts a broad level of attention from both academics and policy makers. In policy studies, it is a highly normative concept which is often used as a policy goal of dealing with immigration issue (Craig, 2015). As early as 1966, integration was defined by the UK Home Secretary Roy Jenkins as an incorporation process 'with equal opportunity accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance, rather than a flattening process of assimilation' (Lester 1967: 267). The term is widely used in refugee and immigration studies, which implies an assumption about a desirable social order with a high degree of internal cohesion and can be seen as a part of nation-building (Rudiger and Spencer, 2003; Ager and Strang, 2004). In addition, the concept predominated in ethnic policy discourse in most Eastern European countries post-1990 (Beresnevičiūtė, 2003).

In academic research, the Chicago School of Urban Sociology popularised the term 'integration' in the early 20th century. Since then, different definitions have emerged with various emphases rooted in their various social contexts. Some of the researchers define the term from a social equality perspective, which suggests equal opportunities for both newcomers and indigenous people (Zincone and Caponio, 2004). Others define social integration by using key indicators, such as migrant's participation in the economic, political, social and cultural life, and form a shared and inclusive sense of belonging (Ponzo et al. 2013). However, both interpretations arise some controversies because they mainly target refugees and economically venerable groups, while the well-off migrants are assumed to have no integration-related needs (Gidley and Jayaweera, 2010).

Moreover, the term 'social integration' can be also defined from both sending and receiving standpoints. For migrants, integration refers to a process of learning a new culture, the acquisition of rights, access to positions, building personal relationships with members of the receiving society and forming a sense of belonging in the host society (Heckmann, 2005). For the native population, integration means treating migrants as members of society without prejudice and respecting their original language, culture and religious belief (Caponio, 2005). There is a tendency that European countries increasingly recognises the influence of the sending context, and seeks to intensify their partnerships with the origin countries in developing effective

and fair migration policies (European Commission, 2003). Critics argue that although defining integration from both indigenous and newcomers' perspective is a more comprehensive standpoint than a purely migrant-oriented focus, this understanding is still derived from the receiving point of view.

To sum up, definitions of social integration are variegated and divergent within migration studies, some common points can be summarised from the mainstream opinions. On the one hand, integration is a two-way interaction which contains a mutual recognition between migrants and the host society (Laurentsyeva and Venturini, 2017). It is not about migrants losing their own identity and characteristics, but rather about them reaching mutual accommodations and equally contributing to the development of host society (Castles et al. 2002; Kivisto and Faist, 2010).

On the other hand, social integration is a gradual and long-term process, rather than an end state (Penninx and Martniello, 2004). In this regard, Heckmann (2005) defines integration as 'a long-lasting process of inclusion and acceptance of migrants in the core institutions, relations and statuses of the receiving society' (Heckmann, 2005:15). This definition represents a mainstream view because it contains both a normative condition and a pathway towards that norm (King and Skeldon, 2010). Similarly, Lopez (2017) regards integration as representing a life-long experience with long-term impact on migrants. Duncan (1933) puts forward a 'three generation cycle' which indicates integration as being an intergenerational process. The 'race relation cycle' from Park (1950) indicates that integration is a long-lasting changing relationship between migrants and native residents and is experienced in a sequence of contact, competition, accommodation and assimilation.

2.3.2 Applying international migration framework to Chinese rural-urban migrants

Within migration studies, there are essentially two types of migrants, international migrant and internal migrant, classified according to whether the settlers cross national boundaries or not (Mabogunje, 1970). Beyond this, these two categories can be further divided into voluntary migrants and forced migrants. Voluntary migration happens because of, for example, economic and labour mobility reasons, whereas forced migration can be caused by conflicts, wars, natural disasters and development projects (Sarvimäki et al. 2009). Development-induced displaced farmers in China, in

this study, are unambiguously a type of internal forced migrants.

Although migrants are classified according to different motivations of migration, the social integration framework can be applied to various types of migrants for four reasons, including international migrants and internally displaced farmers in China. First of all, the differences between international and internal migration have become increasingly blurred as 'the journeys of migrants are becoming increasingly multiple, complex and fragmented' (King and Skeldon, 2010: 1619).

In addition, there are plenty of similarities between international migrants and Chinese displaced farmers. The most significant factor is the Chinese Hukou system (details see Chapter 3, section 3.3), which works as an 'internal passport', playing a central role in controlling the rural-urban population flow and granting urban and rural residents differential citizenships (Fan, 2002; Lin and Yi, 2011). Under this system, the rural-urban migrants in China are confronted with differential citizenship (Wu, 2018), which means although Chinese rural population are mobile within the national borders, they still cannot access the same rights as their urban counterparts. This situation is similar to international migrants who cannot access the full range of services and rights in the host countries.

Moreover, even within China, internal migrants suffer from linguistic barriers to integrate into the host community as the international migrants do. It is because different dialects are used in different areas of China, and some people from rural areas can only speak dialect, which makes it difficult for rural-urban migrants to participate in social activities and to access decent jobs in the cities which requires Mandarin speaker (Tse, 2016).

Finally, Chinese ethnic minority migrants also face difficulties in regard of cultural integration and lacking a sense of belonging when they move within the country. For example, previous research has found relocated Chinese ethnic minority groups, such as Tibetan and Uyghur migrants, face more difficulties within social integration compared to the Han majority migrants in China due to a lack of education, social-economic advantages, acculturation and linguistic skills (Han and Paik, 2017).

These obstacles for migrants to integrate into the host environment challenge international and internal migrants alike. In fact, social integration policies for internal migrants are often transferred from the experience of international migrants, and a

mutual learning process also confirms the similarities between the two group of migrants. Therefore, it is possible to take international migrants integration framework as a reference point for a Chinese internal migrant study, and applying a theory stemming from immigration study to internal rural-urban migrantion helps expand the original concept.

2.3.3 Dimensions of social integration for rural-urban migrants in China

The concept of social integration is multi-dimensional and can be broken down into several domains. Researchers have developed various indicating frameworks to define and measure social integration as well as developing efficient strategies to promote integration in different context (Craig, 2015). Some recent frameworks include : two dimensions of integration on public and personal aspects (Kearns and Whitley 2015); three dimensions on legal-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural spheres (Penninx and Martniello, 2004); four domains on social relation, economic, psychological and cultural integration (Alba and Nee, 1997) or economic, social, political, and cultural aspects (Andersen, 1999). Moreover, Gordon conceptualised seven dimensions (Gordon, 1964) and Ager and Strang identified ten domains (Ager and Strang, 2008). In general, there is no 'one size fits all' framework to examine the social integration of all migrants. We need to consider the types of migrants along with the socioeconomic, cultural, political and social contexts of both sending and receiving society when deciding on the appropriate array of indicators.

Among migration studies, the four domains of integration framework by Heckmann (2005) is one of the most feasible models in empirical research to analyse how and to what extent Chinese rural migrants incorporate into urban host community. As this framework covers both the structural and the sociocultural aspects of social integration of migrants, which fits to examine the domains that may be experienced differently by each individual (Spencer and Charsley, 2016). The four basic domains include structural, cultural, interactive and identificational integration, (Heckmann, 2005). Structural integration concerns migrant's 'acquisition of rights and the access to position in the core institutions', which related to economy and labour market, education, qualification and housing system, welfare and health institutions, and full political citizenship in the host society (Heckmann, 2005: 15).

In terms of Chinese rural-urban migrants, the literature reveals that this group have

confronted a series of difficulties in accessing equivalent employment, education, housing and social welfare to local urbanites because of the Chinese Hukou system, which protects the long-lasting development strategy of sacrificing the interests of rural areas and rural people to facilitate urban growth (Yang, 2013; Zhu, 2014; Chen and Wang, 2015; Swider, 2015). Specifically, rural Hukou prevent rural-urban migrants from accessing the same housing (Shin, 2011), state schools (Wu, 2011; Ye, 2016), high quality medical care (Solinger, 1999; Zhu, 2014), social insurance schemes (Nielsen et al. 2005) and pensions (Ding, 2007) as urban citizens. For the government-led development-induced migrants, although some of them were able to transform their paper identity from rural Hukou to urban Hukou as part of the compensation package (policies varies in different cities), they still face structural integration challenges because rural dwellers have lagged behind in family wealth accumulation, education and professional skills attainment for a long time as remnants of the Chinese rural-urban dichotomy (details see Chapter 3, section 3.3).

As for attaining position and status in core institutions in China, unequal employment opportunities rural migrants experienced, and the differential treatment compared with original urban citizens in the job market are identified in the literature. For instance, migrants are likely to experience employment segregation through sectors, occupations and wage gaps that cannot be explained by productivity-related differences (Meng and Zhang, 2001; Zhao, 2005). Rural migrants are also found to be more likely to bear hardships and to be more easily manageable than urban workers (Knight et al. 1999). Hence, they tend to take jobs with poor working conditions or high risks which would automatically be shunned by urban job hunters, such as manufacturing, construction and services (Huang, Guo and Tang, 2010). In other words, rural-urban migrants are more likely to be exposed to jobs with informality, precarity, low skill requirements, lower pay, longer working hours, restricted working benefits or even a dangerous and unsafe environment. The disadvantaged position in the job market greatly hinders their structural integration into the urban community.

The issues mentioned above render employment status the priority in examining the integration of rural-urban migrants, which is also the case in this research. Employment not only enhances the chances migrants have of remaining in the host society, but also works as a crucial element for acquiring cognitive, cultural, social

competencies and social recognition (Penninx and Martniello, 2004). In this sense, employment is a key indicator of social integration.

Cultural integration is linked to migrants' cognitive, behavioural and attitudinal changes (Heckmann, 2005:10). In terms of rural-urban migrants in China, difficulties in accepting and acting according to the values and norms of the host environment have been identified in empirical research (Qian and He, 2012). For example, although rural migrants move from shabby bungalows to modern flats, they may still maintain their old rural living habits and self-sufficient lifestyle, such as doing their laundry in public areas and planting crops in public green land, which can be perceived as lagging behind in cultural integration (Xie, 2010).

In addition, Heckmann (2005) indicates cultural integration is an intergenerational phenomenon which throws up differences in adapting to urban culture between generations. This point is verified in the Chinese context, as might be expected, the older generations are found to have more difficulties in attaining any cultural integration compared with their children*(Tong* et al. 2019).

Interactive integration refers to the acceptance and inclusion of migrants 'in the primary relationships and social networks of the host society' (Heckmann, 2005:10). In China, rural-urban migrants are found to have a narrow social network after having resettled in the urban community (Yue et al. 2013). They tend to keep close relationship with old friends who came from the same village, or make new friends who have had similar migrant experiences to them, rather than building any new connections with urban members of the host society (Tse, 2016). The intra-migrant and kinship-related groups are largely restricted to migrant building connections and attachment feelings with the host city, which ultimately lead to a lower sense of belonging to the city.

Identificational integration indicates a sense of belonging and identification on the basis of fulfilling the other three layers of integration (Heckmann, 2005). It concerns more with subjective feelings and is seen as being the slowest and hardest process of integration (Heckmann and Schnapper, 2003). Tse (2016) notes that Chinese rural-urban migrants lack the sense of belonging after living in the receiving community for a long period of time. Some of them feel unaccepted and excluded even though they have successfully participated in core institutions (Wang et al. 2015). In addition to

this, some of them experience a vague self-identification as a result of local discrimination, which engenders a lack of confidence. Furthermore, psychological stress caused by their experience of being forcibly displaced, anger towards the administrative authorities and a loss of trust in society result in unsatisfactory social integration status (Colson, 1991).

In conclusion, to examine the whole journey of displacement in this research, social integration provides a necessary framework with rich prior empirical studies to examine the process and experience of the migrants after their displacement. The complex nature of internal migrants in China caused by the institutional barriers such as the Hukou system and cultural barriers such as language and ethics, makes the international migration framework applicable to this research. To understand both tangible and intangible aspects of the migrant's integration process, the thesis has adopted Heckman's four domains to examine the life experience of the subject in the host society.

Conclusions

This chapter has identified 'the production of space' (Lefebvre, 1991), 'the right to the city' (Lefebvre, 1991; Harvey, 2012) and the 'social integration' of migrants (Heckmann, 2005) as the three main theoretical strands embedded into different stages of land-centred urbanisation in China. The review of the literature has demonstrated space production, as a tool to facilitate capital accumulation, has restricted residents' 'right to appropriation' and 'right to participation'. Which, in turn, impacts a subject's social integration in the context of development-induced migration, and consequently leads to the social movements by urban dwellers as they fight for the 'right to the city' (Lefebvre, 1991; Harvey, 2012).

The chapter has identified that the dialectical concept of space provides a spatial lens to identify and review empirically the social relations around space and its development. The review of Lefebvre's (1991) spatial triad has indicated the disequilibrium between the three conceptual spaces: the dominant position of 'conceived space' that is controlled by the social elites against the 'lived space' that is the everyday life of the urban dwellers, which also reflected the conflicts of interest between social elites and city dwellers around the exchange value and use value of space. In addition, this chapter highlighted that space is political and ideological, and

shaping space is a political process (Lefebvre, 1991). The political nature of the space is evident in the manifestation of unjust spatial segregation and social class through the construction of dominant discourses on the contemporary city by politicians and investors. In this sense, the production of space framework provided a crucial spatial lens to examine the formation of social injustice in different forms and the grassroots grievances during the land appropriation process in China.

Furthermore, the three circuits of capital flow developed by Harvey (1978, 2003) illustrated the predominant role of space in resolving the crisis of capital over-accumulation and boosting the economy in both capitalist neoliberal contexts and socialist China under market-oriented economic reform. Although great similarities between the neoliberal development path and the market-oriented economy in China have been identified, such as adopting the 'growth-first' development strategy, the very different economic (transitional economy from planned one to market economy), political (one-party authoritarian regime with the state penetration into market operation), social (Hukou system) and cultural (patriotic enthusiasm and spirit of utter devotion rooted in the collectivism of the socialist country) contextual environment of China distinguished itself from the experience of the West.

Critiquing both Lefebvre and Harvey's theories in the Chinese context, this chapter has identified the significant role of the state, with excessive involvement of the government in market operations and land-centred urbanisation, as the main factor distinguishing China's experience from the orthodox neoliberal countries, where state control in market operation is minimal. For this reason, this thesis has incorporated the findings of the recent empirical studies in China using Lefebvre and Harvey's theory and provided a synthetic framework through a spatial lens that examines the underlying dynamics driving urban spatial production – the institutional mechanisms shaping fundamental social injustice.

This chapter has identified that it is appropriate to link the theory of 'the right to the city' to the rights-defending activism in China in order to further explore the impact of space production on individuals as the focus of this thesis. Existing literature has highlighted how space production restricts residents' 'right to appropriation' and 'right to participation', which consequently led to urbanites' social movements to fight for the right to the city (Lefebvre, 1991; Harvey, 2012). In addition, I have reviewed the formation of Chinese citizens' conceptions of their rights and explained how these

conceptions shaped the soft and moderate forms of rights-defending practices. Moreover, the chapter has emphasised how rights are collectively owned by city residents which could be a reform direction to overcome the deprivation and disfranchisement of citizens amidst urbanisation in China.

Finally, literature on 'social integration' has been reviewed to facilitate the understanding of the long-term and subjective-related displacement impact on internal migrants. Previous empirical studies have shown that rural-urban displacement has resulted in a range of challenges for Chinese rural migrants to integrate into the host city. This chapter has justified the feasibility of applying a social integration framework of international immigration to a comparable study of Chinese internal migrants. Heckmann's (2005) four domains of integration, including structural, cultural, interactive and identificational integration, have provided a feasible framework for investigating the displacement experiences of Chinese rural-urban resettlers. Among the multi-level indicators in this framework, employment status has been identified as a key to social integration because it is crucial for acquiring cognitive, cultural, social competencies and social recognition in the host society (Penninx and Martniello, 2004).

In summary, the literature review has brought together the theoretical stands which address the lacuna of social integration studies underpinned by the fundamental spatial perspective. In addition, the limitations of applying a capital-centric spatial practice view in China's context have also been identified, which allows a synthetic framework to be proposed to consider 'space', 'rights' and 'social integration' for the whole processes and the complex outcomes of land-centred urbanisation in contemporary China.

Chapter 3 The context of urbanisation and land expropriation in China

Introduction

The expropriation of rural land and the subsequent forced displacement of its inhabitants are hallmark features of land- centred urbanisation in China. This process has been underpinned by the state-led transition from an agriculture-based, planned economy into a market-oriented integrated economy which has been ongoing since the late 1970s. Compared with urbanisation in Western countries with free economies and democratic political polities, urbanisation in China is clearly divergent both economically and politically (Lin, 2007). The state plays a significant role in the economy and land ownership of China as well as dominating the country's urbanisation process. Additionally, China's unique household registration system (Hukou) sets Chinese urbanisation apart from other countries. The degraded notions of citizenship and accompanying unequal access to public services for rural Hukou residents, together with unjust compensation policies for land expropriation and unsustainable social welfare support, put rural-urban displaced farmers in a disadvantaged position (Lian, 2016). This adds another level of complexity when examining these people's experiences in integrating into the host city environment.

Considering these contexts, this chapter broadly introduces the economic, political, institutional and social background of land-centric urbanisation in contemporary China. The chapter firstly provides an overview of economic development and urbanisation in modern China and discusses the influence of neoliberalism in this process. It subsequently reviews the institutional set up of the land ownership system and the related policies that govern land expropriation as well as defining compensation levels and conditions. The chapter also discusses the evolution of the Hukou and social welfare systems, which not only provide the relevant institutional context for addressing the land expropriation process in Yinchuan but also contribute to the understanding of the dynamics and challenges in displaced farmers' lives in the city as well as the evolving state-society relations in China.

3.1 The economic and political context of urbanisation in China

The urbanisation of China, since the beginning of the transitional economic reform in 1978, has brought dramatic economic restructuring and urban development.

Particularly since the 1990s, robust economic growth, increasing numbers of modern cities and improved living standards are all results of urbanisation in China. In addition to the external impacts of global neoliberalism and the internal market-oriented economy transition, the distinctive political context is characterised by a strong omnipresent state which has played a central part in deciding the scale, speed and extent of the urbanisation of China.

3.1.1 Transitional economy and urban growth

The economic development and subsequent urbanisation process in China can be categorised into two distinct phases defined by the market-oriented reform since 1978. The time frame between the formation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the implementation of market-oriented economic policies in 1978 is commonly referred to as the pre-reform era, during which the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) adopted a centrally planned command economy model similar to that of the Soviet Union (Wu, 2018). In the 1950s, the state controlled and directed most of the country's economic output by setting production goals, controlling prices and allocating resources in economic activities (Weber, 2020). Between 1958 and 1961, Chairman Mao announced the Great Leap Forward plan – a five-year plan to greatly improve the economic prosperity of China through collectivising agriculture and widespread industrialisation (Li and Yang, 2005). For example, household agriculture was abolished in favour of the collectivisation of agriculture, with farmers working for a centrally controlled joint organisation – the rural collectives – which distributed the land resources and financial benefits to rural households based on the labour inputs of household farmers (Wang and Tan, 2020).

Regarding industrial goods, inputs and outputs were allocated by administrative means in accordance with a plan developed by the State Planning Commission while market forces were largely eliminated in industry and large-scale commerce. Wages were set and skilled workers were allocated to work units by the government rather than the labour market (Qian and He, 2012). Facing geo-political instabilities caused by the Cold War in the mid-1960s, China prioritised heavy industry through extract surplus from the agriculture industry by controlling prices and the free flow of the rural population. A decade of this policy led to a situation where effective growth supported by state-led industrialisation reached its limit; at the same time, urban consumption

was suppressed as a result of the overemphasis on heavy industry (Shen and Spence, 1995; Fan, 2002).

Between 1962 and 1977, due to the failure of the Great Leap Forward in 1961 and the initiation of the Cultural Revolution by Chairman Mao between 1966 and early 1977, China experienced a concerted period of anti-urbanisation. Anti-urbanisation policies became the national policy and, at that time, led to over 20 million urban residents (mainly young people[5]) being forcefully relocated to rural areas and their Hukou status was converted from urban to rural (Chen et al. 2020). In this period, only 21 new cities were developed and the annual urban population rate increased at a rate of 1.3%, which was below the natural population increase rate of 1.75% (Gu, Hu and Cook, 2017). By the end of 1977, there were only 166 million urban dwellers, which accounted for just 17.52% of the total population[6]. By the late 1970s, China's economy was on the verge of collapse after decades of central planning and social-political movements launched by Mao Zedong; in 1976, GDP 'growth' in China was -1.52%. In contrast to the prosperity seen in neighbouring countries and Western economies, China was in a deep crisis and desperate for fundamental change (Wu, 2010a).

The year 1978 represented a turning point for China when the Reform and Opening-Up policy was introduced by then President Xiaoping Deng. This policy relaxed the rigid control of the Hukou system and allowed rural migrants to participate in economic activities in the city. China then started to transition from a planned economy to a socialist market economy seeing significant economic restructuring and accelerated urban growth (Sigley, 2006). From 1978 to 2017, the GDP in China grew at an average annual rate of 9.5%, which was historically unprecedented (Jian et al. 2021).

Table 3.1 highlights that the number of Chinese cities and the urban population has boomed between 1978 and today. From 1978 to 1993, for example, the number of cities in China increased dramatically from 193 to 570, with an average of almost 22

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[5] This movement is known as Down to the Countryside Movement with the aim of redistributing excess urban population following the Great Chinese Famine and the Great Leap Forward, and encouraging urban young aldult to further their education and cultivate their skills by living among the rural population (Nettina, 2018).
[6] Soured from World Bank, Available from:
https://data.worldbank.org.cn/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS?locations=CN [Accessed 03 April 2021]

new cities each year (Gu, 2019). At the same time, the urban population increased sharply from 172 million in 1978 to 459 million in 2000, and the proportion of the urban population in the overall population of China doubled from 17.9% in 1978 to 36.2% in 2000 (Gu, Hu and Cook, 2017). In 2010, for the first time in Chinese history, there was almost an equal number of people living in rural and urban areas. Subsequently, urban population growth constantly exceeded rural growth, finally reaching 60.6% of the total population in 2019 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2020).

Table 3.1 Urban and rural population and urbanisation levels in China from 1949-2021

Year	Total population (10^4)	Urban population (10^4)	Proportion of the urban population to the total population (%)	Rural population (10^4)	Proportion of the rural population to the total population (%)
1949	54167	5765	10.6	48402	89.4
1978	96259	17245	17.9	79014	82.1
1990	114333	30195	26.4	84138	73.6
2000	126743	45906	36.2	80837	63.8
2010	134091	66978	49.9	67113	50.1
2015	136782	74916	56.1	61866	43.9
2021	141260	91425	64.7	49835	35.5

Sources: (1) Data for 2021 sourced from National Bureau of Statistics of China (2021) (2) Data for 1949-2015 sourced from Gu, Hu and Cook (2017).

Urban population growth in China can be attributed mainly to powerful state manipulation through a host of policies such as the Hukou system and administrative designations of statutory cities and towns (such as reclassifying towns as cities) (Chen, Liu and Tao, 2013). During the rapid urbanisation period since 1978, urban population growth did not occur because of natural population growth in the city. Instead, it was more likely the result of either state-led rural-urban migration or governmental upgrading of a village's administrative level from rural town to urban city through administrative regulation policies (Lian, 2014). Urban research has indicated that China's natural population increase rate in cities is typically around 1%, while the internal migration growth rate in cities can be as high as 13.5% annually (Bai, 2015). The breakneck rate of internal migration demonstrates the state's all-encompassing interventionist influence on the urbanisation process, a population growth approach which has created social issues for internal migrants (Hamnett, 2020). Chinese urbanisation-induced rural migrants have encountered unique and manifold

institutional barriers when entering the host city, particularly under the discriminatory rural and urban Hukou system (see section 3.3).

3.1.2 The development of neoliberalism in China

In addition to internal reform, it is undeniable that the power of globalisation and China's integration into the global capital flow propelled the market economy transition. Indeed, countries that embraced the neoliberal ideology became valuable cases for China to learn from during the ongoing economic transitions. For example, the high-level delegations to Japan, France, Switzerland, Belgium, Denmark and Germany in 1978 highlighted the disadvantages of the planned economy for capital accumulation and accelerated China's opening-up policy. Additionally, a group of young Chinese economists' visit to Hungary and Yugoslavia in 1987 played a crucial role in preventing the 'big bang' price liberalisation originally planned for 1988 (Hua, Luo and Zhang, 2016). In such a context, neoliberalism provided a useful lens to examine how global and national political-economic transformation can affect economic development and (re)production (He and Wu, 2009).

Neoliberalism became a hegemonic ideology and response to resolving the crises spreading among capitalist countries in the 1970s (Harvey, 2005; Weber, 2018). Whilst the crisis originated in the capitalist world, neoliberalism spread on a global scale, embedded as it was in the Washington Consensus and the practice and policies of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Neoliberalism has traditionally espoused policies such as the implementation of free market principles, protection of private property, privatisation, and deregulation, which are fundamentally opposed to collectivism and planning ideologies that are commonly associated with socialism (Fine and Saad-Filho, 2014).

As discussed in Chapter 2 (see 2.1.2), considering the significant role the government played in Chinese economic development and governance, it is difficult to fit China's market-oriented economic reform into a specific and generally agreed 'neoliberal' category, and there is much debate regarding whether China is a neoliberal state (Ong, 2007; Nonini, 2008; Wu, 2010b; Weber, 2018; Petry, 2018). No capitalist countries, including the US, the birthplace of neoliberalism, can succeed at economic development without the involvement of the state since the capital-labour relation cannot be reproduced merely through market relations (Jessop, 2002). In fact,

controversies even exist within the general literature about neoliberalism, for example, the practical foundation for neoliberalism – the Washington consensus – has shifted stance over time to include state intervention. This is known as the post-Washington consensus, which is to address the issue that the market works imperfectly (Fine and Saad-Filho, 2014). This practical shift highlighted the inconsistency of neoliberalism regarding its ideological and political elements, and some scholars have argued the practical elements should take dominance over the ideological elements (Brenner and Theodore, 2012). More importantly, Harvey (2005) argued that the essential feature of neoliberalism should not be its end (the free market) but its means (class restoration). For this reason, the discussion in this chapter attempts to avoid the debate about whether China is a neoliberalist state but focuses on neoliberal practices China has taken in relation to its social and economic context.

As a socialist country, China's speculation towards the collectivist economy started in the 1970s after the failure of Mao's Cultural Revolution. The crisis of prevailing poverty across the country and low industrial output made new generation leaders question the Maoist emphasis on a self-sufficient and political economy where economic activities were judged by their political content instead of effectiveness (Hua, Luo and Zhang, 2016). In 1978, the reassessment of the economic failure led to the return to orthodox historical materialism and opening-up policies to focus on all possible means of increasing productivity and economy, which indicated, for the first time, that the Chinese authorities had found some common ground with neoliberalism in terms of understanding economic order (Gewirtz, 2019).

In 1981, after re-establishing economics as a central governing tool as well as in-depth discussion with scholars and policymakers in advanced economies, the Chinese authorities concluded that structural crisis is as inevitable in a planned economy as it is in capitalism. This conclusion further extended the ideological shift of the communist party. As Weber (2018) described, China then unconsciously sided with neoliberals against the planned economy and consciously continued with Marx against the neoliberal idea of an unrestrained market economy (Guo, Jin and Yang, 2022). While there is no ideal economic-political system for such an arrangement, this period fits Deng's description of 'crossing the river by feeling the stone'. Over time, researchers described such a mode as 'neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics' (Harvey, 2005: 122). In this mode, the establishment of the socialist market economy does not require

'the retreat of the state, it simply requires the state to intervene in different ways, ones that combine neoliberal and socialist strategies' (Sigley, 2006: 502).

In the 1980s and early 1990s, China came close to comprehensive neoliberal reform, for example, implementing free market prices. While some Chinese party leaders and economists pushed for further opening-up and free market reforms in China, the prevailing stance in the party was maintaining cautious and gradual change. This approach set China apart from the 'big bang' or 'shock therapy' approach employed in the former Soviet Union and some Eastern European countries (Weber, 2020).These countries also experienced state socialism but abruptly modified this socialism to engage in deregulated markets and currency exchange as well as to minimise state subsidies (Lin, 2014).

The direct presence of state power in the economy has always been a prominent characteristic in China, in contrast to the free-market approach adopted by capitalist countries. The market in China is regulated by the state and the party (Hamnett, 2020). As Petry (2020) and Margaret et al. (2022) noted, China follows the path of state capitalism where the market is important, but the state plays a significant role in intervening in the economy, controlling the resources (such as land) and building state-owned enterprises (SOEs) to create wealth for the party-state. The state-capitalist economic model in China represents an alternative to the existing homogeneous market model under neoliberal principles and leads to different market dynamics and outcomes in China (Petry, 2020). In practice, the Chinese state engages in the pragmatic use of markets, for example, state-owned banks are the primary actors in China's financial system (Harvey, 2005). The state imposes limits on the market's operations, considering disadvantages and managing markets to achieve specific policy goals. A recent example of this is the policy planning of the digital currency and credit system that has adopted emerging market technology to act in a way conducive to, or facilitate, authoritarian capitalism (Allen, Qian and Gu, 2017; Gu, 2019; Gruin, 2021).

Before 1989, there were even no officially registered private enterprises in mainland China. In a sense, China's economic reform after 1978 was a transformation from the collectivist and authoritarian extreme to a greater reliance on individual initiative (entrepreneurship) and voluntary cooperation (free market). Additionally, the attempts to further practice the neoliberal agenda continue today, for example, the

commodification of land and housing (Siciliano, 2014); attracting private and foreign investment for urbanisation projects (Lin, 2010); the marketisation of public services and welfare provision (He and Wu, 2009); shifting payment burdens to individuals in health care and pension realm (Duckett, 2004; Li and Wei, 2010); empowering private education and the decentralising control of schooling (Zhang and Bray, 2016) as well as the current debate over reforming the financial market. It appears that the reform since the 1980s has expanded the scope of neoliberalism, however, this reform is still taking place at present.

'Neoliberalism with a Chinese characteristic' is reflected in governance regarding the interplay between central and local governments, which both work as key players in the process of urbanisation[7]. The central-local interplay involves political centralisation and fiscal decentralisation from central government to local governments. These are systems which stimulate land-centred urbanisation in China (Wu, 2018). Political centralisation refers to the maintenance of a rigid administrative hierarchy (see Figure 3.1) in China and the appointed leader of a provincial government by the central party committee. This has been designed to ensure the effective implementation of central policies by lower-level governments (Liu, 2019). The central government initiates and dominates urbanisation, while local governments execute urbanisation from a practical perspective.

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[7] There are five levels of government: Central, provincial, city, district and sub-district (see Figure 3.1– Administrative hierarchy in China- take Ningxia as an example). The term 'local governments' refers broadly to any government under the central level, except for the residents' committee, which is not officially affiliated with the government administrative hierarchy (Liu, 2019).

Figure 3.1 Administrative hierarchy in China – take Ningxia as an example

The central level	The central Government
Provincial level	The Ningxia Government
City level	The Yinchuan Government
District level	The District Government
Sub-district level	The Sub-district office
Community level (not officially affiliated with the government administrative hierarchy)	The residents' committees
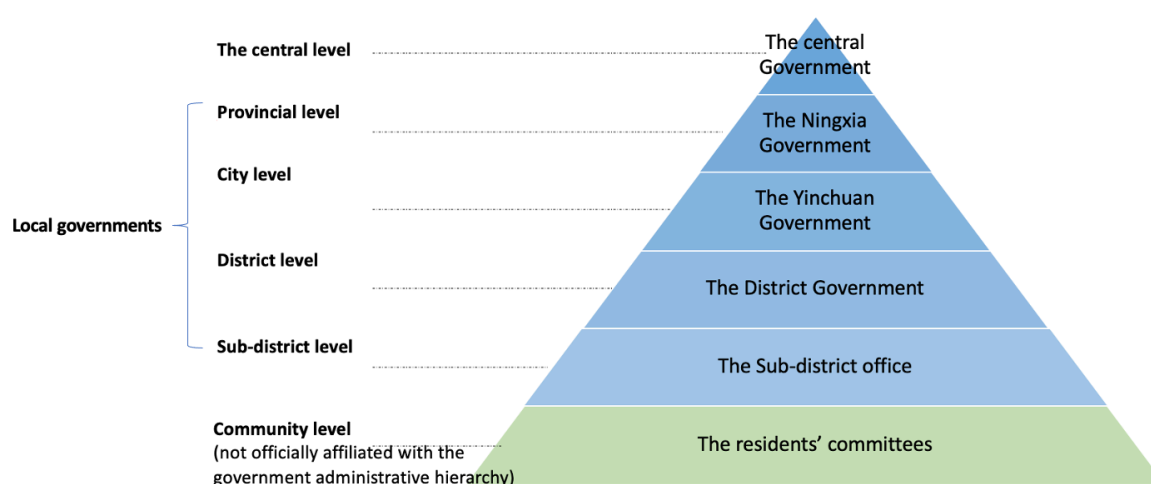
Local governments

Source: created by author.

Compared to centralised political systems, the fiscal system in China is decentralised to facilitate economic growth. Since 1978, due to inadequate budget allocation from the central government, local governments have been tasked with generating fiscal revenue to support local development. In 1994, the launch of the 'tax sharing system' reallocated revenue among central and local governments, which led to a sharp decrease in local tax revenue allocation (Wong, 2000). Against this background, local governments have had to raise income from different sources, such as domestic loans, foreign tax revenue from investment and land conveyance fees (Lin, 2007; Shin, 2013). Land conveyance fees from selling land by transforming rural land into urban construction land was the largest proportion of local fiscal income, and land-based urbanisation has grown in almost every province in China to enhance the local government's GDP performance in order to compete with different provinces (Wu, 2000).

In this context, the local government's entrepreneurship in land development highlights some Chinese characteristics within neoliberal urbanisation practices. According to Ministry of Finance (MOF) data, national land sales revenue was 50.7 billion *yuan* in 1998 and rose to over 8.4 trillion *yuan* by 2020 – an approximately 165-fold increase (Xu, 2020). Between 2000 and 2017, the ratio of land conveyance income to total municipal budgetary revenue nationwide was 53.5%, and in some cities even exceeded 100%, up from an average of 10% in 1999 (Tong et al. 2022). In practice, Chinese local governments act not only as administrators and regulators of

development, but also as investors and developers directly involved in building the urban environment (Shin, 2013). Urbanisation serves not as a by-product of economic growth, but also as a method to boost the economy, increase public finances, enhance local government's performance and to improve the political and financial gains of individual cadres at each level of the state's hierarchy (Plummer and Taylor, 2004; Ding, 2007; Sun, 2014).

Although the top-down political and bottom-up decentralised fiscal system is conducive to tackling the governance and incentive issues inherent in the central-local relationship, the system potentially raises issues relevant to this research (Zhang, 2006). For instance, this system intensifies conflicts between local governments and the people as the local governments are the authorities that directly implement land expropriation policies regarding displacement and compensation, while the central government only plays a role of 'moral authority', overseeing and indirectly mediating conflicts between local governments and local resisters (Lian, 2014). Consequently, it is common in China that the target of grassroots right-defending activism is local rather than central government.

Against the backdrop of the economic and urban growth in China and the underlying neoliberal reforms with Chinese characteristics, the remainder of this chapter elaborates key policies and government practices that have directly impacted land expropriation process and the affected population.

3.2. Land ownership, land expropriation and compensation

3.2.1 Land ownership system and policy drivers for land expropriation

The land ownership system is the starting point for examining land expropriation in China. This differentiates Chinese urbanisation from that in other countries. The state is the 'monopoly owner and supplier' of the land in China (Hamnett, 2020: 694), and land expropriation under current Chinese laws is still within the exclusive power of the state. According to the People's Republic of China Land Administration Law (LAL, see Policy 4 in Appendix 1) issued in 1986, land is divided into state-owned land in urban areas and collectively owned land in rural areas. Although collective agriculture was abolished in the 1980s, the concept of 'collectively owned land', an essential element of socialism, has been maintained and written into the law (Gary, 2006).

However, LAL maintains a deliberately vague definition of 'collective ownership' to prevent land disputes between the various levels of the rural collectives (Ho, 2001). Rural collectives work as an agency to facilitate state control over the land. In fact, the leaders of rural collectives are appointed and paid by the local government, thus, they lack independence and prioritise the interests of local government over farmers (Lian, 2016).

Under LAL, farmers do not have land ownership. They are only endowed with the right to use the land and the right to allocate collective income based on the land contract. The land contract is just a 'paper agreement' because only rural collectives, rather than individual farmers, can appropriate and redistribute leased land whenever deemed necessary (Ho, 2001: 397). Based on this context, the state has the right to compulsorily transfer collective-owned rural land to state-owned land for urban construction without the authorisation of current land users. It is written into the current PRC Constitution that 'the state may, in the public interest, expropriate or requisition land and make compensation in accordance with the law.'[8] This process also involves the state permanently taking ownership of any non-state property on the land (such as buildings and crops) or otherwise[9], which raises multiple concerns and disputes during land expropriation.

Although LAL provides a theoretically solid foundation for the unprecedented speed of urbanisation, its biased position allows profit-driven local government to pursue economic benefits through land appropriation, disregarding the interests of land users, and putting farmers' long-term livelihoods at risk. This, in turn, creates conflict between local government and displaced farmers. In this sense, urbanisation is not just an economic-related issues but also a social issue that puts displaced farmers at the heart of this research.

3.2.2 Resettlement and compensation policies for land expropriation in Yinchuan

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[8] Under Article 10 in the current PRC Constitution enacted in 1982 and amended in 1998.
[9] As prescribed in Article 13 of the PRC Constitution.

In the Ningxia region, the location of the case study, the non-agricultural demand for land has grown tremendously and the amount of construction land has tripled over the last two decades. An increasing amount of farmland has been expropriated by the local government and transformed into highways, factories, economic and technological development zones, the central business districts, and so forth. Consequently, more than 360,000 farmers in Ningxia lost their farmland and experienced forced displacement in the early 21st century. Yinchuan accounted for more than one-third of this number[10].

For compensating the loss of rural farmland and the living land of farmers, the central-level LAL regulates three types of monetary compensation for cultivated land expropriation: land compensation fees, resettlement fees and a compensation fee for attachments to or green crops on the land. The compensation policy in Yinchuan was made based on this central law and as an addendum to it, additional types of compensation were added. There are two main local-level policies regulating the compensation criteria of land expropriation: Policy 7 in 2002 and Policy 8 in 2003 (see Appendix 1) issued by the Yinchuan Municipal Government. The detailed compensation standards are summarised in Table 3.2:

Table 3.2 Compensation package for displaced people in Yinchuan

Types of Compensation	Category	Local standard regulated in policy	Average amount received by displaced farmers
Type 1 compensation fees	Land compensation fee	6-10 times the average output value of the 3 years prior to the expropriation of the cultivated land	Around 15,000-40,000 *yuan* (£1,667-£4,444) per *mu*[11]
	Resettlement fee	4-6 times the average annual output value of the 3 years prior to the expropriation of the cultivated land	After deduction by rural collectives, people receive 12,000-24,000 *yuan* (£1,333-£2,667) per *mu* (see Table 3.3)
	Compensation for attachments to or green crops on the land	calculated depending on the size of their previous housing area	700 *yuan* (£78) per *mu*

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[10] The number sourced from fieldwork in Office of Policy Development in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region.
[11] 1 *mu*= 0.0677 hectare = 0.1647 acre=0.00067 km²

Type 2 resettlement housing	Free flat(s) in resettlement community	Calculated based on the housing area the whole household previously owned. The floor area of flat was discounted as 60%-80% of their previous rural house area, depending on the construction quality and the location of their house. Each displaced people got up to 35 m^2 housing area.	Most household got 1 compensated flat with floor area around 100 m^2
Type 3 living allowance	Living allowance	500-700 *yuan* (£56-£78) per mu per year, and allocated in the first three years	1,500-2,100 *yuan* in three years in total (£167 - £233)
Type 4 employment supports	Employment resettlement	HY projects for renting (Similar to the 'Buy-to-let' in UK)	Every resettler is eligible to buy a 20m^2 residential flat or 5m^2 commercial complex area at a 'concessional price' for renting (See Chapter 5 for more details)
Type 5 Hukou transformation	Hukou	All displaced farmers in Community A transformed from rural to urban Hukou	An urban Hukou

Source: created by author based on Policy 7 and Policy 8.

According to Policy 7, in general, the combined land compensation fee and the resettlement fee were around 15,000-40,000 *yuan* (£1,667-£4,444) per *mu*[12], a derisory offer compared to the market values. Furthermore, displaced farmers were not entitled to 100% of this amount due to the fact that rural land remains under collective ownership and the farmers only have the right to use land based on the land contracts between farmers and rural collectives. Therefore, the compensation fee was divided up between the rural collectives and households, which led to the reduced amount of the compensation farmers received. The distribution ratio depended on the total amount of land compensation fee and the resettlement fee. The final amount received by displaced families after deductions by rural collectives is shown on the last column of Table 3.3:

Table 3.3 Compensation fee allocation between rural collectives and individual household

The combined land compensation fees and	Proportion for displaced families	Proportion for rural collectives	Final amount for displaced people after

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[12] £1=9 *yuan,* currency rate in May 2021

resettlement fees per *mu* (*yuan*)			deduction per *mu* (*yuan*)
≥15,000 (£1,667)	80%	20%	12,000 (£1,333)
16,000-30,000 (£1,778-£3,333)	70%	30%	11,200-21,000 (£1,244 – £2,333)
31,000-40,000 (£3,444-£4,444)	60%	40%	18,600-24,000 (£2,067- £2,667)

Source: created by author according to Policy 8.

In fact, the amount each displaced people received, 12,000-24,000 *yuan* (£1,333-£2,667), was only equal to 1 to 2 years income of a normal local worker, as the local average annual salary in 2002 was 11,723 *yuan (£1,302)* per person per year. This amount of compensation was far from enough for displaced families to restart a new life in the city, especially considering the necessary costs to live in the city, such as the interior finish needed to get the new flat habitable and the hidden fees for selecting the floor of the flat (see Chapter 5, section 5.3.2) as well as a pension premium have to be paid by resettlers themselves (see section 3.4.2).

In theory, according to Policy 7, if the land compensation and settlement subsidy payments were insufficient to maintain the relocated people's original quality of life, the payment of settlement subsidy could be increased with an approval from local government as long as the total amount does not exceed 30 times the average output value of the land as calculated over the three years prior to expropriation. However, in practice, the local government showed little inclination to increase compensation fees to the maximum amounts unless the displacees resorted to resistance actions to fight against the low compensation standards.

Referring to Table 3.2, compensation Type 3, 4 and 5 were three of the extra compensations provided by the local government, which were not included in the central level policies. For example, the Type 3 living allowance offered the displaced family a one-off payment of 1,500-2,100 *yuan* (£167 - £233), which only constituted the smallest part of the compensation package.

Type 4 was labelled 'employment resettlement', although the content of this scheme was not at all related to employment. Instead, it offered resettlers a chance to make a 'Buy-to-let' rental income. According to Policy 8, every resettler was eligible to buy a 20m^2 residential flat or 5m^2 shopping area at a 'concessional price' for renting out in

order to increase their long-term income. We can see the actual content articulated in the 'employment resettlement' policy very little relation to subjected employment, but rather with the clause of providing supplemented financial support. In practice, this policy aroused some serious conflicts between the local government and the displaced farmers due to the unfulfilled government commitment (see Chapter 7, section 7.1.2).

Type 5 of compensation pertained to Hukou transformation, which means the displaced farmers could transfer from rural Hukou to urban Hukou status after displacement. How did the Hukou transformation affect relocated farmers' lives will be analysed in the following section.

3.3 Hukou system and its impact on the displaced farmers

3.3.1 The formation of Hukou system in the pre-reform era

The household registration (Hukou) system is a fundamental feature of the Chinese socialist planning economy, which is served as 'internal passports' dividing Chinese society into 'rural' and 'urban' classes (Lian, 2016). The Hukou system was legally introduced in China in the 1950s during the formation of the socialist planned economy which aimed at achieving growth through allocating rural surpluses in planned, targeted investment in the urban sectors, such as the heavy industry (Cheng and Selden, 1994). Within this system, the state pledges full responsibility towards people hold an urban Hukou in terms of jobs, education, social welfare and food, whereas the rural population is expected to be self-reliant based on farming (Fan, 2002). In this way, Hukou system has created a rural-urban spatial hierarchies, and more importantly, it has shaped two distinct categories of citizenships and social class that privileged urban residents while deprived rural dwellers (Cai, 2011).

The rural-urban imbalanced economic development is the direct outcome of the Hukou system (Huang, Guo and Tang, 2010). In the pre-reform era (between the 1950s to the 1980s), a 'unified purchasing and marketing' system was implemented with the intention of sustaining low prices for agricultural products while simultaneously inflating the prices of industrial products (Cheng and Selden, 1994). The system hindered the rural economic development by extracting value from agriculture to support the process of industrialisation. In addition, the thriving industrialisation in the urban areas provided substantially more lucrative job opportunities than farming, thus

further increasing the earning gap and the regional economic imbalance between rural and urban areas (Chan and Zhang, 1999).

On an individual level, the Hukou status is locality-based and inherited from one's parents, making it a quasi-hereditary system. The conversion from rural Hukou to urban Hukou is strictly controlled by the government. In the pre-reform era, the conversion from rural to urban Hukou was limited to a number of specific routes, including through higher educational enrolment, army experience and through party membership (Wu, 2011). In the post-reform era (the 1980s onwards), additional channels such as long-term residency, military retirement and land expropriation by the state have also contributed to the conversion from a rural Hukou to an urban Hukou (Chan and Zhang, 1999).

3.3.2 Hukou system as a barrier for social integration in post-reform era

Since 1978, the rigid Hukou system, especially the restrictions on the rural to urban population movement, was considered to be no longer compatible with the market-oriented economic reforms which aimed at attaining higher productivity and faster economic growth. There were two reasons for the relaxation of restrictions on movement from rural to urban areas. On the one hand, the growth of the urban economy, the expansion of non-state sectors, and the rise in foreign direct investment created a demand for a large amount of labour in the city, which placed pressure on the urban labour market (Fan, 2002). On the other hand, the surplus of agricultural labour persisted due to advances in agricultural productivity, motivating rural farmers to seek employment opportunities in cities (Shen and Spence, 1995).

In response to such 'pull' and 'push' factors in the urban and rural labour market, the state has started to relax and allow government-led rural-urban migration for the first time on a large scale in 1985. Since then, China has seen a large scale of rural to urban migration as farmers were allowed to work in the city on a 'temporary' basis by maintaining a rural Hukou (Chan and Zhang, 1999). In 2018, there was an increase of 500 million people living in the city, almost a 40% increase compared to 1980 (Hamnett, 2020). It is worth to note that this 40% of the 500 million people were rural migrants who still retain their rural Hukou as they did not meet the necessary criteria, such as income level, fixed abode, and minimum duration of residency in a city, to qualify for an urban Hukou. Therefore, rural migrants cannot access the same urban welfare and

public services as urban Hukou holders, such as pension, medical insurance, public schools, housing purchase opportunities, even though they are living in a city, but made full contribution the urban development (Fan, 2002). Thus, Hukou has long been regarded as the root cause of social exclusion of rural migrants in China (Tse, 2016a).

Institutionally made inequalities under Hukou system directly led to social class stratification and discrimination against rural migrants. In the almost 70 years of implementing the Hukou system, rural people have been naturally regarded as being second-class citizens, while urban people have inherited a wealth of privileges (Huang, Guo and Tang, 2010). An invisible inferior rural stereotype has profound impact on how urban people regard their rural peers and how rural migrants view themselves. This urban-rural identity gap have built barriers for rural migrants to integrate into the city environment, and intensified already unequal power relations between different groups living in the city (Yunsong and Yi, 2016).

3.3.3 A post-Hukou perspective

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the central government of China has gradually eased the restrictions of Hukou and has tried to eliminate the negative influences that it has produced. For example, the central government has implemented a series of policies, such as the attempts to create the non-exclusive labour market and basic social insurance programmes in order to tackle migrants' long-standing problems, including poor job security, low wages and low social welfare coverage in the city (Huang, Guo and Tang, 2010). The key milestone was in 2019, when all Chinese major cities with a total population between 1 to 3 million respectively completely abolished the restrictions on Hukou transformation, whereas the mega cities with a 3 to 5 million population started to significantly reduce their Hukou restrictions. This action has further facilitated Chinese market economy by providing a constant labour force, and at the same time facilitating political stabilisation under the government's slogan of 'building a harmonious society', as both urbanites and rural migrants can officially enjoy the same level of social welfare without prejudice to their Hukou status (Cai, 2011).

Given this context, the conversion from rural to urban Hukou is no longer an unattainable dream for many rural residents, and the disparities between Hukou statuses have become less influential in the lives of internal migrants. However,

obtaining an urban Hukou is only the prelude to become a real urbanite, as identity conversion is more complex than a paper identity transformation (Tse, 2016). In the post-reform era, the thesis suggests taking a 'post-Hukou' lens in examining the social class stratification and social integration of rural migrants.

The 'post-Hukou' perspective, is a beyond Hukou perspective, which lies less focus on direct institutional legacies of Hukou, but pays more attention to the factors that contribute to one's ability building (such as human capital and social capital) against the transitional economy background. Urbanisation in the 21st century has gathered both rural migrants and urban locals into a common market, the pre-determined paper identity has exerted less and less influence on one's personal development under the logic of market operation. Instead of Hukou, individual's educational level, professional skills, social communication ability and networks are becoming crucial factors in deciding one's economic and social status (Wu, 2018).

In practice, the government has implemented policy amendments in response to evolving market demands, and has taken steps to eliminate institutional barriers Hukou produced. For instance, policies now refer to 'new urban residents' and 'urban residents' instead of 'displaced farmers' or 'rural-urban migrants', and some restrictions on migrant's house purchases have been lifted in major cities (Huang, Guo and Tang, 2010). These actions suggest that a post-Hukou perspective is gaining importance in contemporary China, and that the government is reconsidering its approach to social class restructuring to move beyond the previous rural-urban dichotomy (Wu, 2018). Chapter 6 will investigate how the market mechanism affects the lives, social class formation, and sense of belonging of new urban residents in the post-Hukou era.

3.4 Social welfare, pension and rural-urban identity stratification

3.4.1 The development of social welfare and pension scheme in China

There are significant and long-standing welfare gaps between the rural and urban residents based on the Hukou system, and such gaps can be traced back to the 'work unit' period in the late 1950s, when urban employees worked in work units (enterprises or government organisations) and were supported by the state with a retirement income, health care and other social welfare, whereas people in rural areas were

supported by the communes and family members (Allieu, 2019)[13]. A comprehensive welfare system was established for urban population within the state-owned work units since the 1950s, whereas no state-sponsored social welfare system was available for the rural population until the early 1990s (Wong, 2005).

There were two primary factors that contributed to rural families taking on the bulk of their own social welfare and caregiving responsibilities. On the one hand, farmers were commonly seen as self-employed individuals who relied on their land to sustain themselves over the course of their lives (Shi, 2006). On the other hand, the Chinese cultural value of filial piety, which emphasises the responsibility of adult children, particularly sons, to support and care for their elderly parents, played a significant role in shaping the idea that family members should be responsible for providing welfare (Zhan et al. 2011). In situations where someone was unable to engage in farm work, they would be cared for by their family members and would withdraw from productive activities.

Therefore, for almost thirty years before the 1980s, rural families, communes and informal networks, instead of the government, that supported farmers in terms of providing social welfare in rural China. In addition to care, rural welfare also included specific labour protection measures, health service, limited elementary education, cultural welfare and public social participation, however all of these were funded and organised by rural collectives themselves, with the central government serving only as a regulator and a residual supporter for rural emergencies (Han and Huang, 2019). In contrast with the comprehensive social welfare system for urban residents which was fully funded by the state, the inequalities in social welfare schemes between the urban and the rural populations were built.

However, the conventional means of social welfare support provided by rural collectives and families became ineffective in light of the significant social and economic changes brought about by market reforms. In the new era after the 1980s, pensions became the most important category among a wide range of welfare

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[13] Communes were organisations to conduct collective activities, including farming and meal preparation, which allowed for members to share welfare. It was multipurpose organisations aims for managing all of the economic and social activities for rural population.

activities. Especially for displaced farmers, who lost rural land as their permanent means for providing a living throughout their life, pensions offer the only source of a steady income after reaching retirement age. Therefore, pension, as one of the main components of social welfare in China, works as a key contributor to form social integration for rural-urban migrants (Zhu and Walker, 2018).

The evolution of the pension system in China (see Figure 3.3) reflects the long-lasting dual-track system between rural and urban population. The pension system in the 1990s remained a conservative welfare regime and consolidated traditional rural-urban social class differences under the Hukou system (Zhu and Walker, 2018). The first pension scheme for rural people was enacted in 1991, named the *Basic Program for Rural Social Security Insurance* (also known as old rural pension scheme). This was the first time the central government tried to break the privilege of urban residents in terms of accessing pensions. According to this scheme, rural residents were allowed to contribute to the social insurance schemes from the age of 20 and could receive a pension at the age of 60. However, this scheme worked actually as a self-savings plan instead of a pension, due to no state subsidy contributed to the pension pool and the entire pension premiums were self-funded (Li, 2007).

In contrast, in the same period, the pension for urban workers was funded by the government, the enterprise and individuals together, with individuals' contributions only accounted for around 3% of their total income. The small amount of individual premium encouraged the vast majority of urban workers to participate in the pension scheme in order to benefit their future lives, while the provident funded self-saving pensions for rural residents attracted an extremely low participation rate (Wong, 2005).

Figure 3.2 Development of the pension system in China
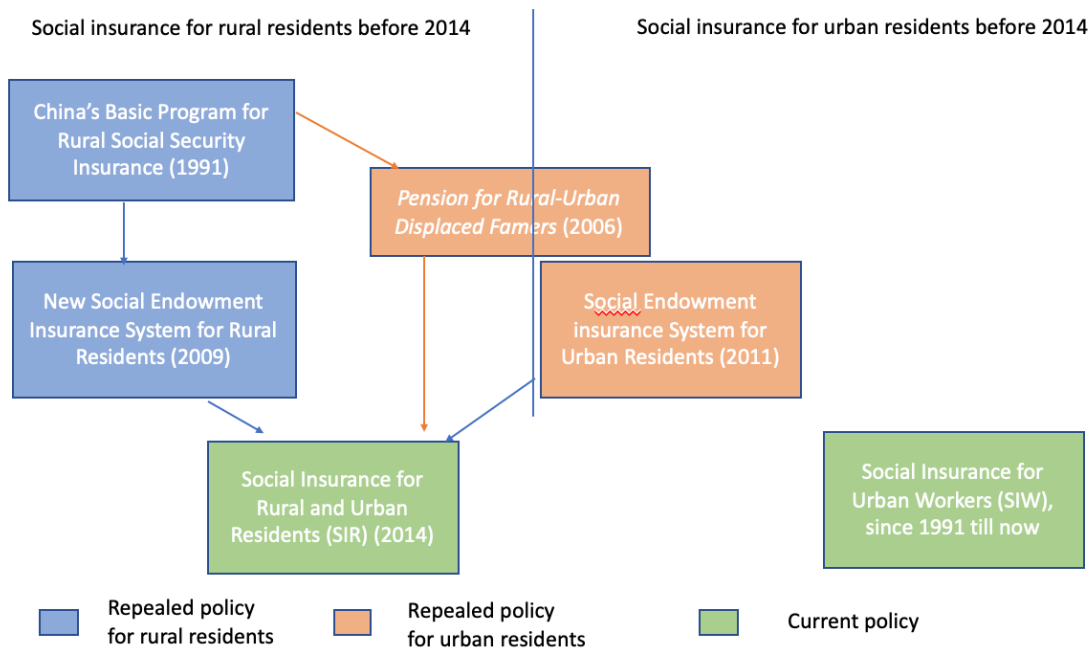
The discriminatory rural pension system and accompanying social status differentiation was finally softened in 2014, when a unified Social Insurance for Rural and Urban residents (SIR) was implemented [14]. Since 2014, the pension system in China has been undergoing a transformation from a state-employer model to a state-society one (Zhu and Walker, 2018). This unified pension system represents a breakdown of the rural-urban welfare boundaries that the Hukou system created, and finally entitles both rural and urban residents a right to benefit from the same pension scheme (Watson, 2012).

The current dual pension systems, including SIR and Social Insurance for Urban Workers (SIW), both are based on employment status. In general, SIW offers more benefits than SIR (the detailed differences see Table 3.4). Both programmes not only provide pension support, but also include basic health care insurance. Employers and self-employers with a formal working contract are eligible for SIW. Rural residents, rural-urban migrants without a formal working contract and unemployed residents can only access to SIR. This indicates that institutional barriers, such as the Hukou system,

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[14] Rural and urban residents refer to three groups: rural residents, rural-to-urban migrants, and urbanites without employers.

no longer prevent rural migrants from accessing the same social welfare schemes as urban residents as long as they secure a formal job with a working contract. The new unified social welfare programme indicates China gradually breaking with the rural-urban welfare dichotomy under the Hukou system and entering a market-oriented welfare stage (Ong, 2014).

Table 3.4 The difference between SIR and SIW

	SIR	SIW
Contents	Only health care insurance and pension	Includes '5+1 social insurances', which refers to 5 types of social insurances (pension, health care, unemployment, work injury, and maternity insurance) and a housing provident fund
Coverage	No Hukou restrictions	Only for urban Hukou residents
Premium contributor	individual contribution and government subsidies (different standard in various province, in general, individual contribute to two thirds and government contribute to one third)	individual contributions, enterprise contributions and government subsidies (individual only contribute to up to 8% of their monthly salary.)
Payment Term	Pay annually	Pay monthly

Source: created by author.

3.4.2 Pension scheme for displaced farmers in Yinchuan

Social welfare is crucial for residents in maintaining a sense of social justice and stability (Watson, 2012). However, among the land expropriation cases taking place at the beginning of the 21st century in China, the inability of displaced farmers to gain access to social welfare was common, thus eroding any role of rebalancing social inequality. According to a survey with 1,791 farmers across 17-provinces in 2011, only 13.9% of relocated farmers gained access to urban social welfare, 9.4% received urban medical insurance, 21.4% were able to attend urban schools, and only 21.8% were entitled to urban Hukou status (Prosterman and Zhu, 2012). It shows that the so-called 'rural land in exchange for social welfare' does not ensure displaced farmers have the same social welfare standards as their urban counterparts (Ong, 2014).

The compensation package offered to the displaced population mainly centred around pension benefits, without adequate attention to other crucial aspects of social welfare such as health care, unemployment, work injuries, and maternity insurance. This was due to either the local government's insufficient financial resources to support the displaced population's inclusion into the higher-level comprehensive urban welfare system within a limited period, or the lack of specific regulations at the central level mandating local governments to effectively integrate rural migrants into the urban welfare system (Watson, 2012).

As a result, local governments in different provinces had their own discretionary power to decide what social welfare was included in their resettlement packages. In Yinchuan, the concept of social welfare in the displacement policy was intentionally reduced to debate only around pensions, because 'pensions' and 'employment resettlement' were the only categories mentioned under the social welfare section in the resettlement policy. Therefore, this study mainly focuses on the development of the pension scheme for displaced farmers and its impacts on their post-displacement life.

The displaced farmers included in this research, for example, were unable to access to any pension scheme prior to their move to the city because their land was considered as a permanent source of income in a rural area. After resettling into the city, the local government enacted the *Pilot Scheme of Basic Pension for Rural-Urban Displaced People* as part of the resettlement package (Policy 12) in 2006. Compared to the old self-funding rural pension scheme released in 1991, the new pension is financially supported by three contributors: the central government, the local government and individuals, with the aim of largely reducing individual's premium to the pension fund by some 50%[15].

Although the individual's premium contribution was reduced by half, displaced people were still required to make a substantial one-off payment for the remaining 50%, which potentially add costs to start a new life in the city. Since displaced farmers had never made any contribution to the pension pool before moving to the city as their years of farming was not counted as valid pension contribution, they were required to make up

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[15] Stated in Article 3 in Policy 12

the shortfall, to become eligible to receive a pension when they reach their retirement age (the scheme required at least a 15-year continuous period of contributions to be eligible for a pension at the age of 60 for males and 55 for females). Based on this regulation, although the central and local government together were responsible for half of the premium for each individual's pension account, the remaining half, which ranged from 3,972 *yuan* (£436) to 11,914 *yuan* (£1,324) depending upon the age at the time of joining the pension scheme (see Table 3.5), had to be paid by the displaced person[16].

Table 3.5 Pension scheme for displaced farmers in Yinchuan in 2006

Age group		Required years of payment (years)	One-off premiums for pension account			Monthly return (*yuan*)
			Total amount (*yuan*)	The government contribution 50% (*yuan*)	Individual contribution 50% (*yuan*)	
First group	Male:60+; female: 55+	15	23,828 (£2,648)	11,914 (£1,324)	11,914 (£1,324)	300 (£33)
Second group	Male: 50-60 Female:40-55	15	23,828 (£2,648)	11,914 (£1,324)	11,914 (£1,324)	/
	Male:40-50 Famale:30-40	10	15,885 (£1,766)	7,943 (£883)	7,943 (£883)	/
	Male:18-40 Famale:18-30	5	7,943 (£883)	3,972 (£441)	3,972 (£441)	/

Source: created by author based on Policy 12.

According to Table 3.5, couples aged between 40-60 were required to pay a one-off premium of more than 20,000 *yuan* (£2,222), which was almost equal to the amount of the compensation fees they received (12,000-24,000 *yuan* (£1,333-£2,667) per *mu).* Although the displaced people were entitled to get 300 *yuan* (£33) as a fixed monthly payment after reaching retirement age (60 for men or 55 for women), which was considerably higher than the local minimum living standard (180 *yuan (£20) per month*), only a small number of displaced people actually enrolled in this scheme. This was

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[16] Ibid

either due to a lack of household savings to pay the premium or a lack of trust in the government. The opinions and experience of respondents in participating initial pension will be discussed in depth in Chapter 6 (section 6.1.6).

The pension scheme for displaced people in Yinchuan has further evolved particularly since 2014 as a result of the Chinese government's initiatives to develop an integrated national social insurance system with full coverage for rural and urban residents (SIR and SIW) (Han and Huang, 2019). The SIR combines individual contributions and enterprise contributions, as well as government subsidies, with the individual contribution level divided into 12 categories ranging from 100 *yuan* (£11) per year to 2,000 *yuan* (£222) per year. The pension a retiree would get depends on the amount they put into the pension pool per year. The more they contribute, the more matched subsidies they will get and consequently the more pension they will receive after they reach the legal retirement age. This pension scheme gives extra flexibility to displaced people. On top of the fixed monthly payment provided by the previous pension plan, displaced farmers could now invest further into the pension pot and enjoy the incremental pay out which is subsidised by central and local governments.

Although there has been no more rural and urban identity barrier in terms of accessing social welfare since 2014, the current welfare system potentially build a new welfare gap between urban locals and newcomers, which diminishes the de-stratification function of social welfare (Han and Huang, 2019). On the one hand, the scheme is designed unfairly in the way that it calculates the length of pension contribution for rural migrants. The unified pension system does not recognise the years spent as farmers as being valid contributions to their pension pool, which has resulted in the expansion of years of payment into the individual pension account and thus increased pension premiums.

In addition to this, the unified scheme mainly categorises pension participants according to their types of employment, which are regarded as unfair for city newcomers who run small businesses (such as working as street vendors) or working in informal labour market without a formal labour contract (Zhu and Qian, 2020). The absence of a formal labour contract impedes the unemployed people from accessing SIW, in which the enterprises contribute more to the employee's pension pool while the individual contributes less. In practice, relocated farmers tend to take jobs without actually signing a formal labour contract. As a result, they could only access SIR which

means paying more and ultimately getting less from state subsidies (Watson, 2012). These two essentially unjust attributes create and sustain a benefits gap both between urban residents and city newcomers, as well as between displaced peer groups who work in the informal and formal sectors.

3.4.3 A unified social insurance – break up urban privileges?

Building up a unified pension system for both urban and rural residents in China represents an institutional reform to ease up the urban social insurance privilege bound to the Hukou system. However, employment status has become the factor creating a new social welfare dualism inside the city. Owing to the increasingly important influence of the market-oriented economy, the contemporary labour market in the city tends to favour well-educated and skilled workers, while rural migrants with lower levels education most commonly work in labour-intensive sectors, where some of the jobs do not offer formal contracts, excluding them from accessing SIW to enjoy better welfare benefits (Kuang and Liu, 2012).

Rural migrants are usually less competitive in the urban labour market because they have lower levels education (Ye, 2016). Their inferior educational background is still regarded as a legacy of the potent rural-urban dualism (Wu, 2011). Rural students in China are more likely to drop out of school before enrolling in high school and are more likely to end with poorer academic outcomes than their urban peers (Wang, 2016). Additionally, students from rural and migrant families suffer from lower parental expectations and lower educational investment compared to their urban counterparts (Gao et al. 2018). Therefore, although the Hukou system itself no longer blocks people's mobility or hinders their job hunting, its legacy remains in the form of imbalanced resource accumulation under the Hukou system and its continuous effects to place rural migrants at a disadvantaged position in the job market.

As a result, city newcomers who are less able to compete effectively in the job market are confronted with difficulties in social integration (Tse, 2016; Ye, 2016; Wu, 2018). This social phenomenon is similar to the 'paradox of redistribution' in Western countries; when benefits are targeted at the poor, the less likely it is that the root causes are tackled, and there is less reduction in poverty and inequality (Korpi and Palme, 1998). It also echoes what Lefebvre (1991) articulated in Chapter 2, that is, the flow of capital (as well as the market-oriented economy in China) is intended to

create various disparities to buttress its reproduction of social relations which facilitate capital accumulation and market operation. In the case of China, a new type of social class stratification based on employment status is one of the disparities that the market-oriented economy brought, and such a disparity potentially facilitates economic development in China. Moreover, Chinese urban indigens benefit from the inflow of rural migrants who take 'dirty, dangerous, and difficult jobs and provide cheaper services', but, at the same time, 'find it difficult to identify themselves with the migrants and are reluctant for the state to extend welfare entitlements to them' (Wu, 2010: 627). In this context, although the privileges bound to the Hukou system have been eliminated, the new forms of social class and identity stratification have gradually been shaped against the background of the market-oriented economy.

Conclusion

Starting from a comprehensive introduction of the market-oriented transitional economy in China, this chapter has explored different contextual dimensions of urbanisation in China, including the role of the state and the market, the influence of neoliberalism on market reform, the interplay between central and local governments, the land ownership system, the Hukou system and finally the social welfare system, particularly the pension system. Exploring and integrating these different dimensions offers a window through which China's unique urbanisation path can be understood.

Compared with urbanisation in Western capitalist countries which happens under free economies and democratic political polities, urbanisation in China is divergent both economically and politically. The market-oriented transitional economy and the influence of neoliberalism have created a relatively open and dynamic market sector in China which largely facilitates urbanisation. However, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the market has been developed under a one-party authoritarian political regime, with especially the state dominating the urbanisation process, intervening in market operation, controlling land ownership and thereby shaping the future of urbanisation in China.

In addition to the transitional economy under the authoritarian context, the uniqueness of China's urbanisation process also lies in the interplay between central and local governments. This is particularly the case regarding the fiscal decentralisation in shaping local government's entrepreneurship in land-centred urbanisation, as well as

the state's full ownership of the land. These characteristics reveal that Chinese urbanisation in a state-capitalist economy challenges the existing homogeneous market model under neoliberal principles. It also represents a distinct alternative to the Western urbanisation path under the orthodox neoliberal paradigm.

The market-oriented economy and urbanisation process has brought about massive economic achievements in China. However, viewed from the perspective of the rural population, one could argue that their marginalised position has not been significantly altered and they remain more of a net contributor than a beneficiary of the whole process when compared with urban peers. The land ownership system, and unjust compensation criteria for land expropriation, further compound farmers' disadvantaged position shaped by the Hukou system, which gives rise to concerns around fairness and social justice.

The rural-urban gap is becoming less explicit compared to the pre-reform period when Hukou was used as the main institutional tool to limit farmers' benefits to propel China's prosperous cities and buttress the growing middle class in cities. The gaps between urbanites and newcomers (for example, in the gaps in human capital and educational backgrounds) caused by marketisation takes on new guises and continue to operate, albeit more insidiously and in a reconfigured manner. Such problems are becoming increasingly important social issues, especially when China is promoting a harmonised society and is attempting to improve levels of social integration in cities.

There is evidence that the government is beginning to consider the social welfare of displaced farmers with the introduction of the unified social insurance programme, which was introduced in 2014. However, little has been done to address the systematic discrimination from both the legacy of the Hukou system and the market-oriented economy towards rural migrants in cities, who possess much less human capital and fewer professional skills to access the mainstream labour market and better social security and pension arrangements. How these issues play out and manifest themselves in the case of Yinchuan will be investigated in the following part of this thesis.

Chapter 4 Methodology

Introduction

This chapter discusses the thesis research design and approach. The specific research aims will be addressed by a qualitative case study in a resettlement community in Yinchuan. This will provide a holistic and in-depth understanding of this social phenomenon in China. The primary source of data is semi-structured interviews with displaced people, accompanied by the views and perspectives from a range of stakeholders and the analysis of government documents and media data.

The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section explains the ontological and epistemological stance applied in this research. Due to the application of constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology, a qualitative research approach is deemed most appropriate for answering the exploratory research questions raised in Chapter 1. This is followed by a discussion of the reasoning behind the use of the case study approach in this research, as well as an overview of the fieldwork location. The second section gives an overview of the data collection methods including documentary data and semi-structured interviews. The third section outlines the data analysis techniques and process. The fourth section illustrates the ethical issues of the fieldwork and how these were addressed as well as my personal reflections after conducting the fieldwork. The final section of this chapter reflects the practical issues and the potential limitations of this thesis.

4.1 Philosophical underpinning and research design

4.1.1 Justification of qualitative research

There is no single way to understand the world but there is a more appropriate method for a particular research question (Saunders et al. 2009). The methodological approach in this thesis is determined by the exploratory research aim, which is to examine the long-term impact of rural land expropriation on displaced farmers. Qualitative research based on an interpretive case study was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the experience and perspectives of relocated residents in the host community and to answer the four exploratory research questions raised in

Chapter 1. Qualitative research provides in-depth insights and interpreted understandings of social phenomena by examining 'social and material circumstances, insiders' experiences, perspectives as well as histories' (Ritchie et al. 2014: 23).

The choice of research methodology is also closely related to researchers' understanding of the nature of the social world and how to further investigate it (Bryman, 2012). The constructivist paradigm lays a solid foundation for carrying out a qualitative case study in this research. To understand the impact of development-induced displacement on internal migrants, objectivist ontology, which insists the social world exists independent of social actors, has not been employed. I believe social phenomena and their meaning are socially constructed by the perceptions and subsequent actions of involved social actors (Bryman, 2012; Cohen et al. 2017). In this research, displaced people and stakeholders contribute to the construction of knowledge about integration and internal migration.

Furthermore, the evolving and heterogeneous nature of reality impedes the pursuit of objective truths regarding a social phenomenon that can be utilised to predict future behaviour, as per the principles of positivist epistemology (Bryman, 2012). The experiences and viewpoints of individuals concerning displacement are varied, and there is no single 'general law' or 'objective truth' that can directly elucidate the thoughts and actions of the displaced group in this study. The complexity of life and the diversity of individual's experience cannot necessarily be grouped into neat mappable pieces. Therefore, it is appropriate to employ an interpretivist epistemology, under which 'truth' is constructed by collecting interpreted meanings from insiders' experiences, which leads finally to a generalised shared understanding and the building of 'multiple constructed realities' after collecting saturated data (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003; Silverman, 2004). This process involves an inductive strategy to comprehend the social world and allows multiple facets built by different actors (Merriam, 2002).

Interpretivism values the subjective experience of human beings, and this is the core of this research (Evans, 2013). The building of a resettlement community is complicated and is full of human involvement, so the interpretation of insiders is the key to understanding this small society. Additionally, the nuance and variability of human interpretation is hard to reveal through quantitative investigation under traditional positivism. It further justifies the qualitative approach which values the

experience of people and individual cases. In this research, the displaced people are regarded as experts in articulating their experience and constructing social meanings on the topics regarding rural-urban displacement and social integration. Qualitative research allows me to closely communicate with the residents in the resettlement community, and interviews serve as the key method for attaining knowledge about the impact of spatial transformation on displaced farmers' lives.

What's more, the formation of subjective feelings comes from an accumulation of various influences. Contextual information, including political, cultural and historical backgrounds, is crucial in analysing how and why a sense of deprivation and differential integration have occurred in a specific area. Qualitative research is explorative in nature and good at revealing the rich social and political texture of 'everyday life' (Lefebvre, 1991), exploring the cultural nuances and unveiling underlying mechanisms in daily phenomena that ordinarily elude surveys and statistical methods (Silverman, 2004). In this research, contextual information can be obtained by analysing secondary data (such as government documents, survey data and media reports) and interviews with different stakeholders.

Research philosophy not only decides research design but also helps researchers to understand their own roles in the research process (Xian and Meng-Lewis, 2018). As an insider, I immersed myself in the field site, exploring and understanding the social world through a subjective lens and drawing meaning from subjective experiences. As an outsider, through the interpretation of compound narratives constructed by various actors, I can understand displacement and its impact from different perspectives.

4.1.2 Justification of case study

This qualitative thesis is designed to examine the long-term influence of displacement on rural-urban migrants through the theoretical lens of 'the production of space', 'the right to the city' and 'social integration'. A case study was chosen as the main research strategy for several reasons. The research aim is closely related to exploring lived experiences and subjective feelings of displaced farmers. Subjective feelings and experiences vary from person to person and result from an accumulation of various factors, including the political, economic, cultural and historical contexts. Case studies provide contextualised understanding of the rich texture of everyday life and they focus on how a phenomenon's meaning is developed by people interacting with their

surroundings (Yin, 1994; Merriam, 2002; Silverman, 2004). Therefore, it is considered an appropriate tool for exploring human behaviours and perceptions in depth (Stake, 1995). Moreover, qualitative case studies are conducive to identifying nuances in people's utterances, expressions and sentiments, which further helps to excavate meaningful features of individual stories (Yin, 1994). Through case studies, opinions, attitudes and values regarding spatial justice, civil rights and social integration themes are unveiled, helping to build an intensive, holistic and in-depth explanation of the long-term integration of displaced farmers in China.

However, case studies take place within a bounded system. This highlights a specific time, space and context when analysing the process of shaping complex social phenomena (Stake, 1995). This research focuses on a specific group of Chinese relocated farmers who were displaced 15 years ago and are now living in a resettlement community in an underdeveloped city. This information clearly delineates the bounded system of this study. Although displacements take place worldwide, the uniqueness of this case makes it worthy of study because how people understand and engage with the world depends on the specific time, place and historical conditions (Bender, 1993).

The fieldwork location

The main reason for choosing Yinchuan as the fieldwork location is that it provides a development-induced displacement case in a relatively under-explored area of China. That is different from most studies in this topic that focus on economically more advanced areas in the central and southeast parts of China. In terms of the existing literature focusing on development-induced migration in China, little research has been conducted in Yinchuan. More attention has been paid to land expropriation and displacement in first-tier cities in China, such as Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou (Ye, 2016)[17]. This thesis aims to address the lack of academic research on Yinchuan.

In addition, Ningxia is one of the five regions of China populated by a minority group. More than a quarter of the total population in Yinchuan are Hui (Muslim) people. The

[17] A search for 'urbanisation' and 'Shanghai' as key words in Web of Science produced 669 results. A search for 'urbanisation' and 'Yinchuan' as key words produced only eight results. None of these related to the topics of displacement or migrants' integration. Obviously, there is a research gap in this area.

unique multicultural history in Yinchuan provides a special context in which to examine the experience of both Hui minority and Han majority migrants in China, which enriches the research content and potentially highlights diversity in integration processes. This contributes to the literature where less attention is paid to the Hui minority group in China in relation to the impact of displacement and resettlement.

Yinchuan is the capital city of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region located in the northwest of China (see Figure 4.1). As one of the five minority regions in China, the region is the official designated home of the largest group of Chinese Muslims – the Hui people – who make up around one quarter of the total population in Ningxia[18].

Figure 4.1 Yinchuan in Ningxia

Yinchuan is a city with more than 2,000 years of history that can be traced back to the Han Dynasty (112 BC). The city was originally built on the plain area close to the Huang River (Yellow River) to aid the construction of the irrigation canals. Ever since, the city has become an important city and market town that deals in agriculture and

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[18] Source: the official website of the government of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. Available from: http://www.nxtj.gov.cn/xxgk/ [Accessed 21 Jan 2021].

animal products from the nearby farms. In the 11th century, the region became part of the Xi Xia Kingdom of the Tangut people, Yinchuan was conquered by Chinggis Khan early in the 13th century and thereafter remained tributary to China. As Mongol power declined, and Turkish-speaking Muslims migrated from oasis settlements to the West, the region became increasingly Islamic – a feature of the region that remains today.

Yinchuan and the wider Ningxia region has always been a less developed area compared to other provinces in China. '*Jingji luohou diqu*' [19] (economic backward area), '*qian fada diqu*' [20] (economic underdeveloped region) are some terms that the central government and media use to describe the region. According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics of China, during the 40 years economic reforms from 1978 to 2018, the GDP of Ningxia remained at the bottom of the GDP ranking for all the provinces in China. As the capital city of Ningxia, Yinchuan ranked 31st among the total 34 provincial capital cities in China between 2009 and 2018[21].

The underdeveloped economic condition has several causes. On the one hand, the central government's economic development strategy has played a vital role in building regional economic and development gaps. Western China's urbanisation process has lagged behind eastern China due to the late start of its economic reform. Most of the cities in western China only initiated urbanisation in the early 21st century after the release of the central policy of the Western Regional Development Strategy (WRDS) in 2000 (Lin et al. 2018). Because of the limited size of the economy, Yinchuan has had less opportunity to access natural, public and human resources, as well as internal and external investments, as the city promises a less lucrative return to the investors than its eastern counterparts (Wang, Krstikj and Koura, 2017).

On the other hand, the geography and natural conditions restricts the development of cities in western China. Western China covers about 70% of the whole territory, but

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[19] This is a description in Chinese pinyin and has been used in various government reports and news, for example in a report in the official website of the central government of China. Available from: http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2019-01-24/content_5360811.htm [Accessed 21 Nov 2022].
[20] Sourced from: A report of *China Daily:* Available from: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/regional/2015-09/09/content_21830854.htm [Accessed 21 Nov 2022].
[21] Main provincial-level cities indicate 23 provincial capital cities, five capital cities of autonomous region and four municipalities, and two special administrative regions. The ranking data sourced from: the official website of National Bureau of Statistics, available from: http://data.stats.gov.cn/easyquery.htm?cn=E0105 [Accessed 21 Jan 2021].

only 28% of the population inhabit it, and this region contains most of the population that has traditionally been engaged in pasturing and farming (Du et al. 2022). In Yinchuan, as one of the main cities in western China, agriculture remains one of the most important industries. Due to the lack of robust manufacturing and service industries, the fiscal income of Yinchuan government relies heavily on generating land conveyance fees from selling land and from land-based finance. According to the literature, for the years 2003 and 2011, the amount of land conveyance revenues in Ningxia was as high as 80% of the total local fiscal revenue, while this number is less than 50% in most central and eastern areas of China (Zheng and Li, 2012).

Due to the local government's urbanisation strategy, Yinchuan has undergone a large population growth in recent decades, increasing from 1.17 million in 2000 to 2.85 million in 2020 (Yinchuan Statistical Yearbook, 2001; 2021). Traditionally an area of low population density, in the last two decades however, the percentage of the total population living in urban areas in Yinchuan has increased from 50.96% in 2000 to 79.05% in 2019, which is much higher than the average urbanisation rate of China (from 36.86% to 60.60%) in the same period (Yinchuan Statistical Yearbook, 2001; 2020). Moreover, between 2000 to 2002, more than 110,000 people living in rural areas were displaced and resettled within the urban area of Yinchuan as part of the 'Big Yinchuan' policy implementation, thus contributing to the local urban population growth[22].

In addition to the population growth, from 2000, the 'Big Yinchuan' strategy also led to urban jurisdiction enlargement projects, which include the abolishment of suburbs and restructuring of Yinchuan's administrative system. Yinchuan's total administrative area is composed of three urban districts, two rural counties, and one satellite city. Today the total built-up area of the city had reached more than 9000 km², having tripled in size compared to 2001 figures (Wang, Krstikj and Koura, 2017).

Community A

Community A was selected as the case study community for this research. It was one of the earliest development-induced migrant resettlement communities in Yinchuan in

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[22] The number of displaced people sourced from an interview with a sub-district officer.

response to the state policy of the WRDS. Social integration is a long-term adaptation process for migrants (Heckmann, 2005). Therefore, it is appropriate to choose the earliest resettlement community as a case study area to examine the long-term impact of spatial policy and explore the long-lasting influence of displacement on resettlers. The first group of relocated people have lived in Community A for over 15 years. It is possible to trace the whole resettlement process by examining their experiences. Additionally, Community A is one of the largest resettlement projects in Yinchuan. The high number of residents ensures 'information richness' when purposively selecting interviewees according to the recruiting criteria (Patton, 2002).

Community A is located in one of the three urban districts of the city. The construction of the community was completed in 2003 to purposely accommodate displaced farmers who lost rural land between 2002 and 2005. The residents came from three suburban villages of Yinchuan and resettled under local government's 'intact displacement mode', which means relocating an entire village or several villages to the same residential area with homogenous rural residents[23]. The whole community includes 108 residential buildings and is capable of accommodating over 15,000 residents. The residents consist of both Hui and Han residents, with Hui residents accounting for more than one-third of the total dwellers. There are also other ethnic groups living in Community A, such as Manchu people, but there are too few to be considered in this research.

Community A is divided into four modern gated sub-communities with similar layouts. 24 six-storey buildings are laid out neatly on both sides of the main road in each sub-community. There is a ground-level car park next to the main road leading to the front entrance. Willows, locust trees, fruit trees, flowers and lawns are well-arranged between the buildings (see Figure 4.2). In addition, each gated community is equipped with pavilions that shelter residents from the heat and provide them with a place for social activities. Additionally, there is outdoor sports equipment for residents to exercise. Furthermore, residents in Community A are within a mile of a large shopping

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[23] In addition to the intact displacement mode, there are other two types of resettlement mode: scattered resettlement mode is where farmers are relocated to various urban communities; single monetary resettlement mode is where migrants only receive compensation money and they are responsible for relocating themselves.

centre, restaurants, health care facilities, schools and public transport. Community A is a modern, practical and aesthetic residential area.

Figure 4.2 A picture of Community A

Source: Taken by the author.

4.2 Data collection methods

This research consisted of three stages of data collection from a variety of data sources, including government documents, media data and semi-structured interviews with a range of stakeholders and displaced people, among which the interviews with displaced people provided the key source of data.

4.2.1 Documentary and secondary data

Documentary data was the first stage of data collection, the analysis of which provided a comprehensive foundation for this research. It was primarily conducted from May to June 2019.

Documents from a variety of sources provided an overview of the context of urban spatial transformation, the rural-urban displacement action plan, and the resettlement and compensation package in Yinchuan. Additionally, the documents also demonstrated details of power relationships and context-bound local struggles. Three types of relevant documents were examined, including:

- Policy documents: Central and local government documents, including six central-level laws and central government policies and 12 policies released by the local governments regarding the local urbanisation plan, rural land expropriation project design and the local displacement and resettlement scheme (reference to Appendix 1 - Policy list).

  All central laws and policies were collected from the official central government website. Local policies after 2012 were accessed directly from local government websites, while policies before 2012 were hard copies collected from different local government departments. The government documents demonstrated the political and legal context in which land expropriation was conducted. They created a detailed picture of why and how land expropriation projects were implemented. They were crucial evidence for revealing the government intentions behind spatial practices. Moreover, policy analysis laid the foundation for contextualising the experiences and emotions manifested by the displaced group and the ways social injustice were produced. The detailed documentary analysis is presented in Chapter 5.

- Survey data: Ningxia and Yinchuan statistical yearbooks from 2000 to 2021, the government work reports, Yinchuan city planning reports, and Yinchuan city archives were reviewed to provide background information of the city in terms of population, employment, wage level and people's livelihood changes before and after land expropriation. The numerical data helps to identify the positive and negative influences of land-centred urbanisation exerted on displaced farmers.

- Media data: There were two primary resources of media data. The first was media reports from mainstream local newspapers, including *Ningxia Daily Newspaper* and *Yinchuan Evening News* from 2002 to 2019. News and reports on the mayors' speeches and interviews with local officials relating to the progression of the displacement and resettlement projects were collected. These media reports not only helped to construct and inform the whole story of displacement and resettlement from a mainstream media's viewpoint, but also reflected the process of the governments' dominant discourse on urbanisation to rationalise land expropriation action. This, in turn, caused conflict between the powerful authority and the powerless people (see Chapter 5).

  The second media resource is Weibo (also named Sina microblog) [24]. Mainstream media reports sometimes presented partial information about the event and tended to avoid sensitive topics and negative opinions on government policies. Bias existed if the stories were only told by one party. Thus, this research collected online posts on Weibo to determine the general public's views on displacement. Weibo posts demonstrated public opinions, individual stories, grievances and confrontations with government authority in terms of resettlement-related experiences (see Chapter 7). Both mainstream and social media resources offered historical records of the event along a timeline, which enabled a richer empirical analysis.

4.2.2 Semi-structured interviews

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were adopted as the main data collection method in this research. Interviews are the most effective way to produce first-hand, in-depth data and to obtain detailed information about personal feelings and perceptions (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). A social phenomenon is largely constructed by 'perceptions and subsequent actions of social actors who were involved' (Bryman,

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[24] Weibo is the largest social media platforms in China and similar to Twitter. It has more than 500 million registered users and over 100 million messages posted by users each day. It is one of the most popular informal platforms that Chinese people share and disseminate information. Source from: https://www.whatsonweibo.com/sinaweibo/ [Accessed 21 Jan 2021].

2013: 17). Thus, having purposive conversations with different social actors to elicit their views on the topic was an appropriative method in this research to understand social injustice and social integration issues due to the displacement that occurred in Yinchuan. Moreover, along with secondary data analysis, interviews deepened my understanding of the case. They were a heuristic device which offered me new insights into how to make theoretical arguments and refine the theoretical framework.

Unlike structured interviews which produce quantitative-oriented data to maximise reliability and validity, semi-structured interviews allow more flexibility and produce rich and in-depth answers on a topic (Bryman, 2012). To foster learning about individual experiences and perspectives on displacement issues, both closed-ended questions and open-ended questions were used. Close-ended questions ensured every interview followed a similar systematic process and generated a comparative understanding of basic information, such as resettlers' post-displacement lives in four domains: structural, cultural, interactive and identification aspects. This was based on the social integration framework put forward by Heckmann (2005).

Open-ended questions enabled interviewees to provide more information on certain areas and digress slightly to let new ideas/themes emerge (Berg, 2001). Additionally, the flexibility of semi-structured interviews allowed for further questions during interviews, and the sequence of questions could change depending on earlier responses (Bryman, 2012). For example, in stakeholder interviews, when the community leader mentioned they offered residents employment training, but that it did not have the intended result, I continued to enquire about the details of the training and uncovered reasons for the unsatisfactory outcome. Additionally, I added follow-up questions in interviews with displaced people to investigate their opinions on professional training provided by the community to compare the narratives between different groups.

Interviews with stakeholders

In the second stage of data collection, eight semi-structured interviews were carried out with a range of stakeholders (see Table 4.1 for details). I employed purposive sampling to select stakeholders. Purposive sampling is based on a researcher's judgement of who is best placed to answer the research questions (Etikan, 2017). Based on the preliminary fieldwork study and the initial document collection, I

accumulated rich information to design stakeholder categories and to identify eight potential interviewees.

Specifically, interviews with a sub-district officer helped to explore how basic-level government agencies implemented resettlement policies and addressed residents' concerns and complaints. Interviews with community leaders were essential to understanding how grassroots autonomy organisations dealt with resident-related affairs, and to what extent residents' committees utilised their power to help residents better exercise their citizenship rights. Interviews with NGO representatives allowed me to explore the available resources, or lack thereof, that helped to mitigate post-displacement gaps and facilitated resettlers' integration into the host community. In addition, the interviews with a manager of the property management company aimed to understand residents' daily concerns and their everyday forms of resistance. Furthermore, interviews with employment agencies provided evidence of a displaced group's employment status, which is crucial for relocated farmers to make a living, change their disadvantaged economic and social position and develop a social bond with the host city.

In practice, I reached and successfully recruited a sub-district officer, two community leaders, a manager of a property management company and manager of YZ Human Resource Service Company through the contact information available on the official organisation website. The rest of the stakeholders were accessed through one of the community leaders and my personal contacts. I recruited interviewees via phone calls, texts, personal visits and emails.

Table 4.1 Interviewee list – Stakeholders

No.	Stakeholder Categories	Name	Details
1	Sub-district office (Basic-level government agency in Chinese government administrative hierarchy, reference to Figure 8.2)	Cao	Sub-district Officer
2	Residents' committee	Tang	Community leader (also called residents' committee leader) of south district of Community A

3	Residents' committee	Ma	Community leader (also called residents' committee leader) north district of Community A
4	NGOs	Wang	The founder of XC NGO (a local NGO aims to provide extra-class education for disadvantaged groups in Yinchuan)
5	NGOs	Chen	Deputy director of the Ningxia Social Organisation Administration Office
6	Property management company	Song	Manager of property management company in Community A
7	Employment agency	Zhang	Manager of YZ Human Resource Service Company
8	Employment agency	Jian	Deputy chief of Employment Aids and Vocational Training Agency (a government-led employment agency)

Most of the stakeholder interviews were conducted between June and July 2019, except for the interviews with NGO representatives which were carried out in October 2019 due to access issues. Each interview took around 60 minutes. All interviews were digitally recorded after signed informed consent was gained. When interviewees perceived the topic as sensitive and did not want to be recorded, notes were taken at the scene and transcribed afterwards.

Interviews with displaced people

Interviews with displaced people were the key data in this research. 24 semi-structured interviews with displaced people in Community A were conducted from mid-July to late October 2019. Before formal interviews, three pilot interviews were conducted to test the flow and clarity of the interview topic guide. Participants of pilot interviews included two displaced people and a deputy leader of a residents' committee. Their comments were used to further refine interview questions. I employed purposive sampling to recruit 24 participants. The prescribed sampling criteria were:

- Rural farming and living on land in suburb villages of Yinchuan which was expropriated by the local government between 2002 and 2005 because of urbanisation development projects.

- Resettled in Community A and lived in Community A for 15 years or more.

- Both males and females.

- Both ethnic minority Hui people and Han people.

- Aged 35 to 60 years old.

The reason why 35 was chosen as the lower age limit of respondents was because most interviewees in this research lost their rural land in 2002, and the displaced farmer who was 18 in 2002 was 35 in 2019. Adopting 60 as the upper age limit was because, in general, 60 is the statutory age of retirement for males and 55 for females in China.

The participants were further stratified into four groups by employment status and job sectors (see Table 4.2; the full details of all interviewees can be found in Appendix 2). This was because, firstly, for displaced people, employment was one of the most important aspects of resettlement after losing farming land, and various employment challenges have continued (Li, 2006). Also, previous research indicated employment was a crucial factor for resettlers to maintain subsistence, build various degrees of cognitive, cultural and social competence and promote upward mobility in the host city (Penninx and Martniello, 2004). Furthermore, employment was identified as a main indicator in Heckmann's (2005) framework to assess the social integration of migrants.

On the other hand, further stratified interviewees helped to answer the research questions in a structured way. The four job sectors not only led to different levels of income, but also made a great difference in accessing social welfare and job security. For example, state sector jobs provide employees with five types of social insurance, including pension, medical, unemployment, work injury and maternity cover. In contrast, whether self-employees and private business employees can access any of these types of insurance depends on their work contracts, and usually they have fewer benefits than state sector workers (see Chapter 3, section 3.4 for details). Therefore, interviewees with different employment statuses and work experience informed the research why and how resettlers have built different post-displacement lives and a sense of belonging in the host city.

Table 4.2 Interviewee list – Displaced people

Categories	Employment status and job sector	Interview numbers
The displaced people	Self-employed	6
	State sector	6
	Private business	6

Stakeholders and my personal contacts facilitated contact with individual participants. The starting point for recruiting interviewees was a referral from a community leader who I had previously interviewed. After conducting several interviews, the participants acted as facilitators and referees for me to access more potential interviewees. My task in the field was to get access to and establish credibility with displaced people who fit my sampling criteria. After frequently visiting the community and talking to many residents, the residents either participated in my interviews or introduced participants to me. Based on their referrals and my own connections with the community, data saturation was reached.

To check data saturation in this research, I considered two principles in the sampling stage and data analysis stage respectively. In the sampling stage, I considered whether the interviewees had been fully sampled based on the literature review and preliminary study (Morse, 1995). In the data analysis process, I adopted an inductive thematic saturation model, which means I considered whether additional themes could be found by reviewing successive data (Saunders et al. 2018). Based on this model, saturation is reached when no new themes emerge.

In practice, I conducted interviews alongside preliminary data analysis. A new interview was undertaken only after transcribing and first-round coding the previous interview, as this process allowed emerging themes to be considered in the next interviews. This way, I grasped the progressive information of interviews and could adjust the number of interviews if needed. 'Key events' and 'various perspectives on these key events' were two basic criteria to decide whether enough data had been collected (Saldaña, 2009). For instance, when I finished 18 residents' interviews (approximately four interviewees from each employment sub-category), an increasing number of interviewees mentioned repetitive key events (such as difficulty finding a job, insufficient professional training and living a more stressful life compared to rural life), and after 24 interviews, there were no more new key events or novel views on the events. I conducted two more interviews in addition to the completed 24 interviews, but the additional interviews were not included in the next round of coding and analysis because no new information and insights were found.

The length of interviews ranged from 60 minutes to 90 minutes, and all interviews were conducted in locations chosen by the interviewees, such as public gardens, restaurants, tea houses and shopping malls.

4.3 Data analysis

Thematic analysis was the main data analysis technique which guided the whole data analysis process. Thematic analysis allows researchers to answer research questions by identifying and making sense of collective meanings or the patterns of meanings related to research topics (Braun and Clarke, 2012). The themes in this research regarding the process of rural-urban displacement in Yinchuan and its social impact were generated in a complementary strategy which combined an inductive approach and a deductive approach.

Guided by thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006), the data analysis was divided into four stages. The first stage was fully transcribing interview recordings in Chinese and entering transcripts into Nvivo 12. The second stage included reading and rereading interview transcripts to make notes and carry out initial coding as well as to generate some emerging themes. For example, when reading the transcripts regarding the displacement experience, I included codes such as 'unforgettable memory', 'sense of deprivation', 'angry and fear', 'forced to move', 'low compensation standard' 'inconsistent compensation standard', 'not involved in decision-making', 'village leaders corruption', 'failed resistance', 'powerless', 'difficult to find a job', 'higher income', 'convenient life', improved social welfare' and 'better housing'. These codes were grouped into different categories, such as 'displacement consciousness', 'unsatisfied compensation standard', 'difficulies against the government's decision', 'the development of right awareness' and 'changes in life'. This stage was a purely data-driven process where themes were directly derived from the data itself (Patton, 1990). The inductive method created the opportunity to fully explore the rich description of the data, but it also meant the data were not coded to answer specific research questions nor fit into a pre-existing analytical framework at this stage (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Deductive analysis was adopted in the third stage. During this stage, the analysis was driven by pre-set theoretical frameworks and focused on specific aspects of the data. For instance, when analysing the transcripts about the lives of displaced farmers in

the city, I followed and applied the four domains of social integration framework put forward by Heckmann (2005), and extracted the contents related to interviewees' narratives in structural, cultural, interactive and identification aspects of their life. Within the structural integration topic, I concentrated on how employment status and job sectors played out across the data to find out how employment factors affected the lives and sense of belonging of displaced people.

Another example of the third-stage data analysis was based on Penninx and Martniello's (2004) theory. I primarily coded respondents' descriptions of their views of current and past working experiences, employment support, the determining factors for working in a specific industry and a specific job sector, colleagues and their social lives as well as their perceptions of 'a good job' and 'a bad job'. These views led to a number of themes which have already been included in the original theory, such as 'employment not only affecting subsistence, but also forming cognitive, cultural and social competences for migrants' (Penninx and Martniello, 2004). More importantly, interviewees' views expanded the original theory by detailing the classification of job sectors and elaborating their influences in China's context based on the themes such as 'the impact of the work contract' and 'the benefits of working in the state sector'.

The final stage was refining and combining the themes generated in the second and third stages. This stage was designed to make sure the final themes were closely connected with the research aim, answered research questions and responded to findings from the literature.

4.4 Ethical consideration

This research was fully compliant with the research ethics guideline of the School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol. Ethical approval from the School's Research Ethics Committee was gained on the 29th of May 2019. All participant research started from June 2019. There were no ethical issues in the document collection and analysis stage because government documents, survey data and media reports and social media posts are open access. I clearly indicated the references of the document data in the text.

All participants voluntarily took part in the interviews after being informed about the research aims, themes, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality, the limits of

confidentiality, anonymity, data use and storage and the potential use of the research results. Before conducting the interviews, a written participant information sheet (PIS) was sent to potential interviewees, and a written consent form was signed if they agreed to participate. I prepared two versions of PIS for stakeholders and displaced people respectively, and I applied different methods to inform participants. PIS for stakeholders contained more details about the research and some technical terms, and the form was sent via email to every stakeholder and each main point was verbally introduced again at interview. For displaced people, accurate and easy-to-understand words were used in their PIS and consent forms to avoid misunderstanding. For illiterate participants, the contents of both forms were clearly, verbally presented to ensure they fully understood the research information and process and to avoid the 'competence gap' (Brown, 1968). All interviews were digitally recorded and participant consent was received prior to any digital recording. A box of tea with a 'thank you' note was given to every participant after each interview.

Confidentiality, anonymity and data protection were carefully considered and clearly stated in the PIS and consent forms to minimise potential risks. To protect confidentiality, only the researcher (myself), had access to the data in this research, including documents, digital recordings, interview notes, interview transcripts and their translated version. The research outcomes are available for access by participants at any time.

All interviewees were anonymised after transcription. Participants' names were replaced by identification codes and anonymised in the fieldwork notes, data analysis process and thesis overall. Additionally, location names and company names were replaced by fictional names. Interviews were recorded on an encrypted recorder and saved on the University of Bristol server via a remote desktop computer. All data was for academic research purposes only and used only by the researcher.

I carefully considered and minimised the potential risks that the research may bring to research participants. For example, talking about the displaced experience with interviewees may have caused unpleasant or upsetting memories of the loss or anger or nostalgia. In addition to informing participants of the interview topic themes in the PIS beforehand, I carefully chose appropriate words for questions on sensitive topics. Interviewees were free to end the conversation anytime if they experienced a negative emotional impact and uncomfortable feelings. When talking about interviewees'

controversial opinions and actions against the government, participants had the potential to worry that their responses and activities would be identified by others. To address this issue, all participants were informed that their responses were going to be strictly confidential and anonymised. Also, government officials in senior positions were not permitted to refer potential interviewees to me to minimise the influence of power relationships and any feelings of obligation on behalf of participants. Based on being fully informed about the research details and the potential benefits/risks of this research, I waited five days after sending the recruitment letter and PIS for them to decide whether to participate.

Finally, I anticipated the potential risks to the researcher. I strictly followed the University's fieldwork safety protocol. All stakeholder interviews were conducted in the participants' offices or meeting rooms during working hours. All resident interviews were conducted in public places before 9 pm. I informed a second person (a local friend) about each interview. In accordance with the standard protocol, I rang my contact after the agreed interview time to confirm my safety. I contacted participants using a local mobile phone used exclusively for this research. During the fieldwork, I also met regularly with my supervisors via video call to report on progress and safety.

4.5 Practical issues and potential limitations

During the five months of fieldwork, I spent most of my time with the residents in Community A. Practical issues arose due to the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the participants, regarding rapport (and its benefits) between the researcher and participants. My task in the field was to access and establish credibility with various groups relating to the rural-urban displacement controversy.

This fieldwork largely depended on my ability to build rapport with interviewees. To do so, I moved back to Yinchuan for six months. Given that Community A is only 15 minutes walking distance from where I live, I was able to spend time almost every day in the community talking to the residents. I either joined a group chat in the community centre or had unplanned one-to-one conversations in the community common areas. These usually started with small talk to break the ice, for example, residents were very interested in my experience in the UK. I spent most of the time at the beginning sharing my personal experience living in the city for more than 20 years and talking about why I conducted this research. This process allowed me to identify potential research

participants and build rapport with residents.

After several conversations and a period when I was able to build real connections with some residents, and as people became more convinced that my research was genuine, some started to share their experiences of their life both inside and outside Community A. 24 resettlers agreed to formally participate in my research and undertook an in-depth research interview. Additionally, having a consistently compliant ethics protocol and open attitude allowed me to build a good reputation in Community A and word of mouth helped more residents to trust me and share their experiences with me.

My frequent visits to the community and having a local dialect and accent helped me to get closer to participants and gave me the opportunity to appreciate their emotions during conversations in the interviewing process. Even during informal conversations, I could feel some residents' anger, upset and disappointment when they described their displacement experience. Many interviewees had already looked past the displacement experience and settled into city life and described their displacement in a less emotional manner.

Based on these two different responses, to avoid the unnecessary negative emotions created during the formal interviews, I was sensitive with the participant's expressions and appearance to gauge their mood and emotional state. I did this by considering the language they used and the way they talked. I carefully selected my vocabulary in asking questions to avoid triggering negative emotions. I tried to match their body language by sitting like them and harmonise with their verbal pace and tone and spoke in the same language as participants if they spoke a local dialect. One of the participants told me that 'talking with you is like talking with an old friend'. As Youell and Youell (2011) suggested, I also found subtly matching both verbal and non-verbal communication patterns could physically and mentally release the pressure on respondents when talking about sensitive topics.

Furthermore, given the nature of the displacement experience and the potential emotional trauma that could occur for some interviewees, interview protocols were carefully considered to protect participants from harm and minimise any potential distress. During the interview, at any sign of distress, I suspended formal questions, and asked interviewees if they wanted to stop the interview or change topic if it was

too difficult. I kept the conversation open and allowed participants to talk about what they wished to. Additionally, topics that may cause any distress were always considered in the research question design as well as during interviews to avoid probing into sensitive topics (Guillemin and Heggen, 2009). Finally, being local and being able to establish rapport with participants allowed me to understand some of the emotional elements of their experience during displacement and experience empathy when conducting interviews to avoid any potentially upsetting consequences for participants.

However, a certain degree of trust and rapport with participants also brought me some confusion. On the one hand, they were willing to share with me 'dark secrets' behind the scenes, such as the corruption or disreputable stories related to local government officials and previous village leaders, especially after stopping the recording and having a less formal talk with participants. In fact, this information did help me to have a deeper understanding of the formation of certain social facts. However, since these stories were mostly hearsay which cannot be corroborated, I mainly included the data I collected during the formal interviews. For sensitive information that participants generously shared with me within the formal interviews, I cross-checked their statements with various sources to ensure credibility. Furthermore, I integrated their verbal communication with nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language to discern the reliability and contextual relevance of the information conveyed in their narratives.

On the other hand, due to the trust and rapport built with informants, although I have clearly explained my research aims and potential use for this research, some participants hoped that I would help them address practical issues or publicise their stories. I sensed that they believed the more they told me, the higher the possibility I could help them. To manage this, I was transparent with the interviewees, and rectified any misunderstandings, about my role as a researcher collecting original data and reflecting their experiences in the thesis. This thesis and my potential subsequent publications might attract increased attention in the future, which could indirectly influence the life of the participants.

The potential limitation of this research rested on the selection of the sample. Given that the displacement project happened in 2002, the then stakeholders, including sub-district officers and community leaders who were directly involved in the project, had

left their jobs and could not be contacted, therefore, stakeholder interviews were conducted with the people in these positions at the time of the interviews. It would have been possible to gather more details of the events if I could have accessed the stakeholders from 2002. Fortunately, both community leaders I interviewed were original villagers who experienced the whole process of the displacement and resettlement in Community A, which compensated for the lack of historical stakeholders.

Regarding interviews with displaced people, the stratification of interviewees was based on their employment status and job sectors. An alternative method would have been to recruit more participants and further stratify them into various sub-categories based on detailed criteria, such as family size, different age groups, gender or family income to compare between different sub-categories regarding their post-displacement lives and sense of belonging as well as the formation of diverse attitudes towards the rights in the city. Although this attempt could generate richer research findings, due to limited time and resources, this research focused particularly on the core questions. These points could become potential themes for future research.

From the point of view of research design, qualitative research is criticised for subjectivity because the research design, implementation and the final report rely heavily on the researcher's understanding and interpretation (Silverman, 2004). In this research, subjectivity was not regarded as a shortcoming as it enabled me to accurately comprehend the human experience (Ratner, 2002). Instead of managing subjectivity, I put more effort into ensuring the validity and reliability of this research, such as triangulating data from different resources (government documents, media reports and interviews) and comparing narratives between different interviewees to illustrate social information with minimal personal bias.

Another criticism of the qualitative research method is its limited generalisability. Although extending findings to wider populations with the same degree of certainty that quantitative researchers insist on is never the aim of conducting qualitative research, I still managed to select the most representative community in the area, access as large a sample size as possible and ensure that the participant pool was both diverse and representative. Additionally, I attempted to represent accurate features of the target group and draw conclusions to broaden the case basis and generalise the results to similar contexts.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research design, data collection methods and data analysis techniques of this thesis. This research is a case study of a development-induced resettlement community in Yinchuan, which applied a variety of data sources, including interviews, government documents and media data, to unveil the impact of urban spatial expansion projects on displaced farmers and to examine their experiences, perceptions and feelings of living in a host city. The adoption of the qualitative research approach with a focus on interviews has been justified by the constructivist and interpretivist stance as well as the need to answer exploratory research questions. An interview strategy was clearly designed to cover the intended informant groups, which addressed the selection, data collection and data analysis processes. Finally, the ethical, practical issues and limitations of the research have been discussed in this chapter.

The data generated and analysed based on these research methods demonstrated that to examine the complex impact of land-expropriation on the relocated farmers, the context-bound causes and dynamics of urban expansion, resettlers' post-displacement lives and local conflicts between the government and people require careful consideration. Based on the results of thematic analysis, the next three chapters will explore the formation of spatial discourses in policy and its translation into urban expansion practice (Chapter 5), the life and sense of belonging of the displaced farmers in the host city over a span of 15 years (Chapter 6), and the dynamics and influences of three waves of rights-defending activities relocated people initiated (Chapter 7).

Chapter 5 Growing city: linking spatial discourse and land expropriation practice in Yinchuan

Introduction

This chapter is the first of three chapters which discuss the findings of the thesis. The main focus of this chapter is to scrutinise the discourses present in spatial policies, and to explore how these discourses are constructed. Additionally, this chapter highlights the diverse range of opinions and viewpoints held by displaced individuals regarding the displacement and resettlement policies in the case of Yinchuan. The data, drawn from government policy documents, including central and local level urbanisation policies, land expropriation policies, resettlement, compensation policies (reference to Appendix 1 – Policy list), local government work reports and mainstream local newspaper reports, is triangulated with participant observation and semi-structured interviews.

The chapter begins by analysing the approaches and processes through which local government framed the policy problems regarding expropriating rural land to construct the 'Big Yinchuan'. Section 5.1 investigates how specific social phenomena were constructed and imbued with negative connotations in policies to rationalise specific spatial intervention action. Section 5.2 analyses specific spatial policy discourses promoting land expropriation in Yinchuan. It investigates how the key justificatory expressions in policy, such as 'for the public interest' and 'responding to the requirements of central government', play a role in legitimising and justifying the government's land expropriation actions. Additionally, the chapter explores discourses that shape and reinforce rural-urban identity gap. This gap not only leads to a strong desire among farmers to shed a negatively-perceived rural identity but also increase their tolerance and acceptance of the land expropriation policy.

Section 5.3 discusses the formation of social injustice across three key dimensions. The first dimension concerns the government's prioritisation of exchange value over the people's use value of land, leading to the suppression of the latter. The second dimension relates to flaws in policy design, while the third dimension pertains to the government's failure to uphold procedural and distributive justice during implementation and expropriation processes. This section combines and compares the perspectives of displaced people with interpretations from the government.

5.1 Constructing urban development policy problems

Policy is not always formed as a response to existing conditions and problems. Instead, it often emerges as a discourse where both problems and solutions are are fabricated to serve political agendas and to advance the interests of a particular group (Goodwin, 1996). Therefore, a starting point for policy analysis is to investigate the 'problematisation' process, rather than the problems per se (Kritzman, 1988). This section examines the various agents involved in constructing specific problems related to urbanisation and how these problems were subsequently transformed and re-framed into an urban expansion policy.

5.1.1 Diagnosing 'the problem' and constructing the 'solution'

Before delving in depth into the specific policies, it is important to understand the macro-political background under which the social problem of underdevelopment was constructed. Since 2000, 12 cities in western China have conducted their own development practices to respond to the Western Regional Development Strategy (WRDS) released by the central government. As a target area, Ningxia's government put forward the 'Big Yinchuan' development strategy in 2002 to create a regional central city by enlarging the city, increasing the urban population, adjusting municipal administrative divisions and opening up propitious conditions for market-based development (Ningxia Daily, 2002). The city grew from 3,499 km^2 to 7,130 km^2 by the end of 2002 to facilitate the 'Big Yinchuan' vision (Ningxia Daily, 2002).

The rationale behind such an ambitious city development strategy was the identification of Yinchuan in the WRDS as an economically underprivileged area compared with the rest of China[25]. Zhengwei Wang, the then Chairman of Ningxia, expressed in a media interview that western China only accounted for 11.4% of national GDP, while the east contributed 65% of national GDP in the 1990s. The per-capita GDP in the west equals only 60% of the national average (Zhang, 2002). In this context, Yinchuan, as the capital city of Ningxia, only ranked in ninth place among the

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[25] The terminology of '*luohou diqu*' is sourced from a newspaper report in the People's Daily. The People's Daily is the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and it provides direct information on the policies and viewpoints of the CCP.

total ten capitals in western China (Zhang, 2002). For this reason, the local government was particularly keen to enact changes to improve the local economy.

The limited availability of construction land for industrial development, commercial areas, roads and infrastructures in Yinchuan was cited by local politicians as the reason for the city's less-developed economic status. The then-mayor of Yinchuan, Xuejun Liu, stated that the state's control over the size of cities had hindered local economic development, resulting in only a few large construction projects before 2000 (Liu, 2005). To take advantage of the 'golden historical opportunity' presented by the WRDS and to boost the local economy, the local government prioritised increasing construction land and expanding urban areas by expropriating rural land in the early 21st century. This strategy has been widely adopted by many major cities in China, including Yinchuan, to stimulate economic growth and encourage large investments and real estate development (Zhang and Su, 2016).

Local urban planners supported the criticality of expanding urban space for revitalising the local economy. Chang, the then officer of the Urban Planning Bureau of Yinchuan, saw the barrier to urban development as the lack of construction land. This could be resolved by a series of urban land-boosting measures, for example, expanding the city by shrinking local peri-urban rural and residential land to ensure the provision of urban construction land (Chang, 2001). This suggestion echoed local politicians' rhetoric about enlarging construction land, which was seen as adopting land expropriation as the key measure to implement the 'Big Yinchuan' concept.

In addition, many researchers specialising in urban planning and economic development have supported the enlargement of urban space under the 'Big Yinchuan' vision. They have cited both the short-term and long-term impacts of 'Big Yinchuan' for promoting the regional economy, enhancing city competence and improving people's global living standards to justify spatial expansion policy (Zhang, 2002; Wang, 2004; Ningxia Daily, 2005).

Consequently, the urbanisation strategy of expanding the city using large-scale land expropriation has gradually become established and legitimated in policymaking. This strategy was viewed by politicians, urban planners and scholars as being essentially a 'win-win decision'. This not only acted as a measure with which to bolster regional economic growth but also met the aspirations of local people to enhance individual

income level and overall living conditions through the improvement of the economic conditions of the city overall.

The process of shaping policy issues in the development of Yinchuan experienced a sudden paradigm shift in 2000. Before 2000, limited construction land and small cities were encouraged under the central policy to control city size, and this strategy was highlighted in the previous Yinchuan Urban Master Plan (1996-2010). Therefore, up until 2010, the task of the local government was to restrict the availability of construction land. However, to cope with the WRDS released in 2000, insufficient construction land was suddenly identified as an urgent issue which needed to be addressed promptly by drastically enlarging the urban area. Subsequently, in 2003, the Yinchuan government suspended the previous Yinchuan Urban Master Plan (1996-2010) and replaced it with a new Urban Master Plan (2004-2020) to follow the guidelines of the central government.

The changing political discourse on city development in Yinchuan exemplified the old discourse on urban development being dissolved into new debates as a political stratagem (Hajer, 1993). Once a new discourse was formulated, politicians produced new story lines on specific problems. The old narratives on the city development model were shown not to be fit for purpose to cope with the newly identified 'problems', and therefore no longer became a legitimate basis for the latest policymaking. This process revealed that the political discourses emphasised certain problems and aspects of a phenomenon over others (Hajer, 1993).

In fact, Yinchuan had long been an economically underdeveloped area, a situation emerging from a variety of circumstances, including its geographic location (inland), the topographic conditions (mountainous district), limited natural resources, a lack of investment in the science and technology sectors and substantial emigration. The 'lack of construction land' as the primary reason for restricted economic growth in the Urban Master Plan failed to explain the complexity of the local economic context. Nonetheless, this discourse fit perfectly with the state's western development strategy. The problems, including the constrained economic development and insufficient constructionland that local politicians raised were not necessarily problems; rather, they were social facts/phenomena. Certain meanings were given to these phenomena to construe them as problems to facilitate a wider political agenda.

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5.1.2 Problematising 'village': From the 'village with problems' to the 'village as a problem'

Peri-urban villages were construed as problematic by the local government and politicians from 2000, potentially paving the way for policy discourses that promoted the replacement of villages with urban landscape. Government officials' speeches and the local mainstream media reports contained this problematic portrayal of peri-urban villages. For instance, in a speech, Mayor Liu described peri-urban villages as '*zangluancha*' ('dirt areas') and *'yingxiang shirong'* ('areas negatively affecting the city aesthetic'), which need '*gaizao tisheng chengshi xingxiang'* ('to be replaced to uplift the city environment') (Liu, 2005). These descriptions potentially facilitated the urban expansion programme.

Furthermore, rural land usage in the late 1990s was described in policy as being inefficient, wasteful and problematic due to the scattered distribution of rural housing and low output of cultivated land despite high labour input. These factors were identified as crucial 'problems' that impeded rural development (The Yinchaun History Research Centre, 2016). Therefore, replacing rural land with construction projects with high return became an effective approach for encouraging intensive land usage, increasing land value and enhancing land use efficiency as stipulated in the WRDS.

Through the analysis of related land policy and the related media reports, it was found that the local urbanisation discourses transformed from the 'village with problems' to the 'village as a problem', implying the need to replace villages. The local government portrayed rural housing as unsafe and unreliable and emphasised the need for improvement in infrastructure such as roads, public transportation and other modern facilities (Li, 2003). These narratives helped to rationalise rural land expropriation and resettlement projects. In addition, according to the then chairman of Ningxia, Wang, the concept of '*Kangju*' (meaning 'comfortable living') was initiated by the local government with the key objective to improve the living conditions of the displaced farmers and to improve Yinchuan's reputation (Zhang, 2002). Thus, reshaping villages became a solution to address all aforementioned problems.

Clearly, the same social phenomenon can be interpreted and constructed in divergent ways by various agents when embedded in different contexts and narratives (Leifeld and Haunss, 2012). The supra-rural disadvantages had been long-standing and were

commonly found in most villages in western China but had not been regarded as problematic. This had restrained urban development prior to enacting the WRDS. Additionally, the development gaps between rural and urban areas were intentionally created under the binary Hukou system. Therefore, the notion of rural 'inferiority' regarding economic development, physical environment, identity and culture was clearly related to the policy orientation and prioritising building and expanding cities. Furthermore, the previous pattern of urban and rural development was no longer perceived as an appropriate policy strategy in the post-socialist era but rather a barrier to urban development that needed to be reshaped.

This strategy of problematising village life created insurmountable obstacles for farmers to overturn social injustices insidiously embedded within the urbanisation policy process. The Hukou system established a pre-determined social hierarchy, resulting in inherent power imbalances. In addition, the government's portrayal of farmers as needing guidance and support to achieve modernisation prevented them from shaping the urbanisation discourse (Zhao, 2004). These narratives demonstrated how politicians imposed their beliefs on the farmers about the social realities of their less developed rural context compared to the urban setting, manipulating and exercising their power covertly to transform rural land for urban construction use (Hajer, 1993). Under the powerful dominant discourse, there was hardly any progressive change in transforming unjust rural-urban social relations.

I identified the local land expropriation policymaking process, which started by problematising existing rural villages then creating a dominant discourse which spread through diverse agents, including politicians, urban planners and the mainstream media. Finally, pre-established policies were applied to solve these newly framed 'problems'. The process revealed that a solution had emerged and was being promoted prior to the actual problem being recognised, with subsequent framing of this issue characterising Yinchuan as an economically disadvantaged area because of insufficient construction land and the problematic villages. This indicates that issues that become the focus of policies are not always those that are actually existing 'problems', instead, the 'problems are created or given shape' in the very policy proposals that are offered up as 'responses' (Bacchi, 2000: 48).

5.2 From the context to the text: Rationalising land expropriation

After examining in depth how local politicians and stakeholders constructed the policy problems, this section examines the contents and texts of the spatial intervention policies and investigates how different narratives are embedded into spatial policy to further rationalise land expropriation actions in Yinchuan.

5.2.1 Spatial policy discourses promoting land expropriation

Policy discourse is defined as being 'an entity of repeatable linguistic articulations, socio-spatial material practices and power rationality configurations' (Richardson and Jensen, 2003: 16). When scrutinising the 'linguistic articulations' in policy text, it is clear how the new spatial policy discourse has created the conditions for a new set of spatial practices under specific power relations. By reviewing the urbanisation and land expropriation policies from 2000 to 2005, three types of political rhetoric were identified in policies. These have been used to rationalise the land expropriation occurring in Yinchuan since 2002.

'In the public interest' and 'for the people's interest' were the primary justificatory slogans for the land expropriation policy and acted as strong justification for the Yinchuan government's spatial intervention practices. In central-level law, Article 10 of the PRC Constitution (1998) states that 'the state may, in the public interest, expropriate land and offer compensation in accordance with the law'. Correspondingly, local-level policies (refer to Policy 7 and Policy 8) asserted that the land expropriation and reformation were in the best interests of the people. Policy 3 also indicated that constructing a new regional central city would benefit residents in Yinchuan because the city's economic growth contributed to the overall improvement of individual livelihood. A series of policy debates promised local citizens a wealthy and prosperous future to boost public confidence in the urbanisation decision and process. Consequently, urban spatial expansion practices were rationalised because they were designed for the general good with the full consideration of the 'public interest'.

'Complying with the central law' was another piece of political language applied to the local land-expropriation policies to legitimise land expropriation (see Policy 7 and

Policy 8)[26]. Under the Chinese central-local administrative hierarchy, the decision to urbanise with land appropriation was described in local policy as compulsory, which local governments must obey unconditionally and carry out in line with the national development strategy. Similar expressions, such as 'actively responding to the requirements of central government' (in Policy 9) also worked as a strong argument in rationalising local government's spatial policy and 'passing the buck' to the central government when the legitimacy of spatial action was challenged. Under the absolute power of the central government and the rigid administrative hierarchy in China, using a subordinate tone in local policy potentially reduced the pressure on local government. This allowed them to implement the land expropriation policy.

Local government officials further stirred citizens' assumed patriotic fervour and devotion to socialism to ease issues and advance the land expropriation agenda. Bai, the then mayor of Yinchuan, stated in his mayor speech: "the government appreciated the sacrifices that displaced farmers have made (land expropriation and relocation villagers) in order to build and grow out 'Big Yinchuan'. The achievements in city development belong to every displaced person"[27]. Arousing the public's patriotic sentiment worked effectively to boost acceptance of the land expropriation policy. Nearly half of the interviewees stated that they were obedient to the state development strategy and that they tended to look at the positive life changes which land expropriation had created. In particular, older people and party members were more likely to demonstrate patriotic enthusiasm by valuing the sacrifice of individual interests for collective benefits.

The three streams of discourses together created a deployable urbanisation strategy based on rural land expropriation. The political tactic of representational forms, professional specialisms and domain-specific vocabulary helped to make the government's spatial strategies legitimate and build dominant knowledge about

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[26] For example, the first sentence in Policies 7 and 8 indicate the policies were created by central-level government and adhered to central law'. Policy 9 released by the Ningxia Provincial Government appears to have been based on the central urban planning strategy – the WRDS.
[27] Quote from the mayor speech entitled 'Report-back Meeting about Ensuring Employment and Subsistence Allowances for Displaced People' in 2005 by the then mayor, Xueshan Bai.

urbanisation. Nonetheless, the potential conflicts between the government and the public beneath this strategy were intentionally marginalised and veiled.

5.2.2 The widening rural-urban identity gap in the policy

The urbanisation policy not only focused on building spatial-related discourse but also on generating a new set of meanings related to identity construction and to social stratification. As discussed in Chapter 2, space is a social product, and the production of space is reproducing the social relations that buttress a specific spatial pattern (Purcell, 2002; Lefebvre, 1991). Chapter 3 revealed that under the Hukou system, rural and urban spatial segregation were 'coloured' as identity stratification. This had been taking place since the 1950s. At the beginning of the 21st century, the rural and urban identity gap was re-emphasised in the urbanisation discourses in the case of Yinchuan. The transformation of rural identity to an urban identity was regarded as a 'leap in life' for farmers (Zhang, 2004; Yang, 2004).

The rural-urban identity gap was translated and disseminated through local public media, which shaped the disadvantaged rural identity to build acceptance of land expropriation. The biggest local newspaper, *Ningxia Daily*, published a series of articles on the achievements on the 'Big Yinchuan' strategy, entitled 'Displaced Farmers Learn How to be Urbanite' (Zhang, 2004; Yang, 2004), 'Thanks to "Big Yinchuan" – Displaced Farmers' Views on Urban Development' (Yang, 2008)[28]. Additionally, the mayor at the time stated that the government should take full responsibility for 'extricating' displaced people from their rural identity and should help them to adapt properly to city life (Bai, 2005)[29]. The media narratives served to legitimise the decision to displace rural residents by reinforcing negative stereotypes about the farmer identity. This strategy demonstrated a combination of symbolic levelling drives from politicians, media and residents alike.

Moreover, the different designations for 'displaced farmer' applied in the formal policy documents between 2003 and 2018 verified the existence of a rural-urban identity gap. The different nomenclatures reflected the government's views on the relocated

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[28] These three titles are direct translation from Chinese.
[29] Ibid

population's continuous identity 'elevation'. For instance, the appellation of 'displaced farmer' changed in the relevant policy between 2003 and 2018. 'Land-lost farmer' was the title applied in Policy 9 (2003), Policy 10 (2005) and Policy 12 (2006). While the terms 'resettled residents', 'new urban residents' and 'rural to urban farmers' were adopted respectively in the following policies. 16 years after large-scale land expropriation, the local government formally stated in Policy 17 (2018) that the previously-used term 'land-lost farmers' was to be replaced by 'new urban residents' in formal governmental documents. The appellation transformation in policies also revealed how local government shaped the identity gap not only between rural and urban residents but also between the native urbanites and city newcomers.

5.3 Displaced people's perspectives on the land expropriation policies

Although the local government applied different approaches to justify and rationalise rural land expropriation policy, conflicts between local government and the public persisted during displacement and resettlement. This section will contain a discussion of the discernible tensions caused by the injustices in the land expropriation process, including value misalignment, flaws in designing and implementing compensation policies and the violation of procedural and distributive justice.

5.3.1 The exchange value of the land threatens the use value of the land

Conflicts between local government and the people is key to understanding the formation of social injustice in land expropriation. Conflicts arose when local government pursued the maximum exchange value of the land, while neglecting proper compensation for displaced farmers for losing the use value of their land. Chapter 3 explained that the underlying driver for such behaviour is 'land financing' to generate fiscal income for the local government (Cao, Feng and Tao, 2008). The Yinchuan government spoke highly of the economic results generated from 'the marketisation of the land'. According to a report from the then chairman of Ningxia, in 2003, the Yinchuan government expropriated 33,258 *mu* (22 km²) land for development projects (Wang, 2003).

Interviewees stated that the average compensation fee received was around 20,000 *yuan* (£2,222) per *mu* of land, while research showed that the local land auction price (usually sold to real estate agents) was as high as 4.1 million *yuan* (£455,555) per *mu*

between 1999 and 2008 (Li and Zheng, 2010). This huge gap created extreme dissatisfaction among those displaced. Jaffee (2011) estimated that in China, only 5% of all revenue local government generated from converting rural agricultural land to urban construction land had been paid out as compensation since 1979, however, in this case, this number dropped to only 0.5%.

The local governments created a very stable financial model to maximise land profit, supported by their institutional power as the sole legitimate authority for rural land expropriation. However, the local government's economic achievements overlooked the accurate market valuation of rural land, significantly reducing the compensation displaced farmers received. As highlighted in Chapter 3, in 2002, the land compensation fee was based loosely around the annual productivity of the land rather than the fair market value of the land, which led to significant underestimates of compensation (Zhang, 2013).

Considering the huge gap between the land auction price that the government received and the compensation fee given to the displaced people, the interviewees expressed a sense of deprivation and unfairness. Guokai (a 57-year-old security guard and displaced farmer) regarded the displaced group as 'victims of urban development' because they suffered from loss of their home and failure to acquire the deserved compensation. He said:

> "This is exploitation! We farmers have been exploited for generations. The estate developer paid the local government millions for the land transfer fee, but what we got was just a drop in the ocean! What can 20,000 *yuan* do? For selling vegetables for two to three years at that time could make 30,000 to 40,000 *yuan*, but we lost our means to make a living… For us this is ok, but what about our children? They have got nothing and can only make a living working various part-time jobs " (Guokai, 57, security guard).

The principles and compensation standards established in the central Land Administration Law (LAL) were broad and flawed. While the main principle of the compensation policy in LAL was to ensure that living conditions were of no worse a

standard[30], the standards were ill-defined and lacked any means of measurement. Hence there was a tendency for the local government tended to provide as little compensation as possible – in sharp contrast to the large number of benefits generated from selling rural land to estate developers (Whiting, 2019). More than 50% of the petition letters in 2012 received by the People's Congress of China were concerned with unfair compensation standards (Wu and Heerink, 2016). A 17-province survey indicated that 65.5% of farmers displaced before 2005 were dissatisfied with the compensation received (Zhu et al. 2005).

The research revealed that even in Yinchuan, compensation was inconsistent, for example, compensation for residents in adjacent villages was more generous than that for residents of Community A:

> "…some other land expropriation projects where the land was just next to us, their compensation was doubled. It was unfair that our compensation was lower because we belonged to a different district – we were in the same area after all." (Kongxian, 58, retired)

The fieldwork indicates that dissatisfaction regarding compensation was multidimensional. Being the de-facto owner of the land for generations while not able to gain fair compensation for the land during the urbanisation process led to a sense of deprivation among farmers. This was further aggravated by the minimal compensation provided by local government. Social justice was undermined when the exchange value of space was valued over the use value of space. Space itself became a tool to facilitate the local government's fiscal targets and their ambition to achieve comprehensive state control, rather than to satisfy people's lifestyle needs. For precisely this reason, Lefebvre (1991) emphasised the importance of the use value of space as opposed to the creation of the exchange value, which is centred on the valorisation of urban space (Purcell, 2002).

5.3.2 Unequal flats distribution and extra spending on compensated flats

Part of the compensation for demolishing the rural houses of the farmers included free flats in the resettlement community. This formed a large part of the relocation package

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[30] Written in Article 48 of the LAL.

on top of compensation fees. The housing compensation standards in Policy 7 indicate that the size of the compensatory flat was calculated depending on the size of their previous housing, with a cap of 35 m^2 housing area per person[31]. In general, compared with monetary compensation fees, the resettlement housing scheme was less controversial as living conditions in the city were a significant improvement (a more detailed discussion and analysis of the experiences of displaced farmers in relation to housing are presented in Chapter 6, section 6.1.1).

The existing complaints about the resettlement housing scheme were primarily twofold, namely, the size of housing and hidden fees incurred. Calculating the size of the compensatory flat caused a great disparity in the numbers of flats each displaced household received. According to Policy 7, the size of the free flat was not calculated by the number of people in the household but was based on the size of the house the whole household previously owned. Therefore, large families who had lived in a small house were provided with a small flat, whereas small families may have even been given multiple flats if they previously owned a big house in a village. This created dissatisfaction, particularly for large families who owned a smaller property in the village. Liu lives with a three-generation family with four adults and two children in a two-bedroom flat, because they only had a property of around 100m^2 in the village. She said, angrily:

> "A family of six people only has one flat, but our former neighbour in the village got six compensated flats. Do you think this is fair?" (Liu, 60, retired).

In some cases, families with similar situations received very different levels of housing compensation without plausible official explanations, leading to suspicion that corruption was taking place in the housing distribution process:

> "How on earth has he got three flats and I just got one flat? So, people are questioning the policy, but to whom to complain and which department, we don't know – if you keep looking then you might be in trouble… We all know each other's situation quite well, but then how can you explain the difference? People can

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[31] Stated in Article 13 of Policy 7.

suspect… Either you have some relationship with the people in charge or you bribed them…" (Huazhang, 35, bakery owner)

"…before land expropriation you were much worse off than me, with the same area of land – where are those extra flats from…? From the village to higher officials who do not benefit from it?... Our village leader's car is even better than the county leader's!" (Sanma, 47, shopkeeper)

Although the local government never accepted the fact that the policy was not initially well-designed to consider how much living space was acceptable for each individual, the Yinchuan government replaced this calculation method applied in 2003 from 2010 by calculating resettlement accommodation size based on the numbers of family members[32]. These policy updates confirmed prior distributive injustice for some larger resettled families and revealed the inconsistency of compensation policies.

In addition, Policy 7 calculated the resettlement flat at 60%-80% of the size of the occupants' previous rural home depending on the construction quality and the location of their house. It means that a 100 m^2 rural house could only be exchanged for a 60-80 m^2 flat. This rule further limited the size of the flat for displaced families, and in most cases, the per capita living area in the city is significantly less than the size they had in the village. Guoxiang said,

"Previously, I owned a 365 m^2 house in the village, but after the land expropriation I only got a 280 m^2 flat (two flats in total). How much I have lost? I have been ripped off!" (Guoxiang, 60, gardener)

The second complaint was regarding hidden charges for compensation flats, contradicting the government's promise of 'free flats'. Depending on the popularity of the floor the flat was located on, extra mandatory fees of up to 30,000 *yuan* (£3,333) were levied depending on the results of the flat allocation by lot. First (ground) and sixth (top) floor flats had no additional charge, while flats on the second to fifth floors were charged at 6,000 *yuan* to 30,000 *yuan* (£667-£3,333) per flat. Moreover, displaced residents had to draw lots rather than select their desired flats, which was seen as extremely unfair given the additional costs for the second to fifth floors. Almost

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[32] Stated in Article 13 of Policy 15.

the entire compensation fee had to be spent if they were allocated a third-floor flat (the most expensive floor).

Furthermore, every family needed to fund an obligatory interior finish, such as flooring, wall finishings, bathroom and kitchen decoration and the installation of home appliances before moving in. These expenses were above the compensation fees received. The leader of Community A admitted:

> "Our previous village was located in a peri-urban area without a large amount of arable land, so usually each farmer only had about 1 *mu* of land. Therefore, land compensation fees for each household received was between usually between 20,000 and 60,000 *yuan* (£2,222-£6,667). To finally be able to live in the new flat, a family might spend most of their compensation money on these extra expenses." (Ma, community leader).

Therefore, flat distribution and roughcast compensated flats incurred extra spending on resettlement. The respondents argued that the 'free compensated flat' in political rhetoric was not free at all. The compensation fee for each household was quickly diluted, demonstrating the local government's lack of consideration of hidden costs when calculating compensation standards.

5.3.3 For whose interest: A hidden 'development coalition'

The conflict between the government and farmers was also due to divergent views on the political rhetoric that appropriate was in 'the public's interest'. To conceal the profit-driven intention, before and during resettlement, the Yinchuan government made statements that the expropriated land would be used to create a new administrative centre hosting eight government agencies, along with public infrastructure such as an exhibition centre, hospital, museum, library, schools and leisure centres to improve local residents' quality of life[33]. However, they hid that at least half of the expropriated land was to be used for commercial purposes. Two main commercial complexes with shopping centres were built, alongside more than ten commercial housing projects, many office buildings, hotels and many small businesses.

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[33] Can be found from *the Overall Urban Planning in Yinchuan* (2004-2020).

Displaced rural residents felt deceived by the government's real intention to generate profit through land expropriation and create a 'development coalition' with local real estate developers. One participant recalled being told that their land would mainly become government buildings and an exhibition centre, and stated that the government had effectively covered up the fact that the land was sold for commercial use. He said:

> "The local government was not acting in people's interests, but rather for their own fortune and fame. If they (the local government) had told us the real intention of the land expropriation, they would not have got our land so easily and at such a low price. There was no transparency at all in the land expropriation." (Bing, 53, street food vendor)

The vast majority of the displaced farmers pointed out their utter dissatisfaction with the local government's dishonesty regarding protecting the public's interest as well as the non-transparent policy implementation process. This came from the difference between the government's promised 'representation of space' and farmers' expected 'representational spaces', leading to a sense of dispossession and irreconcilable conflict between the state and the public. Open and fair land expropriation procedures could have played a crucial role in farmers' subjective satisfaction. Indeed, the impact could be even more significant than the amount of compensation the farmers received (Hui et al. 2013).

5.3.4 Violation of procedural justice and distributive justice

Concerning the legality of policy, there are two distinct types of justice in the context of land expropriation – distributive and procedural justice (Holtslag-Broekhof et al. 2016). In simple terms, the government should ensure, and the displaced farmers should perceive, value to be lawful and treatment to be equal to legitimise the whole appropriation process. Displaced people questioned the government's practice in complying with procedural justice. Participants complained that the local government made land expropriation and resettlement policies without any public involvement, for example, any public hearings. According to Goodwin and Ross (1992), procedural justice hinges on four factors: the completeness of information for participants, the chances for participants to modify the information, how the decision maker uses the information and how participants feel about their influence on the end result. In reality,

participants suffered from asymmetrical information flow during the whole process of land expropriation and were excluded from any of the crucial decision-making processes. Guoxiang recalled,

> "Before the land expropriation, there was no public hearing. After land expropriation, there was no government officer who asked our opinion about the resettlement and compensation standards. We were invisible and nobody cares about our thoughts." (Guoxiang, 60, gardener).

The central LAL provided two opportunities for displaced farmers to object following land expropriation, but the local government took no action to obtain public opinions[34]. Additionally, obtaining public opinions after releasing formal policies did nothing to change the policymakers' ultimate decision. This resulted in widespread discontent with the 'post-approval challenge' (Lian, 2016). Therefore, flaws in the existing public notice system minimised the public's involvement in decision-making and therefore reduced the possibilities of success for migrants' claims (Lian, 2016).

Participants indicated that the local government did not follow their own policies regarding land appropriation, which violated the procedural justice the government insisted was sacrosanct. Respondents doubted the legitimacy of the execution procedures that the authority used to seize their land. 'Coercive action' and 'corruption' were two key words that interviewees mentioned.

> "The law-executor broke the law. They (local government officers) did not even ask for our opinions before seizing the land. They used violence to make us leave. In that case, who dares not to hand over the land? And of course, no official media reported our experiences at that time." (Chuan, 44, restaurant owner)

> "We have to say that the central level regulations might be good, but the local executors were not practising in accordance with the law. Coercive actions, such as violence, were very common. This might not happen today, but it did happen around us at that time frequently." (Bing, 53, street food vendor)

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[34] 'Two chances' were stated in Article 46, Policy 4, which include collecting public opinions after the local government releasing the *Land Expropriation Notice* and the *Land Compensation and Resettlement Notice*.

Furthermore, interviewees doubted that compensation was distributed lawfully, especially the cases involving village leaders who had relationships with local government stakeholders. Respondents talked about the potential corruption during the appropriation process:

> "The village leaders acquired resettlement flats easily at that time because of the lack of supervision and accountability for their power. Some of them used to be our neighbours and had similar amounts of farming land to ours. So how could they end up with six compensation flats, when we only got one?" (Liu, 60, retired)

> "At the beginning, our village leader urged all of us to make protests because of the paltry compensation fees we were offered. But after a few days, he totally changed his attitude and persuaded us to accept the compensation and give up protesting. You can guess what happened to them. Money! Nobody knows just how much they got to change their attitudes." (Yang, 51, construction business contractor)

From these descriptions, we can see that the public challenged the government's asserted injustice in two ways: the public was excluded from the policy-making process and the channels to appeal were minimised. This violated procedural justice. The 'right to participation', that is, residents' access to decision-making processes around urbanisation, was largely ignored (Lefebvre, 1991). In addition, those displaced were treated unequally which was perceived as corruption and a failure to achieve distributive justice. This neglect of the law, compounded with various injustices inherent in the land policy, led to a sense of deprivation and of general unfairness. These were aggravated by the absence of efficient channels to appeal to higher-level authorities and the insufficient laws to protect displaced farmers' rights (Shin, 2011).

Conclusion

This chapter has mainly examined the construction of policy discourses which rationalised and legitimised local government's land expropriation actions. I elaborated upon how urban development discourses and symbolic meanings of space and identity have created the conditions for generating a new set of local land expropriation policies and practices, and how these factors have contributed to fundamental social

injustice for the displaced people in Yinchuan. The chapter grasped the relations between textual discourse and material practice in a dialectical way, and explored the interactions between state power, discourses and spatial practices.

The policy construction process indicated that the urban development policy (the Big Yinchuan strategy) had been carefully designed to fit in with the existing political agenda (the WRDS) to suit the local government's political and economic purposes. The policy discourses that the Yinchuan government applied to legalise and rationalise land expropriation policies, such as the 'for the public interest' discourse, obscured the government's real motivation which was to make significant profit from land appropriation. It revealed not only the space production practice, but also the discourse construction was a political process.

Furthermore, a sophisticated 'game' of building a discernible and dichotomous rural-urban identity gap played out through problematising the rural environment and exploiting the existing identity gaps under the Hukou system. The dominant discourse on space and identity constantly guided public opinion about what the urban city should be like. This discourse also shaped displaced people's cognitions around their identities, which increased the public's tolerance and acceptance of the land expropriation policy. An upgrade from rural to urban identity naturally became a plausible discourse to convince and justify the government's land expropriation decision. Harvey (2012) confirmed this in a statement about how intentionally creating various discrepancies to facilitate capital circulation clearly benefits social elites while depriving the powerless, creating social injustice. Although such discrepancies promote economic development, the social cost is significant as they disenfranchise certain groups and increase social injustice (Purcell, 2003; Harvey, 2012).

When we rethink the social problems that urban expansion projects have brought about, we can now explain why these problems are so difficult to address. The 'problems', such as an inferior rural living environment and rural identity get represented in a way that mystifies power relations and makes individuals responsible for their own disadvantaged conditions, while drawing attention away from the structure and institutional reasons for such unequal outcomes (such as the Hukou system). In this sense, exploring the discursive construction strategy that the government applied paves the way for further investigation of the formation of social injustice.

This chapter has highlighted in detail various social injustices identified in the displacement policies, either caused by the establishment of the central policy or local government's practice. Essentially, social justice was undermined when the exchange value of land was greater than the use value of land without the provision of full compensation. The local government's coalition with real estate agencies to maximise the exchange value of land further accelerated the practices of creating land for profit, rather than land for living. Space itself became a tool to facilitate the local government's fiscal targets and politicians' ambitions to echo the WRDS, rather than to meet the needs of citizens.

Moreover, the breach of distributive and procedural justice has shown that the injustice in spatial intervention is deeply rooted in China's institutional and administrative structures. From a distributive justice standpoint, the current land compensation policy provides unreasonable and inconsistent compensation and a biased compensated flats distribution. Additionally, the lack of transparency and not involving those displaced neglected the procedural justice espoused by the government. This gap existed because powerful stakeholders created political problems and created policies to address these problems, excluding those being displaced as they were presented in the political discourse as lacking the specific knowledge about urbanisation. Such power imbalance further undermined social injustice.

To address the social injustice ingrained in the process of spatial intervention, this chapter emphasises the importance of involving citizens, particularly marginalised groups such as rural-urban migrants, in shaping and conceptualising social problems and participating in decision-making related to spatial intervention. Rather than solely encouraging Lefebvre's abstract notion of 'the right to participation' as outlined in Chapter 2, this chapter suggests that the focus of policy study should be on shaping the policy issues. In other words, it is essential to involve affected citizens in decision-making processes of shaping and identifying policy problems to tackle the root causes of social injustice. (Bacchi, 2000).

Chapter 6 Resettled people: post-displacement life and sense of belonging

Introduction

The abrupt and unexpected transition from rural to urban was immensely challenging for displaced people in Yinchuan. Even after 15 years of resettlement, their integration into the host city remains a continuous social concern that necessitates an annual review by local policymakers. To investigate the effects of displacement and resettlement on the lives and sense of belonging of the displaced people, 24 semi-structured interviews were conducted with displaced people from diverse demographic backgrounds (see Appendix 2), as well as interviews with various stakeholders such as the sub-district officer, community leaders and managers of local job agencies. The two streams of interviews provide in-depth empirical evidence for comprehending the intricate impacts of land expropriation on the relocated populations and suggest different possible paths for addressing social integration issues in contemporary China.

This chapter contains two main sections. The first section delves into the long-term lives and experiences of individuals residing in Community A with respect to their housing, employment, household finances, professional training attainment, pension and the formation of social class stratification within and beyond the community. The second section examines the process of building a sense of belonging among residents by analysing their social interactions and networks, memories and efforts to re-establish their identity within the city. Moreover, the section also investigates the influence of the Hui ethnic culture on the sense of belonging of the Hui minority.

6.1 The life of displaced farmers: Opportunities, struggles and responses

The displacement has had different impacts on rural migrants and evoked different emotions during the process of integration into an urban context. While implementing the 'Big Yinchuan' policy has offered various opportunities to citizens, the displaced population must work extra hard to compete with peers native to the city due to the intrinsic disadvantages resulting from the legacies of the Hukou system in education, employment and social welfare. In the post-displacement era, integrating into city life for displaced farmers is further complicated by the challenges posed by the market-oriented reform under the influence of neoliberal paradigm, which has created an environment of increasing competition and sophisticated social class division (Qian

and He, 2012). In this context, this section focuses on the experiences of displaced individuals in terms of living, economic, employment and social aspects over a period of 15 years.

6.1.1 Improved housing

Interviewees widely acknowledged that having stable and affordable housing is crucial for starting a new life in the city, particularly in the initial phase of displacement. Having a home can give migrants a sense of security and stability, as housing is one of the crucial factors that determines one's social-economic status, resources and opportunities. It also creates physical and emotional connections to the host society (Heckmann, 2005). For example, one interviewee stated:

> "Housing is one of our primary concerns when firstly knowing the government's displacement decision, you know. Chinese people typically desire to own their own property, but we could not afford to buy a house in the city at that time. Thanks to the resettlement community, at least we got a home in the city. It made our first few years in the city easier." (Yongmei, 59, retired)

Most participants indicated their living conditions have largely improved since moving to the city. This improvement is reflected both in the newly built flats in the resettlement community and the overall community facilities available to them. Prior to relocation in 2002, participants lived in single-storey brick houses they had either built themselves or that had been built by an unqualified construction team. Gao (48, housewife) mentioned, before displacement, they had to obtain water from an outside well and lit a stove to keep the house warm in the winter due to the lack of utilities. The flats they live in now were constructed by a government-selected construction company. The new homes are safer and more modern, with running water and central heating. Most participants agreed that the community is a modern-style residential area with improved environmental and community facilities:

> "Compared to our rural environment, the muddy path in the village has been replaced by a concrete road, the farming land has been replaced by green space in the community. Although the compensation criteria were unfair, the community environment in general is definitely much better than the rural one." (Guoxiang, 60, gardener)

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In addition, the participants were most satisfied with the community amenities, which to a certain extent, helped foster a sense of belonging in the city as rural migrants were finally able to access the same standard of amenities as their urban counterparts. Most participants stressed that the value of their compensated flat had appreciated in the last decade because of the completion of nearby amenities, and Community A is located currently one of the 'golden areas' in Yinchuan. For instance, Liu (60, retired) indicated it was lucky to live in this area as they could enjoy the best facilities in the city.

Residents in Community A live within a mile of various amenities. One of the largest local shopping complexes and a range of small businesses are close to the community, including grocery shops, supermarkets, restaurants, pharmacies, chain hotels and a community clinic, all of which make residents' day-to-day lives easier and more convenient. The community leader, Tang, also highlighted residents' easy access to local state schools. For example, there is a nearby nursery, a primary school and a junior middle school providing lots of choices for education.

However, it was also noted that the improved living environment comes at a cost. At the beginning of resettlement, flats were provided unfurnished. Therefore, displaced residents had to spend much of their compensation fee finishing their flats, for example, purchasing flooring, decorating walls, installing bathrooms and kitchens and purchasing appliances. In addition, in contrast to their rural residences, residents need to pay a 400-*yuan* (£44) service charge annually to a property management company.

6.1.2 Job sector division

As discussed in Chapter 2, employment is crucial for examining rural migrants' post-displacement life as it is necessary to live in the city and crucial for them to gain cognitive, cultural and social competence (Heckmann, 2005). To some extent, different employment statuses also divide migrants into different social classes. Most residents in Community A within the normal working age range have secured jobs to sustain themselves. Living on the compensation fee became markedly less common after the first five years.

Participants varied considerably in the job sectors where they worked. In general, fewer participants were employed in advanced industries that require specialised skills and high levels of education, such as health and legal work. Among this smaller group

with advanced careers, those who experienced displacement at a younger age were more likely to benefit from urban education which positively impacted their employment status. In contrast, participants who faced displacement when middle-aged or older did not experience similar positive career effects from urban education. For example, Yun (35, solicitor), one of the youngest participants in the study, indicated that completing his last year of high school in the city played a significant role in his admission to university and paved the way for his career as a solicitor.

In contrast, most participants over 45-years-old were engaged in low-wage, labour-intensive jobs which lacked stability. These included jobs such as cleaner, gardener, builder, security guard, salesperson, waiter or owner of a small business. Additionally, it was challenging to identify participants in this age group who worked in state sectors compared to those employed in other industries. Most participants working in the state sector were still in entry-level positions despite having worked for many years. The community leader, Ma, highlighted that the disparity in job sectors is primarily a result of the education gap between urban and rural areas. Most displaced farmers over 45 had a primary or junior high school education, which restricted their employment opportunities. Furthermore, many individuals over 55 had even lower levels of literacy, which further limited their options for employment. Guokai explained why he took a casual job at the age of 57:

> "Of course, I want to have a permanent job, but I only finished primary school in the village, which fails to meet the qualification requirements for the vast majority of permanent jobs… For farming, you do not need a qualification; but for a proper job in the city, people are asking all sorts of qualifications." (Guokai, 57, security guard)

In addition to the lack of qualifications, age discrimination in a highly competitive labour market was a barrier to securing permanent work. More than half of the middle-aged participants (over 45) felt disappointed when they were declined by employers because of their age despite being well-qualified for the job. For example,

> "I used to work as a housekeeper in a hotel. After quitting this job when I was 43 due to looking after my new-born grandson for two years, finding a job was harder than before even if I am still far from the age of retirement. Too many young people

in the labour market means we are seen as not competitive." (Huayuan, 50, housewife).

Regarding gender, the fieldwork suggested cleaning work is a very visibly female-dominated sector, whereas construction and security jobs are skewed towards being male-dominated. The distinction between female-dominated sectors and male-dominated sectors is due to cultural norms in China where men play the key money-earning role in society while women are restricted to looking after the family. Juhua (48, street cleaner) indicated it was common for rural women to be housewives, which equips them with the basic skills for cleaning or housekeeping jobs. However, jobs in cleaning and security are mainly informal, short-term jobs with no contract, so employees have to change jobs frequently without accessing social insurance.

Furthermore, the job-seeking strategies employed by the displaced population exacerbated the existing gender disparities in employment. Referral-based job-seeking reinforced the gendered nature of occupations. Women who worked in cleaning jobs often referred their female friends to work in the same sector. This pattern was also observed among male workers. Participants working in labour-intensive sectors considered referrals as faster, cheaper and easier compared to formal job applications. As Hua noted, friends' referrals have always been the preferred option for finding a job in her family:

> "My current job was referred to me by my friend who also works as a cleaner. I never tried a job agency. I thought they would only cheat money out of me. My husband is a builder, and he got his job from our friend's referral as well." (Hua, 50, cleaner)

The friends Hua mentioned were usually neighbours in the same resettlement communities or internal migrants with similar rural origins. Although this kind of intra-migrant network helped displaced groups to access jobs easily, it also resulted in perpetuating a social hierarchy characterised by labour-intensive jobs. Consequently, relying on fellow migrants' referrals prevented many from advancing their careers and achieving higher levels of job satisfaction.

6.1.3 Low income and job insecurity

The direct outcome of working in labour-intensive jobs is a low income. Participants' overall annual income was around 25,000-40,000 *yuan* (£2,778-£4,444) per person,

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which was slightly higher than the local minimum wage but far below the average wage of state sector jobs in Yinchuan, which was 83,947 *yuan* (£9,327) per year in 2019[35]. This income gap explained why no participants evaluated their family economic status as affluent and more than half of them regarded themselves as poor. Working in the labour-intensive construction sector, Jiangong demonstrated his dissatisfaction with his income:

> "My salary is around 25,000 *yuan* (£2,778) per year. My wife is a cleaner and she earns a similar amount to me. We are still in poverty. How could people without a decent job be rich? Most families living here are not well off. My clients in this city can earn salaries ten times mine." (Jiangong, 54, construction worker)

Even those who run their own businesses, such as Chuan, do not have income much higher than casual workers given the considerable costs incurred running a business:

> "I have run this small restaurant for many years. Believe it or not, I can earn just 3000 *yuan* (£333) per month. I do not have any savings due to the high cost of running a business. I have remained single until now because no girl would want to marry somebody without any savings at my age." (Chuan, 44, restaurant owner)

These statements revealed that the unsatisfactory financial status among resettled families is linked to a sizeable wage gap between the displaced population and local average earners. Even after living in the city for more than ten years, participants still tended to draw a line between 'we, the displaced group' and 'they, the urbanites'. Their low incomes fed into this kind of identity differentiation, especially given the increasing pressure of living in the city.

Unstable employment was also evident in the fact that resettled individuals worked as casual labourers for unqualified companies, where employers avoided contracts so that they could avoid paying five types of social insurance (including pension, medical, unemployment, work injury and maternity) for employees. This phenomenon created

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[35] According to the No. 75 policy – the *Notice of raising the minimum wage in Ningxia* (2018) released by the Ningxia Provincial Government, the minimum wage standard is 1660 *yuan* in 2017 in Yinchuan.

severe job insecurity. One participant recounted how his life took a turn for the worse following a work-related incident due to the lack of a formal contract:

> "I worked as a builder in a private construction company about ten years ago. I quit the job because of a car accident which happened during commuting. I lost sight in one of my eyes and spend over 100,000 *yuan* (£11,111) on medical treatments. All of the medical expenses were paid by myself, rather than by my previous employer or insurance company, because I did not have a working contract. The hit-and-run driver has not been arrested yet and I still have considerable debt for my medical bills." (Er, 52, gateman)

In addition to taking unexpected risks, without a contract, employers can dismiss employees easily. Juhua, like many other participants, took a casual job and was always concerned about her position:

> "I need to work extremely hard, otherwise I can just get fired tomorrow. Lots of people want this job. The employers can easily find someone else to replace me." (Juhua, 48, street cleaner)

The fieldwork suggested that the job turnover rate among resettlers was considerably high. Surprisingly, almost half of the participants were ambivalent towards frequent job-hopping even though they were clear about the disadvantages. Although they complained about the instability of their short-term jobs as well as the repetitive and laborious job-hunting process, they also enjoyed the freedom the informal casual jobs brought. For example, they could quit their jobs easily and get another one within a short time. Hua expressed her opinion towards frequently changing jobs:

> "This is my third cleaner job this year. Although I have a low income without social insurance, I am still happy with the job. I can leave the job easily if I am not happy with my clients or my manager, and I can find a similar job easily. Many of my friends are working in the same industry as me, they can refer me to a new place if needs be." (Hua, 50, cleaner)

Hua's account demonstrated the flexibility of working as a cleaner, and comparable circumstances were discovered during interviews in the housekeeping, construction and security sectors. Despite the low income, job flexibility has become a crucial consideration for displaced individuals when deciding how to earn a living. This trend was more prevalent among participants with lower levels of education or nearing

retirement. To some extent, the requirement for job flexibility limited the opportunity to climb up the social ladder, as jobs that offered flexibility were typically entry-level, labour-intensive jobs. More importantly, the lack of job security and formal employment contracts increased the vulnerability of these workers.

Unfortunately, this situation was not considered in the employment support the government provided. The employment assistance programs did not aim to educate newcomers on how to identify the qualifications of potential employers or companies, nor provided warnings about the dangers of accepting jobs without a formal contract. Without proper guidance and support from government and job agencies, it is difficult to improve the disadvantaged position of resettlers in casual, urban jobs.

6.1.4 The limited role of the job agencies

In Yinchuan, job agencies were ineffective at providing job opportunities to displaced farmers. There were various reasons why participants did not use job agencies as a means of accessing formal job opportunities. The primary reason most participants mentioned was a lack of clarity regarding the job-seeking process that job agencies follow. And many were worried the lengthy process of reading and signing documents was beyond the literacy level of some participants. Additionally, some participants were hesitant to use job agencies due to the potential for unreliable agencies to charge bogus fees. Furthermore, a few participants also reported experiencing unfriendly treatment or even discrimination by staff in job agencies who looked down on them because of their rural origins. Even those who found a job through job agencies complained about the quality of service provided:

> "My current job was found by a job agency. I only have a two-year contract. I will never go back to them again after finishing this job, because I do feel they discriminate against me… They (the job agency) only refer me to the jobs that urban locals do not want to take." (Tantan, 35, staff in a residents' committee)

The job agencies had a different perspective from the displaced people regarding the job opportunities they provided. Zhang, a job agency manager, believed that the unfavourable employment situation was caused by the relocated population themselves, as he believed that the displaced job seekers were too picky in choosing jobs:

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"We job agencies have always struggled to recruit people in some industries which offer higher salaries, such as the energy industry and construction industry… Their (the displaced people) unsatisfactory employment situation is not because of the lack of job opportunities. Rather, it is due to their reluctance to take on specific jobs. They refuse to take dirty and heavy jobs; also they do not want to work too far away from home. Otherwise, there are loads of job opportunities." (Zhang, manager of YZ Human Resource Service Company).

Gao (48, housewife) confirmed some of Zhang's views as she mentioned that she declined an offer to work as an assembly line worker in the suburbs, which required night shifts and allowed her to return home only once a month.

The different perspectives of job agencies and job seekers illustrated their distinct priorities in job seeking. Job agencies primarily focused on income when suggesting job opportunities, considering the job with the highest salary to be the best choice. However, for displaced farmers, income was not the only factor determining whether they would take a job. They were more concerned about the intensity of the work, the location, colleagues and how respected they were by employers, which were issues related to quality of life, self-esteem and self-worth. A job agency's income-focused approach could not meet the quality of life demands of the displaced population. Additionally, job agencies neglected the fact that displaced people are intrinsically different from rural economic migrant workers, who come to the city mainly to earn as much money as they can to support their family in the village (Tian, Tian and Sun, 2019). By failing to understand the complex needs of migrants with different motivations for leaving their villages, job agencies, as a crucial formal employment channel, failed to provide suitable job opportunities for the displaced population.

6.1.5 'Window dressing' professional training

As part of the resettlement package, the local government was committed to providing various professional training opportunities to displaced people to improve their employability in the city. According to Cao, a sub-district officer, a range of professional training courses have been held annually since the first year of resettlement. The entire programme was funded by the district government and organised by the government employment help and vocational training agency to offer tailored training for displaced people.

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However, one-third of the participants never heard about the training. For example, San indicated the reason he did not participate was because he lacked information about the training:

> "Nobody told us about training. I would definitely participate if I knew about it. I guess the ones who can join in training are friends or relatives of sub-district officers or residents' committee members – they always know much more information than us." (San, 47, shopkeeper).

There were residents who wanted training but lacked information. Chuan (44, small restaurant owner) complained that he only heard about training when he spoke with friends; he did not receive any information from the residents' committee about the training and did not know how to participate.

According to the sub-district officer, Cao, the reason for residents not being informed about the training was because all the information was available online or shown on community noticeboards that residents did not check. Additionally, training information was regularly passed to community leaders, who shared it on a residents' group chat on WeChat. Ma (community leader) believed that everyone in the community would be well-informed if they checked the community group chat messages frequently. Cao added that displaced residents did not take the initiative to seek out information but waited for it to be delivered to them individually.

However, from the residents' perspective, their main source of information was word of mouth. They were accustomed to getting information from acquaintances and informal networks – a habit developed when living in their village. For older participants, smartphones and messaging apps did not appeal and were regarded as "expensive stuff only for the younger generation" (Mr. Zhou, 60, retired). The elder generation's attitude towards modern message dissemination potentially limited the quantity and quality of information they received.

Additionally, the residents noted that the participation rate for professional training and the quality of the training sessions let them down. Only two participants in this study attended training courses provided by the local government in the last 15 years, and both regarded the training as ineffective. One participant said:

> "I was hoping to learn some techniques to become a chef, so I attended cooking classes a few years ago. But I felt disappointed about the quality of the training

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courses. The instructor just taught us how to chop carrots. I can chop even better than the instructor who was demonstrating. It was just a waste of time and totally useless to help us find a job. I do not take these training sessions anymore." (Guoxiang, 60, gardener)

There were two reasons for the poor outcomes of professional training. Firstly, the training agency attempted to tailor the sessions to meet the demands of job hunters. However, the agency collected second-hand data from the residents' committee about the people's needs rather than obtaining first-hand information from the residents themselves. Jian, the manager of a local job agency, described how the training courses were designed:

"We had a meeting and talked about the types of training we provided every year. Some community leaders participated in this meeting, and they offered us information about potential participants' needs… There were so many resettled communities in Yinchuan, our department could not reach out to every community, so we chose one community. In the meeting, we together decided the training we were going to offer. In the last ten years, we trained lots of electricians, welders, chefs, gardeners, housekeepers and nail technicians." (Jian, deputy chief of an employment help and vocational training agency)

In this context, the training provided may not have aligned with the interests of potential participants, resulting in a low participation rate. Additionally, since the training sessions did not reflect the needs and desires of participants, individuals gradually lost interest and trust in the effectiveness of training. The lack of direct communication between the training provider and participants not only resulted in unsatisfactory outcomes but also reduced the transformative potential that a well-designed programme could have had.

Secondly, the poor outcomes of training also resulted from the failure to reach those most in need of training. The sub-district officer stated that their department had to reach a specific number of trainees to complete a certain number of training days and they were required to spend a certain amount of funds within a certain period. Community leader, Ma, complained that the sub-district office always passed the responsibility to the residents' committee, for example, asking them to "find 15 candidates for this afternoon's training". With such short notice, the residents'

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committee would ask those most likely to participate rather than those most in need of training.

6.1.6 A persistent pension gap

The participants suggested policies regarding social welfare provision, particularly pension, failed to provide long-term assistance to displaced farmers. Such provision was intended to compensate for the loss of the land's use value. As discussed in Chapter 3, social welfare systems against the Hukou background in China have traditionally favoured urban citizens while neglecting rural farmers. However, in this research, a transformation to urban Hukou did not entitle resettlers to equal access to the advanced welfare system. On the one hand, the required pension premium surcharge was the first hurdle for many resettlers to access the minimum level benefit in Social Insurance for Rural and Urban residents (SIR). On the other hand, the current market-oriented welfare system places a strong emphasis on one's employment status to gain a pension and health insurance, which leaves displaced farmers in a disadvantaged position due to their casual and unstable employee status.

According to Policy 12 (as discussed in Chapter 3), displaced farmers were not entitled to the urban pension scheme for free and they were required to pay a lump sum contribution payment. Although the central and local governments collectively contributed 50% of an individual's pension premium, displaced individuals had to cover the remaining 50%. For males over 50 and females over 40, this 50% translated to a one-off premium of 11,914 *yuan* (£1,324). Such a policy failed to address the pension gap that exists due to the legacy of the rural-urban dual social welfare system under the Hukou system. It was viewed by many participants as unfair:

> "We farmers suffered the most from the land expropriation. We grew vegetables for the city for more than 30 years and we used to pay agricultural taxes to the state. We contributed to the country as much as urban residents did, just in different ways. All of our 30 years of farming history should be deemed as length of service and we should have accumulated payment years for our pensions. Unfortunately, our efforts have not been recognised by the government and have vanished overnight." (Huayuan, 50, housewife)

In addition, the lump sum payment was seen as a financial burden for many displaced farmers. For example, one middle-aged couple in one family needed to pay 23,828

yuan (£2,648) – almost the entirety of the compensation they had received. The one-off pension premium was considered a significant amount for many younger participants. Consequently, some residents chose not to participate in the pension scheme. Huazhang indicated:

> "I cannot afford to pay 3,972 *yuan* (£436) every year for my pension, which was almost several months of salary for me. Also, I still need another 25 years of service to be eligible for the pension return. I still have not participated in the pension scheme." (Huazhang, 35, bakery owner).

The interviews revealed that the younger generation was hesitant to invest their money in what they perceived as intangible long-term benefits. Yi (40, driver), similarly to Huazhang, admitted to not contributing to the pension scheme despite being able to afford it, as he believed he still had 20 years of payments ahead of him before he would receive any benefits. The uncertainty of long-term investment did not appeal to him.

These stories shared by the participants showed that there were differences in opinion among older and younger participants regarding their willingness to participate in the pension scheme. Older participants were more likely to participate as they would receive the benefits sooner.

According to Ma (community leader), from 2006 to 2010, the participation rate in the pension scheme was low due to its voluntary nature. After 2010, when some residents secured formal jobs, the pension participation rate slightly increased, as employers were required to make compulsory contributions to the employee's pension at a rate of 20%. In contrast, casual workers and the unemployed were responsible for all of their own payments, leading to a low participation rate in the pension scheme.

The pension in Yinchuan revealed institutional shortcomings that excluded displaced farmers from the social welfare system at the beginning of resettlement. Numerous critiques on this system by scholars and policymakers led to the amendment of the *Land Administration Law* (LAL) in 2021, which has rectified this issue by making pension contributions a separate and mandatory payment that must be 100% covered by the land appropriation body prior to displacement.

6.1.7 High living costs in the city and the middle-aged financial burden

The participants' accounts revealed a consensus that their household financial situation had been negatively impacted by the increased cost of urban living. Bing (53, street food vendor) indicated that during the initial stages of resettlement, the increase in utility bills and food costs added to their family's financial burden. This was because these costs were low in the village given the self-sufficient rural lifestyle they had been accustomed to. Furthermore, unexpected expenses such as property service charges, winter heating bills and extracurricular fees for their children, which were absent from their rural lifestyle, further raised their living costs. In the post-displacement period, the high cost of living was primarily due to significant inflation in consumer prices without a corresponding increase in wages. Hu shared his struggle of living in the city due to the rising costs:

> "In the village, we did not need to pay for most of our food because we grew vegetables ourselves. Everything costs money in the city! Nowadays, it seems that we earn more money than before, but we need to pay more for everything, especially as the price of food grows higher and higher. Previously, 500 grams of potatoes cost less than 1 *yuan* (£0.10), and now the price has tripled. The living cost has increased so much, but our wages have not changed with it. Our income is just enough to make ends meet, there is nothing left each month." (Hu, 50, fruit vendor)

Some participants indicated that their economic conditions were worse compared to rural life. For example, Gao felt she was richer in the past because her family had few outgoings:

> "We did not have many costs living rurally. Everything costs money in the city! And the heating costs have gone up by one-third this year. I feel I was richer in the past." (Gao, 48, housewife)

Additionally, the financial burdens brought about by the high costs of urban living were particularly acute for the middle-aged group, who were under pressure to support both the older generation and the younger generation. Juhua, a mother of two, illustrated this 'double-pressure anxiety':

> "Our household income is around 4,500 *yuan* (£500) per month. I give 800 *yuan* (£89) per month to my mother who is too old to work and does not live with us. And then I have two sons who are both in middle school. Food for a family of four

costs around 1,800 *yuan* (£200) per month. Beyond that, after the tuition fees, extra-curricular tutorials for my boys, which is not usual in village life, are the major expenses which both cost over 2,000 *yuan* (£222) per month. Along with the cost of commuting, the utility bills and daily necessities, there is nothing left every month. Let alone taking care of my husband's parents." (Juhua, 48, street cleaner)

The interviews revealed that middle-aged participants had considerable financial responsibility as they had to support three generations – their parents, their children and themselves. The participants indicated that their obligation to care for their parents was primarily due to the lack of pension and medical insurance for the older generation who worked as farmers. As mentioned in 6.1.6, the current market-oriented social welfare system considers employment status as the main criterion for obtaining a decent pension and health security. Unfortunately, this puts older resettlers at a disadvantage since they were already above retirement age when they were displaced. This means that it is common for the older generation to have no pension and to rely on family support to meet their needs. Home care is the primary way elderly individuals are supported in Community A. In contrast, native urban middle-aged couples are less burdened with family care as their parents typically have a stable pension income due to their past urban employment history.

Middle-aged participants not only allocated expenses towards supporting their elderly family members but also provided financial support for their children who were not yet of employable age. Most participants indicated education for their school-aged children as one of the biggest expenditures. Extra-curricular tutorials, which can be seen as a by-product of intense competition in the urban job market in a market-oriented economy, have imposed an additional family financial burden on resettled families. For example, Juhua expressed her determination to support her child's education despite the high cost:

"Many generations of my family are farmers. Farmers are second-class people. I do not want my boys to live a life as we do. As long as my boys could enter university, every penny I spend is worth it, no matter how hard I have to work.' (Juhua, 48, street cleaner)

Many displaced parents like Juhua have high hopes that their offspring will achieve upward mobility through education and move away from the farmer identity. However, the cost of extracurricular education, which is uncommon in rural areas, increases their

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financial stress, as this expense accounts for nearly half of their family's expenditures. To keep up with their urban peers and the fast-paced city lifestyle, the vast majority of participants are forced to continuously work hard to make ends meet. The sense of security that was provided by the land is no longer present, and instead, many individuals are left with a life full of uncertainty and unending hard work.

6.1.8 An invisible identity gap: From housing stratification to identity stratification

The social class stratification of the resettlers reflected in the high 'turnover rate' of residents in Community A. The outgoing residents were predominantly families with a higher financial standing seeking a more desirable neighbourhood or better educational resources while the incoming residents were primarily from less well-off backgrounds. According to the interviews with residents and the community leader, a large group of residents have moved out of Community A in the last decade and new tenants have taken their place. For instance, Guokai discussed the outflow of the original residents:

> "Lots of our acquaintances have moved out, especially in recent years. My brother runs his own business and has earned some money. Two years ago, he bought another flat just opposite this community by paying double the price of a flat here. If I had money, I would do the same as my brother." (Guokai, 57, security guard)

Ma (community leader) confirmed that only around two-thirds of residents in Community A are the original displaced farmers. The newcomers are primarily made up of a floating population and migrant workers from nearby areas who seek employment opportunities in the city.

The main reason why Community A attracted an influx of residents is because of the low rent prices, nearby amenities and convenient public transportation. According to a local estate agency, the rental price for a two-bedroom to a small three-bedroom flat in Community A is between 1000-1500 *yuan* (£111-167), while a flat of the same size in the same area is, on average, at least one-third more expensive than this. In addition to the relatively low rental price of flats, both residents and the community leader defined Community A as 'low-end accommodation' as the selling price of flats here is even cheaper than nearby communities.

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> "You know, the sales price of a flat in our community is around 4500 *yuan* (£500) per m^2, while a flat just across the street is double the price. That is the reason why our community attracts a floating population who want to settle down here… For sure, the price difference represents some distinctions in terms of the quality of housing and the level of service between high-end and low-end accommodations." (Ma, community leader)

> "Our community is a 'farmer community', and only poor people live here." (Huazhang, 35, bakery owner)

These quotations revealed Community A has gradually become a hub for low-income individuals in the city and has associated with the label of a 'farmer community'. Moreover, the perception of a 'farmer community' has not only been shaped by the outflow of the wealthier displaced residents and the inflow of less affluent newcomers, but is also shaped by original resettlers' exclusion of urbanites with superior economic and employment backgrounds. For example, Yongmei, who received three compensatory flats and rented out two of her flats to the floating population, said:

> "I have never rented out my flat to urban natives in the last ten years, they are too demanding. Once, I had a client who worked as a civil servant. He requested new curtains, a new bed and also an air conditioner after viewing my flat for rent. Ridiculous! What did he think he could get for such a low rental price? I have rented out my flats without an air conditioner for more than ten years. I have never seen a tenant this demanding… I thought this community was just for poor people, or ordinary people. If you want better housing, you should go and find other places." (Yongmei, 59, retiree)

It seems that Community A has its own rules for accepting newcomers and these unspoken rules have maintained a particular balance within the community. The originally displaced residents have tended to select specific groups of people, not typical 'urbanites', but rather, floating populations, such as migrant workers or economically disadvantaged members of the urban underclass. To some extent, the original residents only want to be neighbours with those in their social milieu. Consequently, Community A has maintained a homogeneous social class composition over time. The restricted social mobility ultimately results in class solidification, which is embedded in patterns of spatial segregation (He et al. 2010)

Overall, the community's outflow and inflow criteria manifested the evolving social class stratification of the displaced population, and these implicit standards create obstacles for resettlers to further integrate into the host city. As a mutual process, a host society sets boundaries to exclude 'out-of-towners', while rural-urban migrants themselves use filters to segregate themselves from the locals. Over time, patterns of housing stratification formed and further transformed into identity stratification, whereby Community A has remained a low-end residential area accommodating residents with low incomes and it has become associated with having a marginalised social status.

6.2 The sense of belonging of the residents in Community A

The term 'sense of belonging' is regarded as a self-explanatory term and is widely used in migration research in examining one's intimate feelings (Ager and Strang, 2008). From a psychological viewpoint, a sense of belonging is an internal affective or evaluating feeling that people are valued (Hagerty et al. 1992). This feeling of belonging may develop as a result of social participation and acceptance and thus will develop at a later stage of the integration process (Heckmann, 2005). Although the participants in this thesis were not directly asked about their sense of belonging in the city, their individual subjective experiences of feeling connected, accepted and valued within the host community and city were largely reflected in many ways through their words, which related to their experience of building social interaction and social networks, the persistent nostalgic memories and re-establishing self-identification in the city. These factors collectively describe their 'sense of belonging'. Additionally, as an ethnic minority, Hui people's customs have been affected by displacement, which influences how Hui participants see themselves as part of the host city. Therefore, the ethnic factor will be analysed in this section.

6.2.1 Intra-migrant friendship and social bonds beyond the community

Heckmann (2005) noted that the extent to which migrants form interpersonal relationships with individuals within the host city determines their sense of belonging within the host society. This thesis identified various patterns of interpersonal relationships among participants of different age groups. The group aged 45 and above showed a preference for participating in social activities with a consistent group

of friends[36]. They tended to maintain close friendships with their acquaintances who moved from the same village or with their neighbours with similar displacement experiences. For example, there were groups of retirees who engaged in recreational activities like card games or mahjong who formed fixed groups of players. In addition to card games, conversation and group dancing were very popular among female retirees, and participants would join in these activities with the same group of individuals every time. Yongmei, a 59-year-old retiree, mentioned that they had an outdoor dancing team comprised solely of members from Community A who came from the same village. She stated that she believed that relocating their rural neighbours from the same community was beneficial for socialising as it allowed them to stay in close contact with their old friends.

For most of the participants over 45, maintaining close ties with old friends who came from the same village was a desirable aspect of moving. Most of the participants at retirement age have never attempted to extend their social network in the city as they enjoyed their status quo and regarded the new social ties as unnecessary:

> "I enjoy time with my old friends. We have known each other since I was born in the village. We take care of others' babies and give one another a hand when needed. We know each other's families and talk about our family affairs freely… We have a lot in common. There is no need for me to meet somebody new at my age." (Hua, 50, street cleaner)

For middle-aged participants who worked, restricted social networks were also common which can be attributed to the lack of opportunities to meet new friends in the city. As some participants explained, they undertook long working hours in labour-intensive sectors and most of their colleagues had similar displacement backgrounds, therefore, sticking to familiar friendships was natural and inevitable.

There were no discrepancies between male and female participants in maintaining old friendships and social interactions. Together with living very close to each other and sharing a similar migration background, Yang described another reason why he was

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[36] 45-year-old is the earliest retirement age in the city.

inclined to keep close friendships with previous rural friends; he perceived urban people to be more calculating, cold and indirect:

> "Most rural people are simple, warm-hearted and direct. I really enjoy chatting with my rural friends, and we still help each other out now. While the city people I meet are always calculating and beating around the bush. Sometimes they are not really approachable because something is always expected in return. And they talk in an indirect way, so I have to try and guess what's the hidden meaning behind their words… It might be because of the (construction) industry I worked in, which pushed me to connect with other bosses and the government officers. I do not think they are my true friends." (Yang, 51, construction business contractor)

Compared with the older group, it was easier for the younger generation (under 45) to extend their social networks and build new social bonds in the city. Instead of keeping close connections with rural peers, the younger group were more likely to make new friends in the city with different backgrounds. As Yun said:

> "I lost contact with most of my rural friends, even though we were quite close when we were young. But after moving to the city, some people went to university and some started a job at a very young age or moved to other cities. We have been on different paths. I have mostly made my current friends in the city, like my university classmates, my colleagues and other friends I met at parties, the gym and my daughter's nursery, etc." (Yun, 35, solicitor)

It was found that different types of social networks and social interactions led to various patterns of building a sense of belonging in the city. In contrast with their older counterparts who still maintained an intra-migrant and community-based social circle, younger participants have extended their social networks beyond the community boundaries. Moreover, the younger group of participants have more options available to connect with others in the city, such as through work and social activities.

6.2.2 Nostalgic memories

Displaced farmers experienced a sense of loss due to an affective rupture with the land, muddying their understanding of 'home'. Participants frequently mentioned missing the village. Even some younger participants said they wanted to return to 'rural utopia'. For example, Huazhang said:

"I do miss our farmland and our past life! It was full of happiness. My friends and I hung around and had so much fun every day. We did not worry much about our life. I rarely felt the pressure of life in the past. On the contrary, life in the city is so difficult nowadays." (Huazhang, 35, bakery owner)

His narrative suggests that living in the countryside was a happy life free from stress and worries. For some displaced people, it was not rural life, per se, which aroused nostalgic memories, but rather the stressful life they have adapted to in the city, forcing them to reminisce. The transition from a land-based to a market-based economy had a significant impact on the resettlers, causing them to feel anxious about how to make a living in the city. The participants' unpredictable incomes, along with their feelings of insecurity and uncertainty about affording household expenses, contribute to detachment from the city. Gao, an interviewee, highlighted the long-lasting effects of displacement on their sense of belonging, which is closely linked to their ability to provide for and support their families:

"…unlike the urban dwellers, the hat of 'displaced farmer' will not be removed for our generation… the income, the pension, the spending and our quality of life, we cannot be compared with the urban dwellers. I prefer to live in the village because life in the village is easier for us." (Gao, 44, small restaurant owner)

During the interviews, it was frequently observed that the participants made comparisons using phrases like 'unlike city residents'. This was indicative of their desire to establish a clear demarcation between themselves and urban dwellers. This sentiment can be attributed in part to the economic disadvantages experienced by the newcomers in comparison to the native population. Newcomers to the city who were able to maintain financial stability for their families felt a sense of self-fulfilment and received recognition from society. Conversely, those who struggled to support their families experienced a drain of energy, enthusiasm and self-esteem, causing them to focus on the past rather than the future. These disparities created a sense of exclusion from the social norms prevalent within the city. This further reinforced the 'us versus them' mentality.

Furthermore, nostalgia also stemmed from their prior self-sufficiency associated with the rural environment but was no longer relevant in the city. Five participants highlighted pride in their farming skills, farm products and self-sufficiency which

formed their sense of social and cultural belonging. For instance, Hua (50, cleaner) thought the disconnection with the rural land gave her a sense of loss, alienation and frustration. She missed rural life where they did not need to rely on anyone because they had everything from the farm. Similarly, Zhao said:

> "I used to be the backbone of my family, being one of the best farmers in the village (saying very proudly), however, as a security guard, I earn minimum wage… but what can you do… life has to move on." (Guokai, 57, security guard)

As a result of forced displacement, participants felt not only the loss of land, but also a loss of productivity and of self-sufficiency. A sense of productivity from farming and self-reliance created feelings of confidence. However, participants' disadvantaged position, both in the economic and employment domains, created a gradual loss of confidence in creating a positive urban life. Therefore, the inability to fully realise value and fulfilment negatively affected the population's sense of belonging in the city.

However, according to participants with different financial and employment backgrounds, a family's financial situation appeared not to be the only factor that affected people's sense of belonging. Nostalgia was not exclusive to families facing financial difficulties but also was observed among affluent families within the community. This is because migrants have different perspectives of money and lifestyle compared with their urban counterparts, which leads to a sense of disconnection form the broader community. For instance, Yang believed the contrasting viewpoints motivate him to go back to the village. He said:

> "Believe it or not, I did not take money so seriously before moving to the city. In the village, nobody talked about money often and we did not think too much about money. So, we were happier at that time. But in recent years, the first thing that comes to my mind when I wake up every day is how to make money. I have become such a money-conscious person now… Everybody around me talks about money as well. I really hate that tension in the city. I have already bought a house in a rural village, and I plan to go back to country life after retirement." (Yang, 51, construction business contractor)

Another factor contributing to the difficulty belonging to the city was the collective memories of participants sharing happiness and sorrow in village life, in contrast to

the isolated, individualistic and self-centred urban lifestyle. This phenomenon was prevalent among participants over 50-year-old. Kongxian commented on this:

> "In the past, it was common to see villagers help each other. We shared food, helped neighbours to build a house and did farm work together… I often left my baby with one of my neighbours when I needed to go out. My neighbours would look after my baby very well like a family member would. But nowadays, how would anyone dare leave their kids with others? People in the city even do not know the name of their neighbours. How could they trust each other?" (Kongxian, 58, retiree)

In contrast, although younger participants did not necessarily hide their nostalgia, they did not want to return as they believed that urban life offered possibilities and prosperity that rural life could not. Compared with their parents' experience, making a new start in the city is easier for younger people, who have already accumulated more social capital and human capital through education, employment and social activities.

6.2.3 Hui ethnic minority and their social integration

Community A has a demographic makeup of both Hui (Muslim) and Han residents, with Hui residents representing over one-third of the population. Interviews revealed that Hui migrants, an ethnic minority, faced more challenges adapting to the host city compared to Han migrants. Hui participants widely stated that they participated in fewer religious activities in the city than previously in the village. Er indicated that mosque attendance decreased significantly after moving to the city:

> "We male Muslims used to attend the mosque every day in the village and prayed five times in a day. But after living in the city, I could only visit the mosque on the weekends because I have to work on weekdays." (Er, 52, gateman)

Some Hui participants mentioned that they prayed at home instead of going to the mosque, either because the newly built mosque was too far away from Community A, or because their workplace restricted their religious activities. In general, the vast majority of participants prayed only on special festivals or just gave up prayer after living in the city for a period.

Moreover, Hui migrants exhibited less outward religious markers after they resettled in the city. For example, Hui males used to wear white skull caps and have beards. Women typically wore headscarves. In the last decade, there has been a decrease in

the number of Hui migrants wearing Hui costumes as religious attire is not common in the city. When I walked around in the resettlement communities, I saw few people in religious attire. Shu explained:

> "For me, I worked as a civil servant, and symbols of ethnic differences were not allowed." (Shu, 55, manager in a public zoo)

Interviews with displaced Hui farmers revealed two main reasons why fewer religious markers were maintained in the city environment. Firstly, the shift from farming to urban work brought about more restrictions in terms of dress code. Some jobs, particularly in the service sector such as gate security, security guard work and cleaning, had specific uniforms that did not allow Hui attire to be worn at work. Secondly, under the central cultural assimilation policy, religious dress was regarded as 'different' by local policymakers and was strongly discouraged for people working for the government or as a party member in any official institutions.

The decrease in Hui attire in the city was exacerbated because of the impact of the overwhelming dominance of urban culture by Han people. The city dwellers perceived dress as a significant indicator of modernity and religious attire was considered outdated. For example, Lin (36, administrative hospital staff) recalled that after moving to the city, only his grandfather still wore a white skull cap and robe. This is because most urbanites wear modern attire without religious markers to avoid being different. The community leader, Ma, also confirmed that Hui people in villages were more likely to maintain their Hui outfits. Religious dress is seen as rural and unsophisticated under the dominant Han culture. One participant recalled discrimination by urban locals because of his Hui attire. In this context, most Hui intervirewees tended to change their dress to adapt to the urban environment where notions of 'modernity' are dominant.

The interviews in this research revealed that displacement exerted a different impact on Hui resettlers of different ages. The younger generation tended to assimilate more into the dominant Han culture and adopt fewer religious markers, while the older generation preferred to maintain their ethnic features. Tantan (35, staff in a residents' committee), as the youngest Hui interviewee, stressed that the younger generation did not prioritise religious traditions and customs as much as their parents' generation. Her parents did not teach her much about her religious culture and she seldomly participated in religious activities because her parents thought school education was

more important than religion given her goal to go to university. She was not concerned about losing the Hui culture as a result.

Lin (36), an administrative employee at a hospital, identified education as a major influence that transformed their ethnic traditions. He explained that since his generation received education in the urban environment from middle school and upward, there was no religious content and everyone wore the same uniform. Consequently, they seldom thought about wearing religious clothes. He also believed that his generation was more accepting of diversity, even if someone dressed differently. His expressions implied that the younger group demonstrated a higher acceptance and adaptation to city culture in terms of religious traditions and dressing, while the older group tended to maintain their religious customs and dress, as they wished to maintain tradition and their culture. A 60-year-old interviewee, Mr. Zhou (Hui) stressed:

> "Hui culture is something that I will never forget. It is a shame that less people pay attention to it." (Mr. Zhou, 60, retiree)

Under the dominant majority Han culture, Hui religious features have been impacted and declined silently. Without participating in this interview, some young Hui adults mentioned they may not have even noticed these changes. To some extent, these changes increased Hui resettlers' social integration into the host environment as there were fewer cultural differences between Hui and Han people in the city. However, the diminishing religious features might increase the cultural venerability of the Hui population as their Hui ethnic culture as well as the diversity of China's Muslim communities will be negatively impacted in the long run.

6.2.4 Diversified self-identity cognition

Identity issues are an unavoidable topic when examining rural to urban migration in the context of a rapidly changing China. Identity is not only related to the paper identity endowed by the government under the Hukou system, but also contains 'who am I' cognition, which reflects a sense of belonging (Qian and Zhu, 2014). In terms of paper identity, all displaced residents in Community A have been transformed from rural Hukou to urban Hukou in part of the resettlement package mentioned in Chapter 3. However, for the displaced people themselves, who they think they are is much more complicated than merely their paper identity.

About two-thirds of participants still firmly held onto the identities of 'farmers' as their primary cognitive identity even after living in the city for 15 years. Within this group, however, only three participants assimilated the identity of 'displaced farmer'. Yongmei, who adopted this identity, believed 'displaced farmer' was an identity institutionally constructed by the government and widely recognised by the public, and this is an indisputable fact, so she used this title with little discomfort:

> "When I went to the government agencies to deal with my paperwork, the officer asked me about my identity. I said I am a displaced farmer. I am OK with the title. It is the government who made us displaced." (Yongmei, 59, retired)

Yongmei's account indicated that an institutionally created label affects a person's sense of self. However, most participants regarded 'displaced farmer' as a negative label which they were reluctant to use because of the association with discrimination:

> "When people call us 'displaced people', I do feel their discriminatory attitude. The bad reputation of this label is blamed on us as well. We have to admit some of the displaced people have a low educational level and have behaved with bad manners, such as littering, spitting and defacing public property, which leaves a bad impression of us with city dwellers. But not all of us behave like that. It is unfair that the whole group is looked down upon because of individual cases." (Jiangong, 54, construction worker)

Jiangong's stories illustrated that identity and belongingness are not 'primordial, essential features' that people have, but something that is socially constructed (Kumsa, 2005: 181). 'Displaced farmers' have longstanding connotations as a poor and less-educated group, as depicted by the media in various reports (see Chapter 5). Additionally, some individual cases of 'deviance' worsened negative impressions of the whole group. Therefore, most participants are keen to get rid of this unwelcome label and hope for a well-recognised urban identity which brings them equality and respect. They are motivated to become fully incorporated into the city. Gao stated:

> "As time goes on, displaced farmers are becoming more and more 'civilised' and better integrated into the city. There will not be any difference soon between indigenous people and us." (Gao, 48, housewife)

In contrast, more participants accepted their identity as a farmer, and the 'farmer' identity is firmly rooted to their connections with the rural land and memories of the

countryside, which persist regardless of the length of time in the city. For many, 'farmer' was far more than just a job title – it represented an everlasting identity tied to the purity of the human spirit and people's essential vitality and goodness. Even those who now have solid urban foundations strongly express their identity as farmers:

> "We are farmers! What else would we be? To be honest, my family's economic status is better than that of lots of urbanites, but I always tell others, I am a farmer. My families have been farmers for generations. There is nothing to be ashamed of being a farmer!" (San, 47, shopkeeper)

It seems that the emotional attachment to rural land is sufficiently profound enough that it cannot be severed by changes to jobs or accumulated wealth. Yang explained why he returned to Community A after failing to build emotional resonance with the unfamiliar environment and neighbours in a high-end residential community:

> "To tell you the truth, the flat I am now living in in Community A is a second-hand flat. I used to have two compensation flats here. When my economic situation started getting better, I sold my compensation flats out and bought a larger flat in a high-end residential community. But I did not like the new environment. I felt isolated and I had nothing in common with other residents there, which makes me feel uncomfortable. It has been really difficult for me to leave Community A! I miss my old friends and the atmosphere here. So, I bought another flat here and moved back." (Yang, 51, construction business contractor)

Yang's narratives indicate that better economic conditions did not necessarily lead to the recognition of an urbanite identity. For some participants, such as Yang, Community A is like a home away from home – a perfect replica of their familiar rural village with life-long friends and something of the rural atmosphere in the city, where their sense of belonging has been (re-)constructed. Their sense of belonging to the city is largely compromised by their emotional attachment to the hometown. To some extent, familiar surroundings, and not simply the rural land, give them a sense of security and belongingness. When they move outside of Community A, alienation and strangeness remind some of them they are still outsiders.

Participants under 45 years old have rarely experienced these identity struggles. They show a strong sense of belonging to the city and clearly identify themselves as

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urbanites. The formation of their identity was mainly based on city-based memories and emotional attachment to, and dependence upon, the city. Huazhang said:

> "I never think about the question of belonging. Of course, we're in the city. The life in the village is just like scattered fragments gleaming in my memory. I know it was a happy and beautiful time, but I cannot remember it clearly. I was about 18 years old when the displacement happened. I rarely did farm work at that time. My parents did. So, I do not think of myself as a farmer at all." (Huazhang, 35, bakery owner)

The impact of displacement on constructing diverse identity cognitions among various age groups implies the complexity of forming a sense of belonging as an actual emotional attachment to the city. Building a sense of belonging in the city is a long-term process and might even take a lifetime or a generation. In a 15-year time span, displacement has benefited the younger generation more than the older generation as the former accessed educational, professional and social resources more easily and accumulated human and social capital. The younger generation has shown a stronger sense of belonging to the city not only because they have a solid affiliation with the city, but also because they do not feel they have experienced discrimination due to their improved education allowing for upwards social mobility.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the post-displacement lives and the sense of belonging of residents in Community A in a 15-year span after resettlement. It has been found that participants with different ages, financial situations, employment backgrounds and ethnicities have approached social integration differently. Relocating rural people to an urban community has created both opportunities and risks to resettlers and exerted different impacts on individuals. Displacement has significantly enhanced migrants' material living conditions, especially housing, but city life comes with a cost – there is no way back to rural life as the land lost is permanent. In the post-displacement era, the intra-migrant wealth gaps and social class stratification were redefined as residents accumulated human and social capital differently under the influence of the markets. Those who obtained human capital, such as technical skills, and social capital, such as strong social and cultural ties with the city, have integrated much more easily.

The inability to obtain social capital for many displaced farmers was partially due to unsustainable and untargeted employment and professional training policies. Despite nearly all participants finding employment to sustain city living, the policies failed to adhere to the government's promise of improving personal competence and employability to secure permanent stable work for resettlers. Less-skilled residents have largely engaged in low-wage, labour-intensive casual work, which potentially consolidated barriers for migrants with rural backgrounds to obtaining upward mobility and integration into the city. Moreover, people who take casual jobs are unable to access social insurance programmes, such as pensions and medical insurance, due to the absence of a formal labour contract. These characteristics have led to employment and social welfare gaps both between urban locals and newcomers, as well as within resettlers' groups.

The chapter highlighted that the government's emphasis on the 'urbanisation of the land' has overshadowed the significance of the 'urbanisation of the people', which is a much longer process. A series of one-size-fits-all resettlement policies have neglected the distinct needs of displaced farmers, especially the Hui people, the less-educated and older individuals without any access to a pension. For instance, resettlers nearing or over the retirement age were left unprepared in terms of possessing the essential skills to thrive in a fast-paced and competitive urban context. Similarly, the middle-aged group has to support three generations, and some have to bear a considerable financial burden as their parents did not qualify for a pension as farming before their displacement was not recognised as valid work for obtaining pension contributions.

Furthermore, displaced people in different age groups have shown contrasting sentiments towards the village and various notions of belonging and attachment to the city. The older group felt less belonging to the city and regarded the village as the source of self-sufficiency, security, freedom and happiness. While younger participants have established psychological and practical affiliations to the city in terms of work, social interaction and education, allowing a better sense of belonging to the city.

The interviews revealed that Hui migrants faced greater challenges than the Han population in adapting to the host city's culture, particularly regarding religious activities and outward markers. This was due to the dominant influence of urban

culture and the dominant 'melting pot' cultural assimilation policy. However, these changes have had a positive impact on the Hui resettlers' social integration into the host city as differences in habits among the Hui minority and the Han majority have gradually decreased. Nonetheless, the reduction of religious elements may ultimately weaken the cultural heritage of the Hui ethnic minority group and potentially undermine the diversity of China's Muslim communities.

Finally, the policy of relocating rural migrants into the same community (the intact displacement mode) has been welcomed by some residents as close ties have been maintained with old friends with similar rural backgrounds. This was a desirable aspect of moving, especially for someone who are unemployed or not engaged in paid work. However, this mode of displacement and resettlement has slowed down their pace to incorporating into the host environment. For instance, maintaining intra-migrant networks and their community-based social circles, engaging in familiar low-skill jobs, relying on their most acquainted information accessing channels, attracting floating population with similar social milieu to settle down in Community A, have limited them into a 'comfort zones' in a cultural and social sense.

Chapter 7 Contesting rights: urban social movements and the right to the city

Introduction

This chapter explores the actions taken by residents to defend their rights against the local government's land expropriation practices and the insufficient resettlement support provided. It also explores a variety of strategies residents have employed to fight for their rights during different stages of displacement. This chapter also aims to investigate, via analysis of interviews with residents in Community A and stakeholders, the long-term effects of involuntary displacement on resettlers and how different forms of rights-defending activities have led to a higher level of social integration.

The chapter begins by examining three waves of rights-defending activities initiated by relocated residents during the early, middle, and post stages of resettlement respectively. Following this, an analysis is conducted to determine why large-scale collective actions in the early and middle stages, such as demonstrations, sit-ins, protest marches and petitioning were unsuccessful; while less direct and everyday forms of resistance in the later stage of resettlement proved more effective. Specifically, the institutional defects, local nepotism and the disunity within the community were responsible for the failures of collective activism. Through an examination of the similarities and differences between the three waves of resistance by considering residents' demands for rights, the forms of resistance they applied and the outcomes of each wave of resistance, the chapter also provides an insight into how Chinese rural migrants' awareness of rights has evolved over time. The concluding section of the chapter provides a detailed explanation of how NGOs and social organisations have been absent in providing supplementary services beyond those offered by the government, whilst the residents' committee, to some extent, has filled this gap.

7.1 Three waves of rights-defending activities in the resettlement community

As discovered in the interviews, three identifiable main waves of rights-defending activities have been enacted by displaced farmers in Community A since 2002. The first wave of resistance occurred between 2002 to 2005 in protest against the local government's unexpected sudden land expropriation action and the unfair compensation standards offered. The second wave of resistance took place from 2004

until 2015, challenging the estate developers' contract breach and the local government's 'stand-offish' attitude. The first two waves of resistance were collective action conducted radically which led to undesirable outcomes. The third wave of resistance was caused by the poor quality of the replacement housing and by a series of community issues from 2015. Soft confrontations and everyday forms of resistance were enacted, which worked more effectively in garnering public attention and placing pressure on the government by creating public debate to settle residents' issues.

7.1.1 The first wave of resistance: 'reject force with force' contention under authoritarianism

The first wave of resistance was triggered by the local government's abrupt land expropriation announcement with compensation standards set without due consideration for public consultation. It started in 2002 before the resettlement and lasted almost three years. Informants described the land expropriation in 2002 as an 'overnight action' because they were informed with very short notice without any public hearing or negotiation beforehand (San, 47, small shopkeeper). According to interviewees, many villagers defended their houses by refusing to leave organising protest marches. However, these actions were ended with the local government mobilising police to evict resisters using violence in some cases. Chuan talked about the failures of the first stage of protest:

> "The government tried every method to force us to leave… Some of our friends joined the protest march. They (their friends and neighbours in villages) returned safely back home after the first day of actions. But on the second day, all of them were arrested and were forced to sign a guarantee of not taking part in any further protests and obligated to leave their houses immediately. Otherwise, they would not be set free from the police station and would be convicted for illegal demonstrations which seriously undermine public order. Under this circumstance, who dared not to hand over the land? They didn't even dare to talk about this experience at that time. Surprisingly, no official media reported this." (Chuan, 44, small restaurant owner)

Since attempts to negotiate and fight with the local authority failed, some of the farmers planned to appeal to the central government in Beijing for help, but their plans were never brought to fruition. Informants suspected that the local government could easily

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mobilised resources from different institutions to suppress their collective actions, including the local police and public media, and they suspected the government and police took illegal administrative actions to prevent resistance actions at that time:

> "Local governments and agents entered into an alliance and covered each other. The petitioners were arrested by the police on the train halfway up to Beijing. They were forced to give up their petition, otherwise they would not be allowed to go back home. The local government could always trace the petitioners. What crime had they committed? Nothing! These things might not happen today, but it did happen around us more than 15 years ago." (Bing, 53, street food vendor)

Blocked by the local judiciary, enraged farmers in other regions in China also resorted to petitioning the central government in Beijing. These long-distance appeals became a 'hide-and-seek game' whereby local police and monitors attempted to intercept, arrest, and detain petitioners heading to see higher-level authority (Kwan, 2008).

In this context, respondents said they have to accept displacement as they did not have any other choices. According to the interviews, after being relocated between the late 2002 to 2005, resettlers gradually shifted their intentions of resistance from refusing relocation to achieving a higher level of compensation standards. They took a series of collective actions, including appealing to meet with the local authorities, organising protest marches, engaging in sit-down protests in front of the local government buildings and passing on information to local media. However, these activities failed to make the desired impact. Ultimately, the fundamental legal structure of land ownership in China dictates that farmers are always at the mercy of the local government to get better compensation for losing their land, whist the displacement decision is fundamentally unchallenged (Lian, 2014; Zhu, 2014).

7.1.2 The second wave of resistance: collective protests escalation

The second wave of rights-defending activities took place after the government broke its promise of offering an employment resettlement scheme as a way to compensate displaced farmers in addition to the compensation fee and a compensation flat. This promise was written in Policy 8 in 2003 but was not fulfilled until 2011. As mentioned in Chapter 3, this 'employment resettlement scheme' was in fact an 'Buy-to-let' scheme, which planned to be realised by allowing displaced people to buy a flat in a newly built business plaza (named HY Plaza) at a concessional price for them to rent

out as a means of generating a household income. HY Plaza is a local government-led investment attracting projects, with the aims of using 1.8 billion *yuan* (£200 million) to build a commercial complex with a shopping centre, restaurants, hotels, rental offices and 3600 commercial flats. According to Policy 8, every resettled residents in Community A was eligible for accessing a 20m^2 flat or a 5m^2 business area in shopping centre in HY Plaza at below the market price to rent out for profit in order to augment and also guarantee their long-term income.

The scheme, however, was described by one informant as the 'biggest scam' in the whole resettlement package (Yi, 40, driver). There were around 3,800 displaced families participated in the HY Plaza projects, and most of them were dissatisfied with the implementation of the programme. Three reasons can be summarised from the interviews to explain why the majority of informants view the employment scheme as being a failed promise.

The first reason that they mentioned was the 'employment resettlement scheme' in Policy 8 remained unimplemented for more than 8 years. The second reason was that the policy has nothing to do with improving resettlers' ability to participate the labour market, it was more akin to a voluntary investment project, which required a large amount of cash input from the project participants. The third and most important reason was that more than half of the informants complained that the government did not make good on their promise of offering the flat at the concessional price, instead the developers increased the purchase price of the flat during the policy implementation. An interviewee, Er, recounted his involvement in the employment resettlement program, which he perceived to be unfair:

"In August 2011, we signed a contract with property developers to buy a 60 m^2 flat at a concessional price of 2980 *yuan* (£331) per m^2. According to our contract, the flat should have been delivered to us in October 2014, and we paid 85% of the total housing price as deposit. However, the promised flat was not handed over until April 2015. What's more, before the final delivery date, we were informed that the price of the flat was increased from 2980 *yuan* (£331) per m^2 to 3800 *yuan* (£422) per m^2, which was the same as the market price of the flat, rather than any kind of concessional price the government promised. It meant that we needed to pay around 50,000 *yuan* (£5,556) more to purchase the flat. The developer said that if we did not pay the price difference, the only choice we would have was

getting the deposit we paid four years ago back without any interest or any compensation. We were angry because it has been so unfair!" (Er, 52, gateman)

Many other interviewees who participated in this scheme shared very similar experiences to the one Er described. Among others, 'scam', 'deception', 'victim' and 'indignation' were some key words mentioned by interviewees when recalling their unpleasant and bitter experiences. In addition, all of the interviewees mentioned the reason why they participated in such a scheme was because it was a government-led project, and the government involvement made them regard it as a reliable investment. Huayuan (50, housewife) noted that the government officials in the sub-district office visited Community A multiple times to promote the HY project as an initiative led by the government and to motivate the residents to purchase a flat with the promise of a stable rental income.

It is evident from the official project description on the real estate developer's website that the government was involved in the construction of HY Plaza. According to the description, HY Plaza is a large government-led project spearheaded by the Yinchuan government during the '12th Five-Year Plan' period to improve the livelihoods of displaced people. The project was planned to address the employment issue for around 20,000 displaced people[37]. This context led the informants to consider the local government as the accountable entity that would assist them in their negotiation with the developer.

However, much to HY project participants' chagrin and surprise, the local government did not side with the residents when they complained about the delayed delivery date and the increased price of the flat. Among the informants, there was an apparent resentful tone when talking about the government's attitude. San said,

> "We constantly complained to the local government about the developer's conduct of breaching contracts, including delayed handover of the flats and the unreasonable and unannounced price increase. But surprisingly, the government

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[37] The introduction of the project can be found from: http://www.chinayuehai.com/index.jsp [Accessed 21 Oct 2020]

supported the developer's claims. The officer in the district government replied to us that it was stated in policy that the concessional price meant the building cost of the flat. 2980 *yuan* (£331) was the building cost in 2011, while 3800 *yuan* (£422) was the price in 2015, therefore the building cost inflation had caused purchasing price rise. This is ridiculous! The price 2980 *yuan* was clearly written in black and white in the contract. But both the government and the developer denied it! They were in the same boat and had shared interests. There must be some complicity and covert collusion between them… When the government loses integrity, who else can we rely on?" (San, 47, small shopkeeper)

The local government's response yet further stirred collective outrage among the displaced people and aroused suspicion that the government was colluding with the developers. Interviewees indicated that they tried different methods to arouse public attention on their case, such as seeking help from the sub-district office, calling the Mayor's hotline, and trying to raise public awareness by sharing the story with local media, posting their experience online on Weibo, but all of these efforts made no different to the decision that the government made – increasing the purchasing price of the flat. A collective demonstration was a desperate last act. As Chuan recalled the protest,

"In April 2015, hundreds of protesters staged a protest outside the Yinchuan government's main building, insisting on maintaining the original flat price and receiving additional compensation for the delayed delivery of the flat as agreed upon in the contract they signed. However, the demonstration ended with the arrests of 2 or 3 participants by the police. Nobody wants to initiate demonstrations, but we had no choice." (Chuan, 44, small restaurant owner).

What Chuan described can be still found from the previous Weibo posts on 7 April 2015. According to the site photos and the contents of the posts, we can see the protesters carrying banners with the words denouncing the government and the developer and asking for protection of their legal rights.

Figure 7.1 A snatch of a displaced farmer's protest march
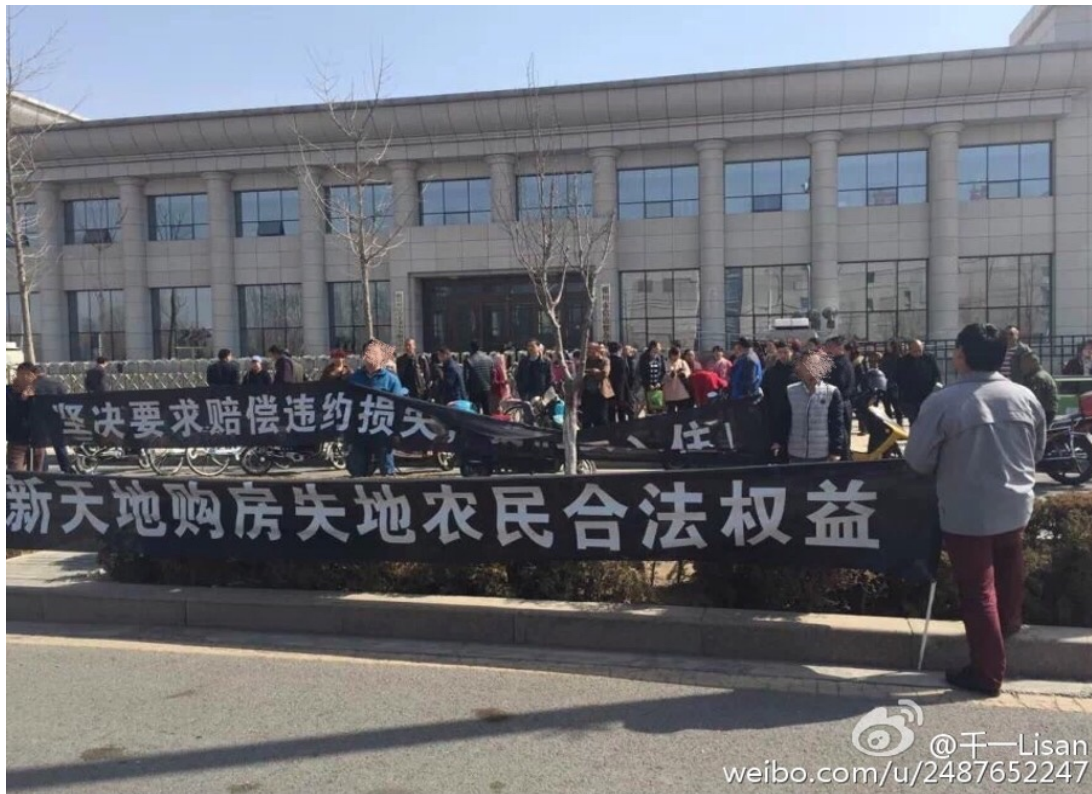
Source from: Weibo posts on 7 April 2015.

Figure 7.2 A snatch of a displaced farmer's protest march

Source from: Weibo posts on 7 April 2015.

Figure 7.3 A snatch of a displaced farmer's protest march

Source from: Weibo posts on 7 April 2015.

However, the efforts that the resistance activists made were far from achieving a result the participants expected. As Chuan continued,

> "To calm the situation down, the district-level government promised us to re-investigate the event. However, after a few days the government released a notice saying that the final price of the concessional flats was still 3800 *yuan* (£422) per m². This price was based on recalculating the housing construction costs calculated by the Bureau for Commodity Prices. To compensate us, the government gave us 100 *yuan* (£11) per m² purchase subsidies, which only reduced the price to 3700 *yuan* (£411) per m². We were also required to sign a new house purchase contract within two days otherwise we would lose the chance to buy the concessional flat at all." (Chuan, 44, small restaurant owner).

The notice Chuan referred to was the No. 3 public notice released by the sub-district Office on 4th April 2015. According to the notice, the final audit pricing of the flat in the HY project was 3804.6 *yuan* (£423) because of its high construction quality, and considering the financial situation of the displaced people, the district government decided to give 100 *yuan* (£11) discount on the per m² purchasing price, so the final purchasing price for the flat was 3704.6 *yuan* (£412) per m².

This notice further irritated the project participants. But after a few rounds of protests, the government still upheld the decision stated in No. 3 public notice. Although the

interviewees felt indignant, the vast majority of them reluctantly accepted the result in the end. Huayuan reflected on the course of events,

> "Of course we were really angry! But what else could we do if we did not accept the price that they proposed? If we quit at that time, we could only get the money we paid to the developer 4 years ago, without any interest on the deposit. We would have lost more in that way! It is impossible to bargain with the powerful!" (Huayuan, 50, housewife)

As the HY Plaza is a government-led project, most interviewees saw a very low likelihood of winning against the full might of the state and gave up the protest. Bing argued,

> "It is impossible for the normal people to fight against the government because it just like 'throwing an egg at a rock'." (Bing, 53, street food vendor)

Sha summarised this experience by using a metaphor of 'shepherd and sheep':

> "We farmers are like a group of sheep, and the government is a shepherd. We can only go wherever the shepherd wants us to go. What we can eat depends on what the shepherd gives us. We cannot complain or resist, otherwise we get nothing." (Sha, 58, public park employee)

After accepting the final purchasing price endorsed by the government based on the previous failures in taking on the local government, the residents in Community A became painfully aware that when the government acts as the final arbiter, their position was not negotiable. Since then, their grievances have not disappeared, but have been tackled in a different less confrontational manner.

7.1.3 The third wave of resistance: soft confrontations and everyday forms resistance

One significant contrast between the first/second waves and the third wave movements advocating for rights is the methods of confrontation employed. In the earlier waves, activists aggressively challenged unjust government policies in a direct and radical way. Tactics such as group protests, petitions, sit-ins, and even violent clashes with law enforcement were applied, yet these approaches failed to produce satisfactory results. From 2015 onwards, there has been a shift toward soft confrontations and everyday forms of resistance to address resident's grievance.

The primary reason for the third wave activities to defend people's rights was due to the unresolved community-related issues, such as unsatisfactory housing quality, including leaking problems, wall cracks and low room temperature in winter, which were discussed in Chapter 6 with greater detail. Although residents constantly complained about these issues to both the property management company and to the residents' committee, these problems remained unresolved for many years. Refusing to pay the property service charge was a common tactic used by residents to express their dissatisfaction with the situation. An interviewee shared her opinion about paying the property service charge:

> "The property management company charges us for their services, but they have not provided us with satisfactory service. Our roof has been leaking for several years, and even though they have attempted to fix it twice, the leaks persist. Therefore, we don't see why we should pay for their services. If they provided us with adequate service, we would gladly pay for it." (Liu, 60, retired)

Kongxian shared a similar viewpoint of withholding payment due to inadequate service,

> "The housing quality in our community is far inferior to the other communities… If there were only one or two people refused to pay the service charge, that might be the resident's fault; but a lot of residents resist paying it, that definitely owning to the property management company's own fault." (Kongxian, 58, retired)

A manager of property management company confirmed their difficulties in collecting the property service charge every year. He insisted that the low standard of community maintenance was because of the low service charge required in Community A. He indicated the dissatisfaction with the service quality was not the only reason that residents refused to pay the property service charge, but as a 'ventilation' to express residents' long-standing grievances. He said,

> "The service charge of our community is the cheapest in this city, just a third, or even a fifth of the price of other communities. It is impossible for us to provide the same standard service as a high-end community... For some residents, they just vent their discontent though refusing to pay. Every little thing we made dissatisfying residents would become their excuse for not paying us the fee. You know, residents' negative emotions and dissatisfactions have been building up for years, the housing quality, the compensation, unmet needs all irritate them. But

none of these things should be blamed exclusively on us." (Song, manager of property management company)

From residents' perspective, not paying the property service charge proved to be an effective way to resist the unresolved community issues caused by the displacement. Withholding payment was strategically used as a bargaining chip to negotiate with the service provider and even with the authority, or to draw attention to various stakeholders supposedly addressing their issues. For example, Hua indicated,

"Our voice can be heard only if we do not pay the service charge. As long as we pay the fee, nobody really cares what we say." (Hua, 50, cleaner)

In actuality, refusing to pay the fee effectively conveyed the residents' desires to the authorities. The community leaders noted that the previous property management company stopped providing services in 2018 due to low service charge rates and excessive arrears, and no other company was willing to take over. As a result, the residents' committee formed a team to provide a low-cost property management service.

The participation of the residents' committee in delivering community service allowed residents to voice their grievances directly to the government. This is possible because the residents' committee reports directly to the sub-district office, which is a basic-level of governmental organisation in China (refer to Figure 7.4 Administrative hierarchy in China – take Ningxia as an example). Thus, the residents' committee acted as a mediator between the residents and the government authority. In this way, residents in Community A achieved their goals of conducting a candid dialogue with the government.

In addition to strategically employing 'deviant tactics', such as withholding housing service charge, to attract attention from the government authority, residents also managed to make their voice heard by a larger audience through using social media. One of the representative events summarised from interviews was residents claiming for an enhanced indoor heating system. According to the interviews, due to the bad design of the indoor heating system, all of the flats in Community A failed to offer sufficient warmth during the winter.

To address this problem, residents constantly posted their experiences and comments on social media, highlighting the indoor heating predicament in Community A. They

composed open letters to the Mayor on Weibo and tagged relevant government agencies and the heating-supply company in their social media posts to pressure them to rectify the heating issues, and they required to be informed of any progress on addressing this issue as well. As seen in their Weibo posts, they also called for a public hearing to reassess the heating price, as they argued they should not be paying for heating bills if the room temperature is below the state-specified standard of central heating-supply [38].

Although the protesters who operate anonymously online have no designated leaders or organised structure, their demonstrations have proven to be effective in capturing the attention of relevant government authorities and prompting them to address their grievances. Through their online postings, the residents were able to garner significant public interest and exert substantial social pressure on both the government and heating-supply company. Consequently, the company took corrective measures such as adding insulation and replacing heating pipes to raise room temperatures. The informants, Yi, believed that the power of public opinion was the most potent weapon in their fight for their rights, he also said,

> "Unlike the social elites who have closed working relationship or personal connections with the powerful agencies and influential people, we normal people know nobody of important. It's hard to find channels to tell others what kind of life the powerless are living. In this sense, the Internet is a good thing." (Yi, 40, driver)

Encouraged by the success to resolve heating problem, more residents in Community A have pinned their hopes on social media to arouse public attention and sympathy to solve their practical problems. For instance, the narratives from a respondent, Hu (50, fruit vendor), shown how a vulnerable identity was weaponised for the impoverished residents to secure a safer and fairer place to live in the city. Hu set up a stall selling fruits in the public garden of the Community A for about two months, due to the lack of license and occupying public space, he had to constantly fight over complaints from nearby residents, and also needed to deal with the warnings of business termination

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[38] Source from Weibo posts on 09.2016–09.2019 by residents in Community A.

issued by the property management company and the Urban Management Bureau. He said:

> "I know it is not allowed to set up my stall here, but I am not causing any harm or disturbance to anyone...The staffs in property management company committed after visiting my stall too many times, and they kind of allowed me to do my business here because they know my poor financial situation. However, the officers from the Urban Management Bureau constantly harassed me and issued me with 3 penalty papers to remove my stall. I will not move, I spent 3000 *yuan* (£333) on this stall, and I have not even earned this money back yet. Setting a stall in the community may just break some rules but it does not break the law... The officers cannot use violence to make me leave, it's not 15 years ago, they (the government officers) are afraid of being exposed on the internet for evicting me. If I post on Weibo, the public will realise what a hard life I have lived, and they would feel like helping me. It is the government's land expropriation that has put me in such a disadvantage position. I am among the most vulnerable people, so the officer cannot do much about me." (Hu, 50, fruit vendor)

It was observed from interviews that social media serves as a central battlefield for residents to address their grievances based upon its wide reach and potentially huge audiences. In addition, the residents tactically developed their disadvantaged social identity as a weapon to attract public attention and to win back their neglected rights in the city. They blamed their impoverished position in the city on the government's land expropriation actions, and thus expected the government not to interfere with their means of earning a living even if their activities break the rules.

A sub-district officer, Cao, confirmed that social media has acted as an important channel for escalating community issues with the government department, especially for the residents in the lower-end community:

> "Nowadays, increasingly people use the internet to express their grievances. We spent more time than 5 years ago solving the issues that residents raised online. Our department was also required by the municipal government to set an official Weibo account to identify residents' issues and to settle the complaints they made. I found residents in different communities use different channels to make complaints. Residents in high-end community tend to make a complaint directly

to our leaders in higher-level authorities informally through their personal networks, which is trickier for us. While hardly any residents in low-end community use personal networks to solve their problems, Weibo is their first choice because it can easily attract government's attention." (Cao, sub-district Officer)

This quotation from Cao illustrated how social media has taken on a significant role in dealing with the problems raised by local residents. It found that the local government has already taken actions to change the hostile government-public relations through building a virtual communication bridge between the people and the authority. According to the policy, *Administrative Measures for Micro-blog (Weibo) Politics,* released by the Yinchuan government, for every identified issue/case from netizens posted on Weibo, the relevant government department in charge should respond within a specified time. Consulting cases need to be settled within 1 working day, complaint cases and proposal cases need to be settled within 5 days[39].

The online platforms have provided equal opportunities for every citizen to have a voice or have a virtual conversation with a specific government department directly to address community-related issues. Just as Huayuan (50, Housewife) noted, thanks to the development of social media, they could access the person who is in charge to address their practical difficulties by posting them online.

In the post-displacement era, residents do not engage in confrontational activism with the government but rather take a strategic approach in seeking assistance from the government. This reflects a shift in the government's attitude towards becoming a more people-oriented institution. This process is similar to Tilly's (1986: 9) argument 'We shall know that a new era has begun not when a new elite holds power or a new constitution appears, but when ordinary people begin fighting for their interests in new ways.'

7.2 Reflecting the failures and successes amidst three waves of resistance

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[39] Source from the official website of the Yinchuan Government: Available from http://www.yinchuan.gov.cn/xwzx/zwyw/201910/t20191010_1784066.html [Accessed 12 Oct 2020]

The ultimate effectiveness of performative protest is measured by whether the demands of the performers have been met (William, 2019). The first and second waves of resistance have failed to achieve the desired outcomes based on this standard. The radical form resistance the residents initiated, such as sit-ins, protest marches, and appealing to central government were all suppressed by the local authority. In contrast, the third wave of resistance saw a shift towards ostensibly more moderate and individual forms of resistance embedded in everyday life, such as refusing or delaying payments of a service charge as well as strategically employing their disadvantaged identity as a weapon and finally utilizing social media to address their grievances. In practice, these activities were more effective in generating public attention and pressure on the government to settle residents' issues. In this section, I analyse three main factors that contribute to the success/failure of grassroot activism in the different stage of resettlement.

7.2.1 Institutional defects and local nepotism

During the first decade of the 21st century, the Chinese government implemented a series of laws and regulations aimed at protecting the rights of citizens, such as enacting the *Property Law* in 2007 and initiating *the Coordination and Arbitration Methods for Resolving Dispute over Compensation and Resettlement in Ningxia* in 2007. Despite this, the residents of Community A resorted to extreme forms of resistance, including unregistered protests which is illegal in China, to defend their legal rights. However, these actions ultimately failed to achieve the activists' objectives. Through interviews with various informants, both internal and external factors can be considered in explaining this process. Externally, institutional deficiencies such as inadequate legal protection of people's interests, insufficient legal education for the public, lack of transparency in policymaking and implementation and insufficient central government oversight of local governments have contributed to the eruption of collective protests beyond the boundary of law.

When talking about the first wave resistance, respondents, particularly those aged between 50 and 60, reported that they were unaware that taking part in a collective protest march was illegal, and they acknowledged not having considered using legal channels to address the local government's misconduct. One of the interviewees, who worked as a solicitor, expressed his views on the displaced farmers' (lack of) awareness of the law:

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"Law is always the last weapon that discontented groups could wield. Displaced people talk about lawsuits a lot, but seldom do they use it to safeguard their rights. The fact is that there are not many channels that residents can access to gain free legal advice or to consult a solicitor. They are afraid of the high legal costs they could incur and also feel trepidation about the unknown legal process." (Yun, 35, solicitor)

In both the first and the second wave of resistance, residents were reluctant to turn to the law for assistance, even if they had a just cause. For example, informants pointed out that they never thought about suing the estate developers regarding the company's unlawful act of breaching the flat selling contract of the HY project, as mentioned by Huayuan,

"Farmers do not know the laws. What I do know is that it takes time and money and does not always come with good results at the end." (Huayuan, 50, housewife)

Indeed, initiating a class action requires specific legal knowledge which farmers might lack. Huang (2010: 163-178) argues that 'court costs, legal standing, the burden of proof, and judicial receptivity' are the four crucial factors of legal opportunity in homeowners' activism. Compared with lawsuits, a collective sit-in or protest march is quicker and financially more viable method for a low-income group to express their grievances.

Moreover, knowledge, time and money were not the only barriers which impede displaced farmers from using legal actions to protect their rights. The suspected nepotism between the developer and the government officers also stopped them from seeking help by using legal means,

"We knew that the estate developer is a relative of the former mayor, otherwise how could the government possibly have ignored and covered up the illegal things that the developer did? The local government officers and the developers protect each other. It is impossible for us ordinary people to win against the resourceful developer through judicial means." (Guoxiang, 60, gardener)

Although it is hard to verify Guoxiang statement vis-à-vis nepotism, his narrative shows the residents distrust of local government owing to a lack of transparency in dealing with the developer's unlawful acts.

Another example of this suspected nepotism was between local government officials and village leaders. Informants suspected that the sub-district officers betrayed openness and transparency principles in allocating compensated flats:

"The lot game of selecting the floor of flat was decided by the sub-district office and by the village committee. It felt entirely rigged that we always got 1st or 6th floor (which were regarded as the worst floors choices in a 6-floor building) when we drew the lots. At that time, we thought it might be because of our bad luck. But when we settled in the community, we found the best floors (the 3rd and 4th floors) were mainly occupied by our previous village leaders and their relatives. How can you explain this? Don't look down upon these small titles, they have their power too!" (Huazhang, 35, bakery owner)

The informants argued that the lack of transparency in the process of making a flat allocation plan suggested that there were hidden connections at play between local government officials and village leaders, which allowed the latter to access 'secret information' about the compensation allocation plan prior to everyone else, thus affording them unfair privileges when they chose the floor of their compensation flat. In fact, interviewees claimed that they neither participated in any of the decision-making processes nor were they told about how and when the allocation plan would be conducted beforehand.

The nepotism was also mentioned by interviewees in describing the failures of the first wave of rights-defending activities. Some interviewees suspected that the previous village leaders had taken bribes from the local land expropriation interest groups and had then given up their resistance easily, bringing forward the perception of the failure of the protests. Yang explained,

"The previous village leaders were not really fighting for the common interests of the whole displaced group because they always had close power relations with the authorities. At the beginning of the land expropriation, some of our village leaders urged us to make protests to ask for higher compensation. But after just a few days, they completely changed their attitudes and persuaded us to give up the protest and accept the compensation standards originally offered. You can guess what happened to them. Nobody knows how much of a dark fortune poured into their pockets." (Yang, 51, construction business contractor)

Interviewees suspected nepotism and cadre positions allowed village leaders to get more benefits, such as unlawful incomes and more compensation fees than ordinary villagers as well as compensated flats on better floors. It not only aroused the sense of unfairness among villagers, but also undermined the trust between residents and village leaders/government authorities. However, due to being unable to provide a lack of concrete evidence, they felt helpless to expose the truth:

> "None of our previous village leaders still live here. They have all got many properties, flats, cars and money, while we haven't got anything. How do they get these? You know, one of our village accountants committed suicide about 10 years ago, and all of the previous account books in our village office went missing. Nobody can investigate what they did because of the lack of evidence - or should I say hidden trail of evidence." (Gao, 48, housewife)

The suspected misconduct and misused power of the local authorities during the process of land expropriation and compensation was mentioned by more than half of the interviewees. These actions were partially caused by flaws in the institutional structure, particularly the inadequate oversight from the higher-level government over local policy implementers and the lack of punishment for power abuses (Sun, 2014).The petition to Beijing in the first wave of resistance was a good example of how difficult it is to escalate local disputes to central government.

Furthermore, the institutional flaws were evident in the process for selecting village leaders. The vast majority of interviewees stated that the election of their village leader was more of a formality than an actual election. For instance, Guokai (57, security guard), and Huazhang (35, bakery owner) were among those interviewed who claimed that their previous village leaders and community leaders were appointed by the sub-district office or district government even though they are longing for selecting community leader by themselves. The lack of procedural legitimacy and transparency in the election process increased the likelihood of nepotism. Nepotism in basic-level authority not only negatively impacts the economic interests of residents but also undermines trust in community governance, which pushes the discontented groups to seek arbiters from the central-level authority or utilize indirect channels, such as social media, to draw public attention and exert pressure on the government to address conflicts in a fair manner.

7.2.2 Stakeholder's contrary viewpoints and the formation of a disunited community

From the residents' perspective, the lack of legal support, alleged nepotism, non-transparent information sharing, and local government misconduct were the key factors that triggered their unsuccessful resistance actions. However, these arguments were not recognised by the informants in leadership positions. Tang, the current community leader who has more than 30 years of standing in the party, shared his opinions on the distribution of compensation:

> "The villagers are difficult to satisfy and always wanting more. Despite receiving complimentary flat(s), compensation fees, and access to social insurance, they fail to appreciate the benefits they have received. It is unlikely that such benefits would be offered in other countries, and the villagers should acknowledge the positive impact of the city's expansion on their lives. It is disappointing that some individuals still choose to protest despite the numerous benefits they have received, as it seems they have been given more than enough." (Tang, community leader)

The leader's viewpoints presented a different viewpoint on how the community leader perceived compensation fairness and the villagers' resistance. To some extent, a series of resistance the residents initiated was unlikely to succeed as the leaders did not share the same values as the residents, particularly concerning the justice of the land expropriation action and the concept of achieving justice through resistance movement. The leader believed that demanding higher compensation was unreasonable and those who did so were driven by greed. However, the leader failed to recognise that the land expropriation was a forced action taken by the government without public opinion involvement.

The residents gradually lost trust in the community leader because they felt that their interests were not being represented and that they were not being supported by the residents' committee in their fight for their rights. The lack of trust that had long existed between the residents and the residents' committee made it challenging for them to work together effectively in dealing with community issues. While the previous leadership group has disbanded, the new community leading team is working hard to earn back the residents' trust. Tang said,

"There are always some residents who never trusted us and always suspected that we would take unlawful benefits from our work. That's the reason why our community work is becoming more and more transparent. We posted our workflow, our use of funds and the different governmental policies on the notice board. Residents can get the information they want. The 'dark stories' in land expropriation period were old stories." (Tang, community leader)

In addition to the distrust between the residents' committee and the residents, the manager of property management company pointed out that the 'self-serving' behaviour also led to a fragmented community. Displaced farmers were used to relying on capable volunteers, typically the village leaders, to speak out for them in collective protests and community matters. Some interviewees expressed a desire to speak out about their grievances or sensitive opinions against the government but were hesitated to do so. It is not only because they believed they lacked the necessary literacy and social networks to represent others effectively (one-fourth of interviewees introduced them as 'illiterate' or 'lack of social networks in the city'), but also due to a fear of attracting trouble to themselves. For example, Gao shared her opinion about why she did not participate in any of the activism:

"Others avoid talking about negative things, so why should I do that? I am not going to stick my neck out". (Gao, 48, housewife)

However, when somebody really stood out and attempted to organise a collective rebel activity, others may suspect his/her motives (just as the aforementioned example that the interviewee suspected village leaders getting more benefits than ordinary villagers through nepotism and cadre position). More than half interviewees expressed scepticism about the leaders of collective action in the early stage of displacement could receive hidden benefits and could server their own interests while claiming to fight for the entire group. Therefore, the formation of a fractured community was not only caused by the absence of trust between the community leaders and residents, but also by the prevailing atmosphere of suspicion among the community residents themselves. In this context, traditional collective resistance was unlikely to succeed because of these internal conflicts within the community, and a new form of resistance is emerging.

In contrast, social media, as a channel of rapidly disseminating information and as a free platform to make claims and demands, has commonly used by residents to counteract the injustices the authority has created in the post-displacement era. As a new form of resistance, movements on social media does not require a leader which avoid the suspected nepotism and behind-the-scenes interest. Every resister could utter their grievances directly without affiliating themselves to the community leader. Just as one of the interviewees, Hu (50, fruit vendor), stated, 'Everybody got different life. I fight for myself.' Social media acted as a crucial resource for discontented groups to generate pressures on government to address conflicts and aroused public sympathy to the powerless to increase the chances of settling the conflicts in favour of citizens.

7.2.3 Rights awareness evolution and social integration progression

The three waves of rights-defending resistance indicate a transformation in terms of rights awareness among residents in Community A. Material-based rights were the main demands raised by the residents in the first and second waves of resistance. This period confirmed Perry's (2008) argument that the rights claims in China are more related to socio-economic security, and less towards political freedoms in the Western sense. In contrast, the third phase of resistance overcame the stage of accessing material-based rights and pursued a higher-level of political participation, albeit expressed in a way palatable to local political sensibilities and realities. At this stage, political participation, such as participating in public hearings and the election of a community leader were requested by the residents. The civil rights awareness transformation echoes Lefebvre's (1991) call for 'the right to participation' in a Chinese context.

Chapter 2 analysed the two main theories which can be applied to explaining the rights-defending movements in China: 'rightful resistance' by O'Brien and Li (2006) and 'everyday form resistance' by Scott (2008). For this research, 'rightful resistance' on the basis of applying legal weapons by the weak does not fit the case of Community A (O'Brien and Li, 2006). On the one hand, no clear political propositions were put forward at any stage of resistance. Also, there was no spokesperson with any clear political beliefs performing at the core of the protest to fight for the other protestors. On the other hand, hardly any evidence has shown that displaced farmers mobilised legal resource to defend their rights. According to interviewees, residents were either

lacking the necessary legal knowledge/support or were afraid of the high cost of applying legal methods. Thus, the new urban residents' resistance does not fall into the domain of 'legal protests' (O'Brien and Li, 2006).

In line with 'everyday form resistance' raised by Scott (2008), the resident's innovative forms of protest in a new era worked as an effective method through which to strive for rights in Chinese authoritarian context. In Community A, the residents have conducted moderate and hidden form of resistance, along with strategically employing the disadvantaged identity as a weapon and tactically using social media as a channel to mobilise resources which support their claims and thus protect their rights.

The rights awareness transformation shows a higher-level social integration between the displaced farmers and urban society. Such a transformation happened not only because of the improvement in social, economic and political context, but also due to residents' better understandings of what their citizenship means. On the one hand, the disadvantaged population have gradually mastered the rules of the modern game, which is using lawful means to obtain legitimacy, and mobilise resources, such as public attention and even sympathy, through mass media to securing a space in the city. Fruit vender, Mr. Hu, refusing to move his stall is a good example which shows how people at the bottom of society may utilise modern rules of the game, proffering silent and/or subtle resistance without breaking the laws in order to achieve their goals and finally integrate into the host community.

On the other hand, the better social integration status also reflected in a way that residents constantly test the limits of authority and strive to gain the best benefits from the policies by using their disadvantaged social identity. People strategically show their disadvantaged status not simply to gain sympathy, but to garner attention to their claims. They subtly mobilise unexpected amounts of social power to stand on their side as well as morally challenge the unjust policies which bring them to a disadvantaged position.

7.3 The missing role of NGOs and social organisations

Even though 800,000 formal and informal social organisations (SOs) and NGOs have emerged since 1989 in China (Wang & He, 2008, Howell, 2004), the role of SOs and

NGOs[40], in representing social interests and conveying those interests into the policy-making process during the three waves of resistance has not become a part of mainstream debates in analysing the case of Yinchuan. It is mainly because of the absence of relative NGOs targeting on rural-urban displaced farmers.

The main reason for the lacuna of NGOs activity is the rigid requirements in these organisation registration in China. The establishment of an NGO in China is carefully controlled by the government. According to the *Regulations on the Registration and Management of Social Organisations* issued by the State Council of China in 1998, all NGO need to be registered with the local Civil Affairs Bureau. Registration criteria are quite stringent, with organisations required to have more than 50 members, fixed office locations, funds, and specific purpose of activity. Besides, all registered NGO need to be annually inspected by the Civil Affairs Bureau in terms of their funding, members and activities. Due to the strict entry requirements and complex procedures, the number of registered NGOs has been falling since 2018 (Huang, 2019).

According to the interview with Chen, the deputy director of the Ningxia Social Organisation Administration Office, the high entry requirements and rigid registration check procedures, as well as perceived regional economic backwardness restrict the number of NGOs situated in Yinchuan. Chen indicates,

> "Among the existing NGOs, we have organisations targeting low-income families, women, children and the older people, but there is no one set up specifically for providing services to displaced farmers. It might be because of the number of this group of people being less compared with the number of other disadvantaged groups. You know, Yinchuan is a relatively small city." (Chen, deputy director of the Ningxia Social Organisation Administration Office)

In terms of the overall operation of the existing NGOs in China, the restrictive political environment makes their effects almost invisible (Swider, 2015; Cress and Snow,

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[40] According to the interview with the deputy director of the Ningxia Social Organisation Administration Office, the name of 'Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)' creates ambiguity in Chinese language because 'non' in Chinese could also means 'anti', so these associations needed to be registered in different name other than NGOs. Therefore, in Chinese context, SO is a literal translation of the Chinese term *shehui tuanti* as a counterpart of English usage of NGO. In this thesis, I will use the term NGO in the most cases to provide a comparable concept to the global context.

2016). The authoritarian setting has led to a situation where the boundary between civic organizations and the government is highly blurred, which undermines the independence that NGOs are supposed to have in theory. Howell (1998) noted that the key difference between NGOs in China and in other countries is the role of the state in actively sponsoring social organisations, which leads to the declining autonomy of such organisations. Naim (2007) even named the NGOs in China as being simply government-operated non-organisations (GONGOs). And Ma (2006) stated there is no genuinely autonomous non-governmental organisations in China. In addition, the state remains intolerant of organisations which attempt to mobilise collective activism to remain the political stability (Fu, 2017). Existing literature therefore asserts that popular resistance either lacks effective organisations or bypasses them, relying instead on informal networks to mobilise (Cai, 2010; Chen, 2012; Hurst, 2019; Fu,2017).

NGOs in China not only face the predicament of independence, but also the issue of resource scarcity, which obstructs their ability to deliver satisfactory services (Hurst, 2019). In the fieldwork, I reached out to a local NGO that offers employment, education, and community services for disadvantaged groups, as there are no specific organisations dedicated to assisting displaced farmers. The founder of XC, a local NGO mainly provides extra-curricular education for children from disadvantaged family and skills training for parents in Yinchuan, indicated the existing local NGOs have limited ability to provide service because of the shortage of staffs, facilitates and funding:

> "Our work is lacking in consistency. We experience high staff turnover and most of our social workers are part-time employees, which creates difficulties in maintaining continuity in our work. As far as I know, it is a common issue faced by many local social organisations. Also, we need to maintain a good relationship with residents' committees, who could provide us on-site rooms and facilitates, as well as access to the contact information of residents in need of our services. In addition, funding is always an issue for us." (Wang, the founder of XC)

In addition to the resource scarcity, Wang noted the limited understanding of their organisations further restricts their roles in providing education,

"There is a lack of knowledge about NGOs in Ningxia, as many people, including some of our class participants, are unfamiliar with this term. Some participants even mistake us for government volunteers, despite our efforts to explain our role. Additionally, there are residents who are hesitant to enrol their children in our classes because they fear we may be untrustworthy unregistered organizations that could potentially deceive them." (Wang, the founder of XC)

Through Wang's narratives, we gain some insights into the difficulties encountered by a formal registered NGO in a city where the general understanding of NGOs is lacking. Due to the limited role that NGOs could play, the residents' committee partly fills the service gap left by the government. The functions of residents' committees, in theory, encompass a wide range of activities that aim to enhance the quality of life within the community. These activities include providing community welfare, maintaining community environmental cleanliness, preventing diseases, conducting health and sanitation inspections, ensuring public security, educating about legal matters, fostering cultural growth, organizing grassroots elections and facilitating other activities associated with building a strong community (Ngeow, 2012). A community leader, Tang, commented on these duties,

"We are providing all-around service to residents, almost covering every aspect of their lives. There is no other organisation like us in the world." (Tang, community leader)

While the *Constitution and the Organic Law on the Urban Residents' Committees* define a residents' committee is a grassroots organisation run by residents in cities for self-governance, rather than a part of state power state[41], the role of residents' committees in providing independent services and representing the interests of the people are still controversial. On the one hand, even though residents' committees are not officially affiliated with the administrative hierarchy, the election of a community leader, the personnel delegation in residents' committee and the funds allocation are

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[41] Source from:
http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/article/lawsdata/chineselaw/200211/20021100050376.shtml [Accessed 20 Oct 2020]

rely heavily on the local government (Audin and Throssell, 2015). Therefore, residents' committee fall short of independently representing people's voice and protecting resident's interests (Friedman, 2014). Faced with such constraints, building independent civil society organisations is clearly a future development goal in building an inclusive and just society in China.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined how residents in Community A expressed their grievances about displacement and fought for their rights during three different resettlement stages. By examining the resistance taken in the early, middle, and later phases of resettlement, it is evident that residents' understanding of their rights has evolved. Initially, their focus was on the right to reside in the city and the right to access material benefits but later, they began to advocate for the right to participate in civic management and decision-making.

This transformation indicates a higher-level social integration has gradually been achieved by the displaced group. Over time, they have gained a better understanding of their citizenship and have successfully utilised public attention as a resource to achieve their goals while avoiding breaking the law – in contrast with the early stage where they engaged in direct confrontation with the government. Moreover, their improved social integration is also evident in their constant testing of the limits of authority and efforts to secure the best possible benefits from policies through their disadvantaged social identities. By strategically showcasing their disadvantaged status, they seek attention to their claims and garner unexpected levels of social power to morally challenge unjust policies that have placed them in a disadvantaged position.

The improved social and economic context as well as the advancements in the legal system in China have influenced the strategies used by city newcomers to combat unjust policies. However, the restrictive authoritarian political climate in China makes it difficult for radical social movements to gain traction, particularly if they are viewed as undermining the government's legitimacy and disturbing social harmony. For instance, unregistered protest marches are illegal in China and many activists are not aware of this, resulting in the failure of such forms of resistance. Additionally, institutional defects, such as a lack of transparency in policymaking and the policy implementation process, inadequate oversight by the central government of local

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government's misconduct and nepotism, as well as the ineffective bottom-up appeal system, led to the failure of the first and second wave of activism.

In contrast, in the post-displacement era, the displaced group have tactically applied lawful, moderate, hidden and everyday forms of resistance to address their grievances and fight for their rights in the city. In particular, social media has played a crucial role in placing pressure on the government to address conflicts and garnering public attention and sympathy for the city newcomers to improve the chances of settling the conflict in favour of the resettlers. Examining the shifts in resistance strategies provides an insightful lens for understanding larger issues about the power dynamics between central and local government, as well as between local government and citizens.

Finally, NGOs have made limited impact in providing supplementary support to displaced farmers in Yinchuan. This is not only due to the authoritarian nature of the one-party political system in China, which maintains tight control over civic organisations, but also because of the public's limited understanding of organisations without a state title. In this context, the residents' committee currently provides comprehensive services to city newcomers but its 'double dependency' on the government in terms of personnel and funding constrains its ability to fully advocate for people's interests. Therefore, the development of civil society in China remains a question that needs to be examined urgently.

Chapter 8 Discussion

Introduction

This chapter draws together the findings of previous chapters and fully addresses the research questions set out in Chapter 1. The first section of this chapter analyses the formation of social injustice in land-centred urbanisation in Yinchuan by revisiting the role of space in shaping the structural marginality of migrants and contextualising the 'spatial triad' in the case of Yinchuan. This is followed by an analysis of the institutional forces which led to economic-centred land expropriation in China, together with its social cost of disfranchising the displaced farmers. Furthermore, I identified three misalignments between the central government, the local government and the people in terms of value, governance and communication channels. These misalignments contribute to the formation of social injustice in Chinese urbanisation.

The second section of this chapter examines the path of social integration of rural migrants in Yinchuan, leading to the identification of key factors that promote and hinder displaced people's structural, cultural interactive and identificational integration into the host city.

The rest of the chapter investigates the evolving state-society relations and emerging civil society by reviewing residents' three waves of activism. Finally, the chapter reflects on the role of three agents, namely, NGOs, residents' committees and social media, in pushing forward democratisation and building civil society in contemporary China.

8.1 Interrogating social injustice in land-centred urbanisation in China

The thesis revealed economic growth and political stability have provided the backdrop of urbanisation in China over the past three decades. Chapter 3 (section 3.1.2) suggested that since the 1980s, market-oriented reform has created 'neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics' and accelerated the formation of a 'pro-growth coalition' during land-centred urbanisation (Harvey, 2005: 120). Consequently, China has prioritised economic growth and deprioritised rural people's living space (Wu, 2018; Duckett, 2020). Additionally, displaced farmers, a group already marginalised by the Hukou system, have faced the possibility of further subordination

due to misalignments in value, governance and communication channels during displacement. This section interrogates the formation of social injustice amidst Chinese urbanisation process by combining all these factors examined in the previous chapters.

8.1.1 Chinese land-centred urbanisation and the 'spatial triad' in practice

Spatial production in Yinchuan serves as a good illustration of China's land-centred urbanisation, which differs from the capital-driven development path in Western countries. The state has been the main driver of Chinese urbanisation, and it has not only decided the scale and pace of urbanisation but has also diverted capital to different regions of China. Since the 1980s, the central government has implemented economic advancement policies with a special focus on land expansion. Consequently, since the late 1990s, the western region of China has been encouraged to adopt aggressive land expansion policies such as the Western Region Development Strategy (WRDS). Land-based development is a feasible urbanisation strategy in China's context due to the state's control over land ownership and the significant appreciation of value when rural land is converted to urban construction land. Moreover, the decentralisation of fiscal responsibility from the central to the local governments further encourages the local government's entrepreneurship in adopting aggressive urban spatial expansion strategies to generate land conveyance fees and taxes as the main sources of local fiscal income (Wu, 2000). These characteristics set urbanisation in China apart from Western countries, as in the former it has both the state and the market as the main drivers of spatial transformation. Whilst in the West, it is mainly driven by capital (Harvey, 2004). This process also echoes Lefebvre's (1991) analysis of the political nature of space, with space serving as a tool for economic advancement and for maintaining political control and administrative power.

Chapter 5 revealed that the distinct Chinese characteristics of urbanisation rest on the relationship between the local government and real estate developers. The common goal of creating financial benefits from land encourages the formation of 'pro-growth coalitions' between local government and local real estate developers. In the case of Yinchuan, these coalitions have resulted in land policies that prioritise the exchange value over meeting people's social and cultural needs and the provision of decent living conditions. Moreover, these coalitions have led to a huge gap between the sale price of the land and the compensation fee the displaced farmers received, which

created considerable dissatisfaction and a negative social impact on the affected population. The findings in Yinchuan are consistent with the argument from Lefebvre (1991) and Harvey (2014) that the logic of capital accumulation leads to the deterioration of vibrant urban life (vivid *œuvres* in Lefebvre's words), and that emphasis on the exchange value of space diminishes its usefulness. This causes certain groups to feel disconnected from the urban environment and results in a loss of social and cultural richness in urban spaces.

My research revealed that in the short-term displaced farmers were unable to benefit from the tremendous land appreciation profits as they were given very little compensation. Consequently, they were financially exposed to the rising expenses of urban life. In the long term, many resettled households faced a lack of sufficient and consistent employment, professional training and social welfare support from the government to help them adapt to the new city environment. In essence, the value proposition of the land appropriation and the following urbanisation of the space led to an observation that the key concern for the government during the urbanisation process was the 'urbanisation of the land', rather than the 'urbanisation of the rural people'.

The process of land expropriation and the process of displaced farmers resisting the government's spatial practice in Yinchuan provided a practical case to explain the abstract concept of the 'spatial triad' Lefebvre (1991) proposed. The 'Big Yinchuan' concept is an example of 'representations of space', or the 'conceived space', which has been co-produced by central and local government, experts, city planners and developers through a package of urban policies (illustrated in Chapter 5). This concept reflects the dominant ideas and knowledge about the modern city and the modern way of living. In contrast, the rural village and the resettlement community are both 'representational space' and 'lived space' that people inhabit and experience. This space is where residents live their everyday lives and social relationships form, and it is also the space that reflects the culture of the people who live there and the people's understanding of the space as a home (analysed in Chapter 6). 'Spatial practices' are manifested in a way that displaced people continuously engage in negotiation and resistance against the government's spatial practices, especially rural land appropriation. As the government's representations of space do not align with the

residents' lived experiences, the three waves of resistance were used by residents to claim their rights to space and shape spatial practices in their communities.

8.1.2 Structural marginality of rural migrants

Lefebvre's (1991) theoretical framework on the production of space highlighted that space production entails creating specific social relations that support the movement of capital and reinforce the power of certain groups. This thesis draws on that and contends that understanding uneven social relations during land expropriation in Yinchuan is the key to comprehending the emergence of social injustice. The unjust social relations for rural migrants started when the Hukou system was implemented in 1958. This system deliberately marginalised rural residents' access to social resources, limiting their mobility from rural to urban areas and generating social welfare and identity disparities. This system has ultimately created a socio-spatial division across regions and time to facilitate capital accumulation (Qian and He, 2012). Against this long-standing historical backdrop, the displaced farmers' resistance against forced displacement in Yinchuan is an extension and reflection of uneven power.

When the restricted population movement and rural-urban dichotomy under the Hukou system hindered further capital accumulation, the state instituted new spatial and social configurations to enable greater economic growth. However, despite being resettled in cities in the 21st century where the Hukou system had less influence as an institutional barrier, those displaced still experience substandard financial situations, limited job opportunities and restricted access to social welfare benefits. The legacy and long-term impact of Hukou continue to contribute to the disadvantaged socio-economical position of displaced farmers facing the dominant city experiences. Consequently, many displaced farmers, especially the older generation, remain on the periphery of urban society and culture, increasing their susceptibility to the capitalist mode of production and social connections.

8.1.3 Three misalignments

This thesis sought to advance the theoretical understanding of Lefebvre's (1991) 'the production of space' theory through an exploration of a case study in China as a specific example of space production where power dynamics and social relationships articulated in Lefebvre's abstract framework were brought to life. My findings suggest that although the capitalist mode of space production has greatly benefitted China's

economy, it has inevitably led to a deeply uneven distribution of capital and social resources. It has also resulted in the naturalisation and reproduction of unequal social relations which fundamentally marginalise disadvantaged people.

Western ideologies around individual freedom and rights have influenced China's institutional framework to a certain degree, including those of displaced farmers, such as the right to consultation, appeal, and access to improved living conditions. In practice, however, my research has identified that the existing legal and institutional system are still susceptible to the influence of various social power dynamics. These power plays have eroded the supposed impartiality of the legal regime, resulting in three significant misalignments within the power relation triangle involving the central government, the local government and the people (refer to Figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1 Three misalignments within the power relation triangle
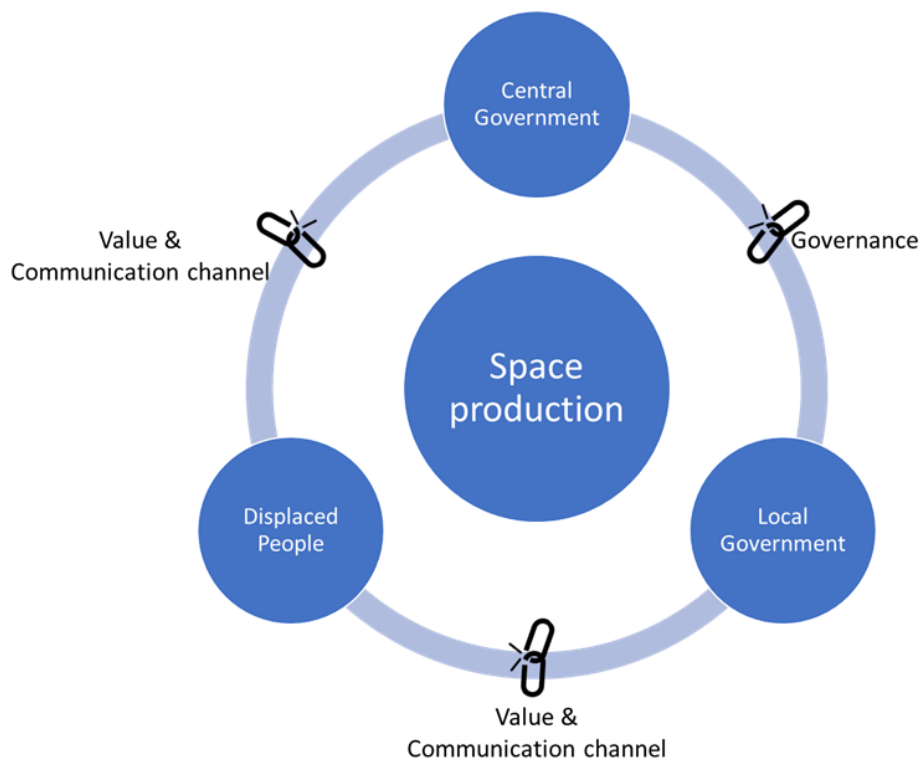
Source: Created by author.

Misalignment in value

The key misalignment in the space production process lies in the value difference between the governments (both central and local government) and the people. The governments' focus is on commodifying land to create exchange value, while the people are more concerned about the use value of the land (elaborated on in Chapter

5, section 5.3.1). Value difference is considered a barrier impeding displaced people's right to the city, which is reflected in the erosion of distributive justice and procedural justice when land compensation policies are enacted by governments. The original land compensation policy failed to achieve distributive justice as it provided poor, inconsistent compensation, falling short of the expectations of those who were displaced. Moreover, a lack of transparency in both policymaking and implementation during the entire relocation process resulted in the government's failure to deliver on its promise of procedural justice (elaborated on in Chapter 5, section 5.3.5).

The research found that the value misalignment between the government and displaced people not only manifests in the value of land per se but also in the way urban/rural locality representations are constructed in support of the governments' value propositions. In line with Lefebvre (1991), space plays a central role in shaping and supporting an unequal value proposition to maintain control over people and land in China. Under the administrative hierarchy in China, the central government exerts dominant power over civil society through top-down hierarchical levels governing entities by materialising representations of space. This entails the ongoing construction of rural/urban paradigms that have underpinned the government's spatial actions. In the case of Yinchuan, the local government took the dominant position in constructing a problematised concept of both rural identity and of the rural physical environment. Furthermore, local authority portrayed the resettlement project as the only possible solution using a narrative of progress and modernity. In this way, urban space expansion projects were and continue to be rationalised and legalised, while the spatial injustice they engender continues to be aggravated (illustrated in section 5.1).

Misalignment in governance

This thesis has found that defects in governance exacerbated the disenfranchisement of displaced farmers during the land displacement and resettlement processes in Yinchuan. These defects include weak central supervision over the local policy implementation, a lack of transparency in policymaking and restricted public involvement in government decision-making and information disclosure. In practice, local governments have been granted discretion to design local land expropriation and compensation policies based on central guidelines and have been able to implement policies with their own interpretations. However, the insufficient transparency and the

lack of central supervision of local policymaking and implementation led to misconduct and nepotism by the local government. The local government was found to exploit the existing policy and system shortfalls for profit maximisation to meet their fiscal targets. Consequently, the central government's overarching framework – 'for the people's interests' – failed to protect displaced farmers' short-term and long-term interests and resulted in a conflict between the local government and the people.

Due to the lack of effective and accountable governance, the entrepreneurial style of the local development strategy arguably created more issues than achievements for the central government to address. This included financial issues such as the increasing debt of the local government as a result of excessive focus on economic growth (Allen, Qian and Gu, 2017), political issues such as endemic corruption (Lian, 2014) and most importantly, people-related social issues including rising urban poverty (Yue et al. 2013), cultural marginalisation (Qian and He, 2012), widening social class stratification and deteriorating social integration (Tian, Tian and Sun, 2019), which has been discussed in various forms throughout the thesis.

Misalignment in communication channel

The misalignment in communication channels between the people and central/local governments during the displacement process created a major obstacle for farmers to negotiate a fair replacement, resulting in inadequate issue resolution and subsequent resistance from internal migrants. Although these protests ultimately failed to change the existing power relations in space production due to the limited scope for bottom-up reform in China's political context, they did show the disconnection between policymaking and implementation within the overall displacement arrangements. It also demonstrated that a complex government structure with layers of bureaucracy is not effective at resolving social issues such as the long-term settlement of displaced people.

The long administrative chain (refer to Figure 8.2 Administrative hierarchy in China – take Ningxia as an example) did not incentivise officers working in the residents' committee to pass real issues to the top. This study revealed that residents' feedback was often not reflected accurately, or it was not delivered, with the local government even taking actions to prevent displaced farmers from filing their appeals in Beijing. The limited capability of such a bottom-up system to resolve conflicts highlights the

urgent need for alternative mechanisms to negotiate people's interests and resolve conflicts. One potential alternative could be a more developed civil society where citizens are capable actors with the collective right to the city, as Purcell (2014) suggested. However, such a change appears unlikely in the short term as it would require the government to grant certain powers to the people and allow participation in the decision-making process, as well as hold governments accountable.

Online and social media may be one of the few feasible ways for displaced people to be heard given the current power relationships, potentially contributing to incremental improvements in indirect public participation in decision-making (this will be further discussed in section 8.5.1 in this chapter).

8.2 The paths of social integration in China

The concept of social integration is at the centre of understanding the experiences of the relocated populations in contemporary China. Chapter 6 revealed the main barrier for displaced farmers in integrating into the host city has shifted from institutional barriers, especially the Hukou system, to obstacles caused by the market forces. My findings also suggested the booming of market forces is a double-edged sword which substantially affects new urban residents' lives and their sense of belonging in the host city. While market forces serve as a catalyst for the transformation of social identity by offering plenty of opportunities for upward mobility, they can also impede social integration as they contribute to widening gaps in income, housing, employment, social welfare, culture and identity. This is particularly the case for the most vulnerable groups (such as the elderly and ethnic minorities) when there is a lack of attention given in the policies to those most in need in the migration process.

8.2.1 Key factors influencing social integration

The findings in Chapter 6 suggest that displacement is a transformative event that impacts nearly every aspect of displaced people's lives, including their household income, employment, educational attainment, housing, social welfare, leisure activities, lifestyle, social interaction, social networks and self-identity recognition. The different dynamics in approaching social integration depended on an individual's access to these factors. In line with Heckmann (2005)'s four domains of the migrants' social

integration framework, the findings of this thesis reconfirmed that structural, cultural and interactive integration are critical for identificational integration.

Additionally, the findings of this thesis revealed that policy interventions are more effective at promoting structural integration, which encompasses housing, employment, education, social welfare and political participation. In contrast, achieving cultural, interactive and identificational integration is more challenging since they are linked to an individual's internal sense of belonging.

In the case of Yinchuan, basic structural integration as the first step into the city was not well established because of the unsustainable and homogenous policy design that did not adequately address the needs of specific groups, for example, illiterate or elderly people or those from ethnic minorities. Consequently, these groups have integrated poorly, which has led to further social class stratification and separation from their urban peers over the 15-year integration process.

8.2.2 Employment as a key factor of social integration being under-addressed by the displacement policy

The thesis has demonstrated that monetary compensation is only a short-term, early solution as a safety net for evicted farmers. From a long-term perspective, employment status plays a decisive role in rural-urban migrants attaining social capital and achieving social integration. The experience of displaced farmers highlights that stable employment status creates a solid foundation for city newcomers to acquire income and assets, which contributes to the formation of social class stratification. Moreover, employment is necessary to build human capital and mental and physical connections with the host city, which leads to a greater sense of belonging in the city. Compared to participants not employed in the labour market, employed respondents demonstrated a higher degree of integration into the host society and were more likely to accept their new identities as urbanites. This conclusion echoes employment as the key aspect of social integration in Heckmann's (2005) framework.

The findings suggested most residents in Community A have been able to find a job in the city. However, during the 15-year period of displacement, most residents over 45 were mainly limited to casual or labour-intensive jobs that did not provide long-term security or social insurance because of the lack of contract. Chapter 6 revealed the types of working contract affected the sense of belonging of the migrants. Employees

with formal job contracts offering all the standard types of insurance were more likely to describe themselves as urban people compared to casual employees without contracts. This disparity is mainly due to the long-lasting rural-urban social welfare gap that deprives rural people of state-endowed benefits, making a job with social insurance a symbol of urban identity (Fan, 2002). Thus, the transformation from a farmer identity to a formal employee in the city represents a social identity upgrade.

These findings demonstrated that the construction of an urban identity is intricately linked to the complex social meanings assigned by the politicians and social elites linked to urban space, just as the 'representation of space' Lefebvre (1991) highlighted. These meanings can a exert long-term impact on an individual's understanding of their own self-identity (Qian and Zhu, 2014).

The above findings improve the social integration framework proffered by Heckmann (2005) by providing additional subgroups to the 'employment' category in the structural integration domain, for example, employment status, job sectors and job-related social insurance. Based upon this, a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of employment on forming migrants' sense of belonging can be gleaned in the Chinese context.

Furthermore, the findings in Chapter 6 stressed that unsustainable employment support from government agencies resulted in unsatisfactory employment status and migrants' difficulties with social integration. Employment in the city was no longer directly arranged by the government as it was in the 1980s. Instead, it is governed by the market, therefore, one's employability is largely related to one's professional skills and educational background. The lack of formal education and professional training hindered city newcomers' ability to access higher-skilled jobs to advance their careers.

Additionally, the resettlement policies aimed to provide employment support did not offer enough guidance and information about channels for job hunting or accessing professional training. This limits an individual's possibility of entering an advanced job sector and gaining necessary upward mobility. Therefore, it is argued that the present resettlement policy, which emphasises direct economic support over skills and education, has resulted in city newcomers' fundamental difficulties in integrating fully into the host society.

8.2.3 The lack of support for the most vulnerable group

The various post-displacement lives that the interviewees revealed suggest that the path of social integration and the experiences of those who have been displaced cannot be oversimplified or generalised as universal or attributed to a homogeneous group of 'displaced farmers'. Chapter 6 highlighted the individual differences in socioeconomic status, cultural attainment and self-identity, emphasising the significance of acknowledging and sympathising with these differences to promote a feeling of belonging in the host community. Specifically, the thesis identified those most but neglected by policy as the unemployed, illiterate casual workers, middle-aged couples with a double financial burden through supporting the older and younger generations, and Hui ethnic minorities with deep religious customs.

The thesis showed that the burden of high living costs in the city became the main reason for resettlers to develop a sense of uncertainty, leading to anxiety regarding how to make a living without living off the land. This issue was particularly pronounced among the middle-aged and retired groups. The middle-aged group was found to be under pressure to pay for both the care of the elderly and education for the next generation. The older generation did not receive pension payments because of flaws in the urban pension scheme. Both groups experienced considerable stress and ongoing difficulties coping with the costs of living in the city during some or all stages of the displacement process, highlighting the need for greater attention to be paid to policy design for future relocation imposed by state-induced urbanisation.

Furthermore, despite comprising one-third of the migrant population, the Hui people became a group rarely mentioned in displacement policies. Their specific needs were not taken into account after they resettled in the city. Policymakers adopted a cultural assimilation framework that encouraged a uni-directional homogenisation process where migrants gradually erased their ethnic minority identities in order to assimilate into the host society (Castles and Miller, 2009). To some extent, this policy direction deprived Hui migrants of their cultural customs and characteristics, for example, regular prayer and wearing ethnic clothing. The social and longer-term impacts of sacrificing distinct religious practices for a certain type of integration are still uncertain and should be further explored in future research.

Overall, my interviews show that these one-size-fits-all resettlement policies neglected a group of evicted farmers who were most in need. The current policy's position takes the perspective of the recipient society and fails to address the different needs of those

displaced who face challenges with city life. This finding calls for a complete overhaul of the current policy and allows for genuine participation of those displaced in shaping policies from the outset of the process.

8.2.4 Integration as an intergenerational process

Social integration gaps were evident across the different age groups in Chapter 6, which shows that social integration is a long-term and intergenerational process (Penninx and Martniello, 2004). The thesis found that younger migrants of working age (especially below 45 years old) and those educated in the city were more likely to develop a closer physical and mental attachment to the city and thereby achieve a better integration status than their older counterparts. A better integration status of the younger generation promoted their parents or even grandparents to build more social bonds and a stronger affiliation with the city. For instance, taking care of grandchildren and picking them up from school helped the older generation to expand their social networks in the city. Such kinship support filled the gaps of the absent policy in supporting the social integration of the older generation.

This finding again highlighted employment as the vital aspect in forming a sense of connection and adapting to urban life. Specifically, the employed resettlers had a greater chance to interact with urban locals and consequently, their attachment to the city is non-migrant oriented and spans social class. In contrast, retired and unemployed migrants tend to form attachments to the city based on connections with other migrants and their families, which results in partial inclusion and a lesser sense of belonging in the city. Additionally, the older, unemployed group hardly felt a sense of commitment and achievement from work, which should be one of the main ways by which to realise self-value and social value (Heckmann, 2005). It also explained why, in contrast to the younger group, the older cohort constantly recalled memories of the village. This finding echoes the argument of Penninx and Martiniello (2004) that employment not only allows migrants to remain in the host society but is also a crucial element for acquiring cognitive, cultural and social competence as well as social recognition.

8.2.5 The formation of subculture groups

The research findings in Chapter 6 suggested that individuals who faced challenges in establishing a strong connection with the city tended to retain their customary rural

beliefs, values and norms. Consequently, displaced farmers who remained attached to their rural culture gradually formed subcultural groups that coexisted within the dominant urban social system and culture (Fischer, 1995). This distinct rural culture based on acquaintanceships and customs was closely linked with the rural land, which was different from the urban context. Consequently, retaining the rural lifestyle was sometimes viewed as 'deviant' or 'unconventional' in urban communities. The study confirmed that after 15 years of displacement, differences in behaviour and norms between urban locals and resettlers persisted, leading to the formation of subculture groups within the city.

Chapters 5 and 6 stressed that the defects in policy designs played a crucial role in the formation of a subcultural group in Community A. Compared to research on rural-urban migrants in other Chinese cities, displaced farmers in Yinchuan experienced similar cultural marginalisation (Young,1990; Qian and He, 2012). The government's sudden and non-negotiable decision to relocate rural migrants resulted in significant culture shock. Furthermore, subsequent resettlement policies have not provided adequate support for them to effectively adapt to urban culture or establish social and cultural connections to the city.

Furthermore, the intact displacement mode the government applied, which relocates an entire village or multiple villages to the same community, has significantly restricted the resettlers' opportunities to form social connections with local residents in comparison to the scattered resettlement mode that relocates villagers to different urban communities. Such arrangements acted as a catalyst to build an intra-migrant circle and facilitated the formation of a rural-based subculture group within the dominant urban culture (Fischer, 1995).

The vulnerability of resettlers in the face of capitalism has been worsened by their marginalisation in the cultural realm. Throughout this thesis, it was observed that rural culture in Community A has remained resilient, attracting individuals with similar cultural backgrounds to relocate, while more affluent families sought to distance themselves from the 'outdated' rural resettlement community and join upscale, modern communities. Consequently, a certain level of class stratification has emerged between those who departed the resettlement community and those who remained, leading to a shift from spatial stratification to identity stratification over time.

However, in contrast with some existing literature that indicated subculture groups impede migrants' social integration (Li et al. 2016; Zhang and Qian, 2020), the thesis identified, to some extent, that maintaining rural culture and lifestyle in the urban context facilitated integration and social harmony, by providing a win-win relation that the government expected. On the one hand, neoliberalism intentionally creates and reinforces social class disparities to maintain the social relations that benefits groups with power and capital (Harvey, 2014). Under the 'growth-first' development ideology in China, social class disparities are necessary to facilitate neoliberalism as rural migrants fill gaps in the labour market by taking labour-intensive jobs in the city (Shin, 2016). The existence of subculture groups helps a cheap workforce to settle in the city.

On the other hand, the resettlement community has functioned both as a 'buffer zone' for urban newcomers by providing affordable housing options to help them adapt to the urban environment, and as a 'comfort zone' that allows migrants to maintain their rural lifestyle and traditions. Within the social class hierarchy, everyone can find a place that suits them in the city. In this sense, it is not the subculture itself that hinders the integration of the relocated community into the city but rather the government's implementation of a neoliberal mode of space production, which purposely creates spatial and social identity disparities that result in cultural and social segregation.

8.3 Contesting rights to the city in contemporary China

Previous research has explored various approaches such as citizenship theory, contentious politics, social movement studies and resource mobilisation to provide valuable perspectives for understanding the mechanisms, processes, and outcomes of grassroots grievances and state-society conflicts (Herold, 2011; Zhu, 2014; Cress and Snow, 2016; Darling, 2017; Fu, 2017; Islar and Irgil, 2018; Qian, 2020). However, these perspectives overlook the fundamental role of space in shaping unjust spatial production and uneven spatial patterns which lead to confrontations between the state and citizens. The right to the city theory proposed by Lefebvre (1991) and Harvey (2012) provides a crucial spatial perspective which aims to contest unjust spatial production and social relations associated with spatial patterns. This theoretical lens is instrumental in analysing space-related activism in the context of China's rapid urbanisation.

By examining the interactions between displaced residents and various levels of government agencies during three waves of resistance within the background of Chinese authoritarianism, this section uncovered a cycle of tightening and relaxing of state control over civil society. This reflects the shifting of state-society relations. Although state power continues to dominate civil society in China regardless of the rise of the market and various social forces, new types of citizenship and residents' growing awareness of their rights as well their pioneering practices to contest substantive citizenship have promoted the development of civil society. This requires the rethinking of the grassroots governance strategies and the future of civil society in China.

8.3.1 The evolving state-society relations

The thesis argues that state-society relations in China have experienced significant changes, moving from being antagonistic to cooperative in the past 15 years. Moreover, recent policies regarding resettlement and integration signified a shift from a purely economic-centred framework that excluded public participation towards a more inclusive approach that incorporates public opinion in the policymaking process. For instance, the new compensation policy released in 2010 (Policy 15) stipulated that a public hearing is compulsory for any land expropriation. This regulated and safeguarded the public's right to information, participation, supervision and appeal. This change has been driven by a variety of factors, including economic progress, institutional improvements, greater public awareness of rights and ongoing social activism. Together, these elements are gradually shaping the evolution of the relationship between the state and society in China.

Chapter 7 suggested that the first wave of resistance (2002-2004) demonstrated a confrontational relationship between the displaced group and the governments. During this period, the relationship between the state and society in China was characterised by asymmetries in power, with a strong state and weak civil society (Friedman, 2014). This power imbalance was embedded in an imbalanced spatial pattern, with rural villages being subordinated and urban space placed in a superior position within the remnants of the dominant Hukou system. The deprivation of rural people in terms of forced migration and poor compensation led to displaced farmers' antagonistic attitudes towards authority. This fuelled confrontation against different government bodies. In response, the local government adopted a 'zero tolerance' approach to

collective protest by intercepting, arresting and detaining protesters, while central government either knowingly or unknowingly turned a blind eye to collective activism related to land expropriation, or left the responsibility with local authorities. In this context, unsupportive governments combined with a lack of transparency in policymaking (see Chapter 7, section 7.2.1) and a lack of accountability for abuses of power in policy implementation (see Chapter 5, section 5.3.5) escalated the dissent of displaced farmers, resulting in conflict in the state-society relationship at the beginning of the 21st century.

In the second decade of the 21st century, although the fundamental unequal social relationship remained unchanged amidst the prevailing emphasis on capital accumulation, the tension between society and the state started to show signs of relaxation because the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) initiated political reform to improve governance (Lee, 2010). With regard to local-level governance, the residents' committees started to play an increasingly important role in softening the conflict between governments and the public, resolving urban residents' issues and mediating between the higher levels of government authority and the general public (Ngeow, 2012). Centrally, new leadership in the Jinping Xi era, from 2012 onwards, has prompted a series of political institutional systemic reforms, such as the anti-corruption movement, making government affairs public and accepting of supervision from the people's congresses, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and the general public (Howell and Pringle, 2019). These actions together contributed to an overall smoother state-society relationship.

From 2015 onwards, decreasing collective resistance and radical confrontation during the third wave of resistance suggested a more relaxed state-society relationship even though the authoritarian political default remains unchanged. In the political domain, different levels of government agencies have adjusted the existing political system to adapt to new situations (such as accepting Weibo as a way of collecting public opinions to addressing public concerns) and pay special attention to socially marginalised groups, such as the unemployed, ethnic minorities, farmers and the transient population in China, to resolve their practical problems (He et al. 2010; He and Lin, 2015). Additionally, the diffusion of central power and the flattening of bureaucratic hierarchies make local leaders much more sensitive and responsive to political demands from local residents (Shan and Yang, 2016).

The easing of the state-society relationship also revealed how economic advancement has impacted the dynamic between the state and society in China. The public's different strategies in claiming rights in the three waves of resistance signified that both state-level and individual-level economic growth played a significant role in increasing the public's overall trust in the government's governance under President Xi. This contributed to the relaxation of the state-society relationship in post-reform China. This finding is consistent with Harvey's (2005) argument that China's economic reforms aimed to accumulate wealth and improve technological capabilities, which would enhance the government's ability to manage internal dissent. It also supports Qian and He's (2012) assertion that Chinese political authority has shifted from an ideology-focused state to a regime that emphasises the management of economic development to reaffirm its political legitimacy.

Furthermore, economic progress has indeed contributed to the growth of civil society in China, with the rise of NGOs and SOs serving as examples. To some extent, this expansion of the social sphere has allowed for greater diversity of viewpoints and opinions from the public, which helps to balance the power of the state in specific areas.

8.3.2 Active citizenship and restricted civil society

The findings of this thesis suggest that Chinese civil society has undoubtedly grown in the past 15 years and the country will eventually demand further political liberalisation (Islar and Irgil, 2018). Chapter 7 indicated that residents' awareness of their rights and practices of citizenship in the post-displacement era have shifted from claiming material-based rights in the early stage of resettlement to seeking civic and political participation by influencing community decision-making processes. Such transformations cannot be achieved solely through economic reforms, but also require residents to have a better understanding of their citizenship and to take a more active role as urban citizens (Alpermann, 2013; Qian, 2020).

Especially during the second and third waves of resistance, the activities displaced people initiated, such as being actively involved in the process of designing the ideal community and selecting community leaders themselves, demonstrated active citizenship, concerned with empowering citizens, engaging them in decision-making processes and ultimately cultivating an ethos of civility (Qian, 2020). Their resistance

(in both radical and moderate forms) signifies that citizens have contributed to civil input and are taking on greater community and civic responsibilities within the city. As well as challenging their marginality in the economic sphere, residents in Community A gradually took actions to reverse their inferior position in the decision-making sphere. This is a positive indication of the emergence of civil society in China.

Moreover, the resettlers' attempts at civic and political participation imply that active citizenship is no longer merely the preserve of the middle-class (Sun, 2014). Previous research has shown that the Chinese middle class has engaged in increasing civic and political activity (Chen and Lu, 2011; Miao, 2016; Wu, 2016). This thesis further indicated that city newcomers who have passively suffered social stratification under the impacts of the neoliberal economic paradigm have now become actively involved in the process of contestation for full citizenship by voicing their social and political claims. Their resistance implies that they do not regard political participation as top-down with citizens solely as recipients. Instead, the right is viewed as a type of procedural goods that is built up through ongoing interactions between the public and the state (Qian, 2020).

Nevertheless, the question remains as to what extent people's claims can affect final political decisions within the current authoritarian political context in China. Teets (2013) argued that China is experiencing a transformation from being a 'totalitarian authoritarianism' to being some kind of 'consultative authoritarianism', which allows more operational autonomy and public participation in decision-making under the unchangeable CCP leadership. The thesis found that the effectiveness of such consultative authoritarianism in involving public opinion is still restricted.

On the one hand, the neoliberal mode of space production remains the dominant ideology of Chinese economic development and the accompanying social relations continue to reinforce unequal social power and limited access to political decision-making (Qian and He, 2012; Qiaoan, 2020). The visions of social elites who control space and manipulate power are more readily accepted and implemented than the ideas of those without power and capital, especially under the context of limited institutional channels allowing the public to have a voice and participate in decision-making.

On the other hand, previous research and my findings both indicate that the state is imposing more sophisticated controls over civil society, such as establishing a residents' committee to create a façade of participation, which allows for superficial autonomy and restricted political participation (Ngeow, 2012). This finding suggests that the state encourages civil society only within its existing political framework to satisfy new demands from different levels of society and to maintain political stability. Thus, the beneficial aspects of civil society are diminished to prevent the potential for the overthrow of the current political regime (Teets, 2012; Wu, 2017). In this context, the extent to which ordinary people can attain real and meaningful involvement in the political decision-making process and how much influence their opinions can have are still questionable.

As China is still in its infancy with regard to building civil society, the concept of civil society has multiple meanings in China's unique political context. Therefore, researchers need to carefully examine what factors limit the practice of active citizenship in China. The claims for political rights and civic participation that the residents proposed are still restricted in the domains of influencing community decision-making and the civic affairs related to community issues. Moreover, there is still a lack of evidence that residents in resettlement communities have engaged in or strive for political decision-making beyond day-to-day community affairs. This narrow understanding of the broad and plural meanings of active citizenship and civil society restrains and encumbers citizenship practices.

To radically remove the barriers which impede the formation of active citizenship and civil society in China, it is necessary to return to the spatial viewpoint, in particular, the theoretical arguments of Lefebvre (1991) and Harvey (2003). They claimed that rights are earned by living in a space and should be of a collective nature. This thesis argues, in this vein, that the abolition of the Hukou system cannot secure the empowerment of the relocated group or bring about equal power relations as it is unlikely to fundamentally shake the power of the dominant social groups who represent the pro-capital modes of space production. To challenge the power relations which have marginalised migrants in societal economic, political and culture structures, it is necessary to overturn the growth-first mode of space production and challenge the dominant political discourse which commodified space to urbanise China.

8.4. The future of civil society in China

In addition to emerging civil society, the study identified three agents that potentially challenge social injustice and promote social integration among different groups in contemporary China. These agents include NGOs, residents' committees and social media. NGOs work in the sphere out of the direct control of the state to address social issues; residents' committees represent a trade-off between democratisation and government control; and the widespread use of social media to address public grievances indicates a demand for broader civic participation in decision-making. These three agents herald the future of a more inclusive society in contemporary China.

8.4.1 Residents committees and NGOs under the authoritarian context

Scholars have critiqued China's political system as lacking democracy (see Chapter 2, section 2.2.4) and thus 'democratisation' is a commonly used concept instead of 'democracy' to describe the ongoing process of political reforms promoting democratic practices in China (Lee, 2010; Ngeow, 2014; Ci, 2019). In China, the state carefully distinguishes 'state body' (capitalist/socialist) from 'political body' (the governmental form), so political reform is intra-party reform aimed at creating modern governance under the current Chinese Communist Party's leading socialist system (Ngeow, 2014: 99). The reform intends to introduce and develop democratic features within the existing political regime (Zheng and Lye, 2011). Thus, Chinese-style democracy is fundamentally different from its Western liberal counterpart, which is characterised by the separation of powers, competitive elections for leaders and a multi-party system (Lee, 2010).

Residents' committees are unique in China's authoritarian context and they have failed to bring about democracy in China (Wu, 2016). Theoretically, residents' committees are constructed to promote urban grassroots democracy in four areas, including democratic elections, democratic decision-making, democratic management and democratic supervision (Ngeow, 2012). However, in practice, these four basic elements of grassroots democracy have not entirely lived up to that promise in the authoritarian context in China (Howell and Pringle, 2019). Although they mediate between the government and the people to resolve conflict in Yinchuan, the findings in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 suggest that relationships between residents' committees

and the local governments (especially the sub-district office) are hierarchical. The hierarchical relationships made it difficult for residents' committees to achieve autonomy and democratic independence from government control. Moreover, residents' committees fall short of representing and protecting residents' interests as the committee leaders are delegated by higher-level authorities rather than elected by the people (illustrated in section 7.2.1).

Therefore, this thesis indicates that residents' committees do not represent a pathway towards democratic progress in China but rather function as entities that extend the state's reach into every community and ultimately undermine democratic principles and autonomy. Residents' committees fail to represent democratic social relations due to their intrinsic government-led nature and residents' committees represent the unjust social relationships shaped by the political regime's manoeuvrings and realpolitik. Consequently, there are hardly any radical political claims put forward through residents' committees which ultimately challenge the government's unjust spatial policy and the misconduct of government officers. As Lefebvre (1991) and Harvey (2003) articulated, the goal of social justice is not the equal distribution of goods but the inclusive involvement of all sectors in political decision-making. The construction of residents' committees falls short of achieving this goal as they do not promote a truly democratic and inclusive decision-making process.

Similar to the role of residents' committees, the thesis argues it would be an overstatement to portray NGOs as a crucial force in enacting structural reform or as an instrument of civil society in China's authoritarian context. The findings in Chapter 7 (section 7.3) suggest the predicament of the role of NGOs in China is twofold. Firstly, in addition to funding shortages and professional personnel scarcities, NGOs lack independence. Government-operated NGOs in China differ fundamentally from the independent NGOs found in developed countries (Naím, 2007). Consequently, Chinese NGOs have limited bargaining power with government authorities and encounter obstacles in promoting the practice of substantive citizenship and making an inclusive, liberal society (Franceschini, 2014).

Secondly, the efficacy of current NGOs is constrained by the public's limited understanding and acceptance of them. This was evident in the case study city of this thesis. The impact of one-party authoritarianism and the state-monopolised public service provision limits Chinese citizens' acceptance of organisations without the

'state label'. This study (section 7.3) reveals that city newcomers in Yinchuan still do not understand NGOs and have limited access to their services. Even residents who have accessed services provided by NGOs were more inclined to take advantage of the free services offered without having a clear understanding of the background and purpose of these organisations, let alone regarding them as actors who may be capable of bringing about structure improvements. Thus, the functions of NGOs as a catalyst of political change and citizenship transformation (noted by Lee (2008) and Jakimów (2017)) are almost invisible in the case of Yinchuan.

Furthermore, the thesis highlights the importance of considering the regional context and the scale of NGO development when assessing their effectiveness. The differences in the effectiveness of NGOs in different cities suggest that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to NGO development in China. My fieldwork suggests that the delayed urbanisation process in Yinchuan has impeded the development of NGOs, in contrast to first-tier cities that experienced earlier urbanisation and have seen more growth in this sector. Furthermore, NGOs in Yinchuan have a limited scope of services, and there is no NGO that caters specifically to the needs of internal migrants in Yinchuan or even in Ningxia. This situation is in stark contrast to the thriving NGOs in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, where the largest influx of population in China is being accommodated and where established various NGOs that specifically target internal migrants (Jakimów, 2021). The disparity in the development of NGOs across different regions highlights how the level of economic development in a region can limit/promote the emergence of civil forces with some level of independence from state influence.

8.4.2 Social media and Chinese-style democratisation

The widespread use of social media can be seen as one of the processes of democratisation that has occurred in China in the recent decade. My fieldwork and other research has suggested that an increasing number of Chinese citizens use social media, particularly Weibo, which is a government-approved platform, to engage in civic affairs management, unveil misconduct by local government officials, voice their apprehensions regarding political and civic issues and even offer valuable policy recommendations (Herold, 2011; Sun, 2014; Xinyuan, 2016; CStradiotto, 2018；Lu, 2020). This tendency has become more pronounced since the government released

the White Paper in 2010 to formally encourage this practice[42]. Since then, social media has played a significant role in promoting open discussions and cultivating active citizenship, especially against the background of the absence of adequate and effective bottom-up communication channels and the mainstream media's inability to remain neutral (analysed in Chapter 5, section 5.1.2 and 5.3.4). It has also contributed to the growth of civic awareness through its ability to combine top-down reforms and bottom-up surveillance (Lu, 2020).

The central government's encouragement of civic and political participation through the Internet indicates the authority started to regard democracy as a 'supra-class universal value' rather than a class-based rule (Lee, 2010: 87). It could potentially boost broader public engagement in involving civil affairs beyond the community level (Xinyuan, 2016). Additionally, officially approving the supervision of government officials by the people through the Internet has helped to mitigate inefficiencies in the lengthy administrative hierarchy and fix the misalignments in communication between the government and the public. Furthermore, the supervision of local officials by the public and inclusive online discussions of civic affairs have compelled the local authorities to respond to local concerns transparently and promptly (Herold, 2011). The success of the public contesting for better indoor heating in the third wave of resistance suggested the power of online civic participation.

This thesis asserts that social media platforms can be instrumental in empowering people, particularly the marginalised groups in China, by providing equal opportunities for every citizen to have a voice online. This can serve as an initial step towards building a democratic and inclusive society in China, and it may help to bridge the gap between the theoretical 'rights to participation' and the actual practice.

However, the right to participation that Lefebvre (1991) and Harvey (2003, 2014) noted is far from realised in China. Involving people in decision-making remains at procedural participation and the CCP controls all political activities in China and exerts

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[42] As a key milestone, the government *White Paper* published in June 2010 noted that the central government approved the Internet as a platform of communication between ordinary citizens and the highest levels of government (Herold, 2011).

a wide-ranging influence on all aspects of society. Therefore, Chinese society remains at an early stage of democratisation – the democratic distribution of social income – and far from the later stages with regard to the radical democratisation of political decision-making (Block and Unger, 2000). As Harvey (2003) noted, the 'later stage' will not happen within the current institutional system. Instead, it needs revolutionary change with respect to decentralising state power with universal political participatory institutional frameworks where all people have the collective power to reshape space, values and social ethics and reverse the dominant power relations that lead to social injustice (Harvey, 2003).

Based on the concept of 'the right to the city' (Lefebvre, 1991; Harvey, 2003), the thesis proposes two pathways leading to more just social relations in China. From a top-down perspective, pluralism in politics ensures that every group is represented in shaping and negotiating social relations. Such pluralism emphasises the right to participation, which includes the right to equal participation in political decision-making about what space citizens want to live in and what social relations residents desire. From a bottom-up perspective, a collective identity across different social classes and group labels, such as farmers, rural migrants, laid-offs, urbanites, women and ethnic minorities, should be enacted. A shared group consciousness must be socially constructed to face the entrenched system which produces unequal social relations (Harvey, 2003; Smith, 2000; Qian and He, 2012). The goal of this spirit of alignment is to push equal social relations into the various spheres of urban life from where they were originally excluded (Harvey, 2003; Williams, 1989).

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the findings and existing literature, this chapter has examined four main themes: social injustice in land-centred urbanisation, the path of social integration, contesting the right to the city in China, and the future of civil society in China. Firstly, the chapter highlighted three misalignments between the central government, local governments and the people in terms of value, governance and communication. These misalignments led to fundamental social injustices amidst land-centred urbanisation.

More importantly, the chapter reconfirmed the central role of space in producing the economy-driven pro-growth coalition and land-centred urbanisation in China.

Lefebvre's (1991) 'spatial triad' was fully reflected in the urbanisation process in China. 'The representations of space' was tactically applied by politicians and other actors to reshape people's 'lived space' and consolidate specific social relations which disfranchise rural migrants in favour of capital flow. The resettlers demonstrated their 'spatial practices' by consistently negotiating and resisting the government's spatial practices to win back their rights in the city. In this sense, it is not the political ideologies of a state, capitalism or socialism, that produce social injustice, as both forms have resulted in social injustice and the marginalisation of certain groups. Instead, it is the rationale behind capital-driven space production that has given rise to distinct forms of injustice.

In identifying the uneven path of social integration for displaced farmers in China, it is apparent that structural, cultural and interactive integration are key to generating identificational integration, and this is consistent with Heckmann's (2005) argument. Additionally, this thesis revealed that the development of valid resettlement policies in areas such as housing, employment, education, social welfare and political participation could enhance structural integration. However, the lack of sustainable policy design has hindered resettlers from establishing a strong level of structural integration. Moreover, the 'one-size-fits-all' approach of resettlement policies has failed to adequately address the needs of specific groups, such as the illiterate, elderly or ethnic minorities, thereby impeding their ability to achieve cultural, interactive and identificational integration, which are more closely related to an individual's internal sense of belonging.

To some extent, the lack of cultural, interactive and identificational integration has contributed to the formation of subculture groups, leading to a new form of social class stratification. In Community A, these subculture groups have acted as a "buffer zone" for urban newcomers, providing them with affordable housing options and intra-migrant networks to navigate city life. Simultaneously, these groups have also served as a "comfort zone" for migrants to maintain their rural lifestyle and traditions in an urban environment. The emergence and consolidation of these subculture groups reflect the resettlers' response to the challenges brought about by displacement, with significant implications for social class stratification and broader urban dynamics. This phenomenon illustrates that displacement not only affects individuals but can also have community-level and even country-level consequences.

Through analysing the rights-defending activities initiated by displaced farmers over the 15 years, the thesis recognised a relaxation of state-society relations and an emerging civil society in China. The transformation from claiming material-based rights to civic and political participation by shaping an ideal community for themselves implied that residents better understand their citizenship as urban residents (Qian, 2020). However, under China's authoritarian political context, to what degree citizens can genuinely participate in the political decision-making process, and how much their opinions can influence outcomes, remains a moot point.

Finally, both NGOs and residents' committees fall short in promoting active citizenship and democracy in China due to the penetration of state power. The experience of the displaced farmers showed that social media has played a more effective role in cultivating civic awareness and garnering public participation. The wide use of social media can be seen as an initial step towards building a democratic civil society in China, as it allows every citizen equal opportunity to express their opinions. Moreover, it offers a practical means for realising the theoretical concept of the 'right to participation' in people's daily lives.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

Introduction

This thesis has sought to examine the long-term impact of land expropriation and displacement on resettled farmers in a city in northwest part of China, and to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how urban expansion has engendered a profound human impact on displaced farmers in China. By conducting an in-depth case study on the experiences of rural residents forcibly displaced into a resettlement community in Yinchuan, it offers comprehensive insights into the various dimensions of life changes that displaced farmers underwent over a 15 year-span. Moreover, the thesis sheds light on the long-term impact of displacement, not only at the individual level but also at the community and state levels.

This concluding chapter starts by introducing the key findings of the thesis by explicitly addressing the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. This is followed by A consideration and drawing together of the theoretical contributions of the research, and then the implications for the policy making process and policy more generally. Finally, the thesis concludes by addressing the limitations of this research and by outlining future research possibilities.

9.1 Key findings and empirical contributions of the thesis

This thesis has provided an in-depth analysis of the production of urban space and its impact on relocated people in Yinchuan during the first two decades of the 21st century. It found that the government-led displacement which was designed for boosting the local economy has had far-reaching social and human-related impacts that extend beyond a spatial transformation. The displacement has fundamentally altered every aspect of the lives of the resettled population and has produced long-lasting and diverse effects on their personal development path and their integration into the host city.

This research has contributed to and extended debates in urban and migration studies by drawing together elements of three different theoretical approaches, including the production of space, the right to the city and social integration, and embedding these within empirical evidence and personal experiences in order to fully understand the

complexity and multi-stage processes and impacts of displacement and resettlement on rural migrants in China. The incorporation of these theoretical debates not only illuminated the rational, the dynamics and the outcomes of displacement, but also justified the use of Western theories in examining urbanisation in China's authoritarian context, highlighting the central-local hierarchy and the local government's entrepreneurship as the distinct features of the neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics in shaping the urbanisation process in China. Furthermore, empirical evidence on the human experience of rural-urban displacement, as well as interviews with the key stakeholders suggested the evolving state-society relations, emerging active citizenship, and the increasing awareness of rights among the internal migrants, pointing to potential directions for civil society and citizenship development in China.

The contributions of this research extend beyond a case study in Yinchuan and have broader applications for understanding the influence of spatial change on migrant's life. Specifically, this research has situated Lefebvre's spatial dialectic within the context of China's unprecedented urbanisation against the market-oriented economic reform which has been largely influenced by the Western neoliberal paradigm. The growth-first development approach adopted by the central and local governments of China was identified as the underlying force which led to prioritising exchange value of land over the use value of land. The pro-growth coalitions formed between the local government and the local estate developers have benefited from the land-centred urbanisation, while the majority of displaced farmers have been excluded from the significant profits generated by sacrificing their farming land. This finding can be extended to other cases to analyse the unjust social relations underlying the capital-driven production of space.

The thesis provided valuable insights into the subjective perceptions of the displaced individual's living experience and sense of belonging by considering various demographic characteristics, including age, gender, ethnicity, employment and household financial background. The findings revealed the impact of displacement on individuals and households has been diverse, long-lasting and far-reaching. Chapter 6 uncovered some positive changes that displaced residents experienced, including improvements in their housing and amenities, greater access to various employment opportunities, and increased potential for their children to attain higher levels of education. However, many facets of the individuals' lives were negatively impacted

upon by the displacement, for example, the financial difficulties for families, limitations on accessing jobs in state sectors or with a formal working contract, as well as restrictions on intra-migrant social networks, all of which have hindered their further integration into the host city. These challenges faced by the resettlers were found especially concerning for certain vulnerable groups, including those with low levels of education or skills, elderly individuals without access to pensions, and Hui ethnic minority people. Their marginalised position has not attracted additional policy attention under the 'one-size-fit all' resettlement policies, which led to the difficulties for these specific groups of residents in building cultural, interactive, and identificational integration in the city.

My findings in Chapter 6 also indicated that the challenges in culture, interactive and identificational integration have resulted in the formation of subculture groups in the city. The subculture group acts as a 'buffer zone' for both city newcomers who face similar marginalisation in social and economic spheres and for displaced farmers who wish to maintain their rural lifestyles and traditions in an urban setting. The emergence of these social groups also reflects the strategies employed by resettled individuals to adapt to urban life. Such phenomenon has significant implications for broader urban community construction and social class stratification, indicating that displacement has not only created individual-level impact, but also generated community-level and even country-level consequences.

Moreover, this thesis addressed an important lacuna by providing empirical data for understanding the evolution of rights awareness among migrants with rural origins in in China. Two such transformations were identified in Chapter 7 from the three waves of right-defending activities initiated by residents in Community A. The first transformation pertained to the state-society relations experienced from tension to relaxation during the first two decades of the 21st century, while the second transformation related to citizens' increased rights awareness, from claiming material-based rights to the right to participate in civic management and decision-making processes. Both transformations suggested a higher-level of social integration has been gradually achieved among the resettlers. What's more, the discussion in Chapter 8 argued China remains at an early stage of building the civil society in the unchallengeable one-party authoritarian context, and the country will eventually demand further political liberalisation.

Finally, this thesis presented evidence that the Chinese government and its various tiers and institutions of governances, including different government agencies and residents' committees, were still the dominant actors providing various public services to urban residents in the post-displacement era. Even stakeholders outside the direct control of the government and its various agencies, such as NGOs, were still constricted to an inherently limited role in providing services to rural migrants or making up for the gaps of the current 'all-encompassing' government. Within China's authoritarian context, although residents' committees have played increasingly crucial roles in encouraging public engagement in participating civic affairs compared with the earlier stages of displacement, they are still constrained from making any substantial structural changes that could support a democratic society with political liberalisation and autonomy. In contrast, a flourishing social media goes some way towards cultivating civic awareness and mitigating the misalignments caused by insufficient central to local power supervision and a lack of bottom-up communication channels. Additionally, Weibo, as a platform through which the public express their concerns, helps to offset the lack of democratic participation system in the current political landscape of China.

9.2 Theoretical contribution

This thesis has employed an innovative theoretical framework combining the theories of 'the production of space' (Lefebvre, 1991), 'the right to the city' (Lefebvre, 1991; Harvey, 2003) and 'social integration' (Heckmann, 2005) to illuminate the longer term, temporal and multi-stage processes and impacts of rural land expropriation and displacement amidst China's market-oriented economy reform. The first two theories highlighted the importance of adopting a spatial perspective to comprehend the social injustice of displacement, emphasising the formation of institutional and practical challenges faced by the rural migrants in integrating into the host city. The incorporation of 'social integration' theory into this analysis has introduced a more micro, individual-level understandings of the impacts of space production, which has largely been addressed from a macroscopic perspective by Lefebvre and Harvey. In addition, integrating the three theories into one framework has provided a spatial perspective to the existing research relating to migrant's rights, which has been a notable gap.

This research not only contributes to constructing a holistic theoretical framework, but also to the enrichment of the theories themselves through their application to and the production of original empirical data in the Chinese urbanisation context. The thesis justified that Lefebvre's (1991) 'the production of space' theory, which critiques space production, capital accumulation, and social relations in capitalist societies, can also be used to analyse land-based urbanisation in the Chinese socialist context. The thesis developed this theory by highlighting the strong role of the state in manipulating spatial intervention, which differs from Lefebvre's original theory that emphasises market forces in the Western context. This significant role of the state suggests a unique 'double-engine' mode of urbanisation in China, distinct from the more orthodox neoliberal paradigm in which the state should have only minimal control over the operation of the market (Weber, 2018).

Moreover, this study provided concrete illustrations to explore the theoretical concepts of 'spatial triad' (Lefebvre, 1991), thus extending its scope beyond the abstract realm. The case of Yinchuan identified that 'the representation of space' has played a dominant role in rationalising the unjust spatial patterns (such as the imbalances between rural villages and the city, and the disparities between high-end and low-end communities) and reproducing the accompanied unjust social relations in order to facilitate the land expropriation and reconstruction. Specifically, Chapter 5 revealed the 'Big Yinchuan' image was a manifestation of 'the representations of space', which was conceptualised by politicians, real estate developers and urban planners with the aim of attaining exchange value for the pro-growth coalition and keeping pace with the whole country's rapid urbanisation. This 'conceived space' transcended the geographical delineations of 'rural' and 'urban', and became political rhetoric that shaped the public's perception of urbanisation and the desired modern life. In contrast, the rural village and the resettlement community represented the 'lived space' or 'representational space', where residents experienced their daily lives. This space is an embodiment of the residents' cultural values and their perception of it as their home.

The 'spatial practices', in this thesis, are demonstrated by the residents' continuous negotiations and resistance against the government's spatial interventions, particularly in the three waves of resistance during the early, middle, and post stages of displacement, as analysed in Chapter 7. Due to the disparities between the

government's 'conceived space' and the residents' 'lived space,' users of the space employed various strategies to fight for their rights to space and influenced the spatial practices in their ways. By exploring the Lefebvre's (1991) 'spatial triad' in the context of Yinchuan, this thesis provided practical relevance to the abstract ideas and amplified the theory's applicability to the Chinese setting.

In addition, this thesis enriched migrants' rights and citizenship research by introducing a spatial perspective to them. Existing studies, such as citizenship, contentious politics and resource mobilisation approaches (Herold, 2011; Zhu, 2014; Cress and Snow, 2016; Darling, 2017; Fu, 2017; Islar and Irgil, 2018; Qian, 2020), have not given sufficient weight to a spatial perspective and have not adequately considered the fact that contesting citizenship rights by residents can be driven by a spatially-related rights consciousness. This research engaged a theoretical and practical reflection on the concept of 'the right to the city' amidst China's urbanisation progress from a spatial standpoint, which contributes to the contextualisation of the theory in contemporary Chinese cities.

It is evident from this research that it is appropriate and illuminating to apply a spatial lens to examine Chinese citizenship rights practices. This approach added a 'local epistemology' to the broad concept of 'the right to the city' introduced by Lefebvre (1991) and Harvey (2012). The thesis argued that the unequal rights accessed by citizens are formed based on spatial-related factors as space is a manifestation of unjust power relations. For instance, the varying rights granted to Chinese rural and urban residents under the Hukou system represent this space-related injustice. To break with this uneven power distribution, the thesis emphasised that it is people's everyday experiences of inhabiting the city that entitle citizens to the right to the city, rather than one's place-based identity. Therefore, it is necessary to eliminate the Hukou restrictions which are based on a person's birthplace to ensure equal citizenship rights for all residents in China.

Moreover, the burgeoning rights awareness of rural migrants in Yinchuan added local interpretations of 'the right to the city' with regard to social integration. This thesis proposed that 'the right to the city' can be captured as a combination of both the distribution of tangible benefits (such as housing, public service, social welfare) and the mobilisation of process (such as structural changes in involving citizens in political decision-making). The distribution of tangible benefits can be achieved in the short-

term by the publics increased understanding of their rights to appropriation and initiating rights-defending activities, whereas fundamental structural change is a long-term process including improving the social function of the city and providing democratic mechanisms to promote social justice. This could be achieved by the accumulation of every single success from different cases. Both the radical confrontations as well as the soft and everyday forms of resistance contribute to the gradual construction of democratic society in China.

Furthermore, previous studies criticized the original theory of 'the right to participation' for being vague about what specific aspects of urban life people should be participating in (Purcell, 2002; Kuymulu, 2014), as an alternative, the thesis proposed that involving the public in the process of constructing policy and in the civic affairs management could be a practical approach to addressing people's disadvantaged position in decision-making in China. Rather than simply participating in existing spatial policy initiatives, the fundamental injustices in spatial production should be addressed at the level of constituting the shape of policy issues. In other words, actively involving citizens in diagnosing social problems and constructing policy discourses are practical approached to challenging the way dominant power groups currently rationalise their actions.

Finally, this thesis enriched the migration literature by examining development-induced rural to urban displacement in a city that has not yet aroused much national and global academic attention. Additionally, the application of an international immigration integration framework to a comparable Chinese internal migrant's case enriched social integration theory. Specifically, this thesis contributed to developing the 'social integration' framework by Heckmann (2005) into two main aspects. On the one hand, my analysis identified the sequence of realising the four domains of integration. My findings suggested that structural, cultural and interactive integration are the key prerequisites to facilitating identificational integration for displaced individuals in China. However, a higher-level structural integration does not necessarily lead to rural migrant's recognition of their urban identity. Instead, accepting the dominant culture, participating in local social activities, as well as building social bonds with indigenous people and the host society are crucial factors for promoting identificational integration.

On the other hand, the thesis offered new insights into the Heckmann's (2005) framework by adding three specific and localised indicators under the 'structural integration' category according to China's context, namely employment status, job sectors and job-related social insurance. Based on the in-depth interviews with four groups of participants, these three factors were identified as having a significant impact on Chinese migrants' sense of belonging in the host cities, influenced by a deep-rooted mindset of prioritising state-labelled jobs. By detailing the various employment situations of participants, such as their employment status and the job sectors, this thesis has extended a more nuanced framework with which to rigorously examine the process and dynamics of the social integration of rural-urban migrants in contemporary China.

9.3 Policy implications

The policymaking process in the case of Yinchuan reflected the ineffective mechanisms in place for bottom-up feedback in China. Within the rigid power hierarchy and centralised power regime, the voice of the people at the bottom of this hierarchy is essentially inaudible and therefore not taken into account by policymakers. Chapter 8 (section 8.1.3) identified a significant misalignment in communication channels between the people and the higher-level governments. The six-level administrative hierarchy (refer to Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3) suffered from a notable loss of information because the higher-level agencies decided what messages they received could be passed on to the next level policymakers. My findings revealed the basic-level officers tended to take on the minor issues or accentuate positive feedback to evade major or negative allegations in order to showcase their achievements in implementing the policies to their superiors. In this context, the residents' entire feedbacks were generally not reflected in the follow-up polices. Therefore, it is crucial to encourage transparency and accountability in the policymaking process, so that residents have a clear understanding of how policies are developed, and their feedbacks are accurately conveyed to policy makers.

Furthermore, my findings in Chapter 5 unveiled the process that the central and local governments employed various political discourses to materialise the 'representation of space' and justify land expropriation practices (Lefebvre, 1991). It indicated that both the space production action and the policy discourses construction are political

processes that serve political objectives and the interests of certain groups. A review of the urban development and displacement policies in Yinchuan demonstrated that policy is not always formed as a response to existing conditions and problems, it sometimes emerges as discourses in which both problems and solutions are created. Therefore, the thesis highlighted including citizens in shaping the policy discourses and decision-making processes are of vital importance to address the social injustice resulting from space production. This can be achieved through measures such as implementing public consultations, public hearings and independent oversight mechanisms in China's context.

Moreover, the thesis argued that the design of the land expropriation policy undermined people's interests in both the short-term and the long-term. For example, flaws in policy design, especially the low compensation standards harmed short-term interests of displaced people (analysed in Chapter 3). In addition, the growth-first urbanisation strategy in China was found to be focused on economic development while the social welfare, social interactions, and the ethnic culture have not received the same level of policy attention. The overreliance on monetary compensation overlooked other essential aspects of the well-being of migrants. More importantly, the 'one-size-fit-all' resettlement policy has failed to identify the most vulnerable displaced groups, including the Hui ethnic minorities with distinct cultures and customs, who were not adequately considered in the resettlement policy. The social and longer-term impact of sacrificing distinct religious characteristics for a certain type of integration are still uncertain and should be further explored in the future research.

The long-term defects of the intact displacement mode have been gradually coming to the fore, which run into inherent tensions with the government's political rhetoric of promoting the social integration of rural migrants. This mode, which involved displacing the entire villages and resettling residents in the same community, was commonly employed in resettlement policies in the first decade of the 21st century. My findings suggested that although this mode has kept intra-village connections alive, it has also limited opportunities for them to form new social networks and relationships with local residents. This, in turn, has resulted in the emergence of subcultural groups that struggle to fully integrate into the larger host city. Therefore, this thesis argued that it is crucial to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of resettlement policies over

a longer period to prevent certain groups from experiencing marginalisation in a culture and social sense.

9.4 Limitations and future studies

The limitation (and also the strength) of this study lies in its focus on the views and experiences of a small group of informants from a single community. A greater cross-section of data would enhance the validity and generalisability of the research. However, due to the research questions raised in this thesis, a significant number of participants and quantified indicators were beyond the scope of this research. This thesis intended to provide a nuanced, rich and detailed depiction of one community, instead of a superficial portrayal of various cases. Producing comparable data on other communities or delineating interviewees by detailed age groups or family compositions could certainly become potential perspectives for future research. In addition, return migration, as some older informants mentioned their willingness to go back to rural village after retirement, is another interesting topic as follow-on research.

In terms of other directions for future studies, constructing horizontal organisations in China is an emerging topic for future research. Homeowner association (HA) is one type of these horizontal organisation building across communities, whose aims include improving property management-related legislation and practice, networking between HAs, enhancing homeowners' self-governing capacity, lobbying the government with the aim of influencing city decision making process and also protecting the rights and interests of homeowners (Wright and Pavlićević, 2019). This attempt is similar to what Sitrin (2006) called 'horizontalism' in Argentina, in which people do not adhere to hierarchical template and advocate direct democracy, direct action and self-management. The examination of existing literatures in China's context suggests that HA is a credible attempt to protect resident's rights and to promote independent civic autonomy on the basis of house-ownership. Some such experiences have begun emerging in some of China's major cities, for instance Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou (Wright and Pavlićević, 2019; Guan and Liu, 2021; Cai et al. 2021; Cai and He, 2022).

The establishment of these horizontal networks, in addition to the institutionalisation of horizontal connections between urban communities, exemplifies the adaptation of Lefebvre's (1991) notion that the rights to the city are acquired through residing in the

city and that such rights are collective in nature to the Chinese context. The ethos of HA, then, proffers a profound ideological challenge and counterpoint to authoritarian rule and in the longer term could be a route into chipping away at the state's institutionalised power manipulation. However, it is still not clear how the authorities respond to the emerging HAs since this type of organisations is still only at an embryonic stage in China. The trials in the first-tier cities could serve as model for the less-developed cities. In a sense, the development of HAs could be a potential research topic for future studies as it has profound implications for enlarging public participation, promoting active citizenship and building self-governing civil society in contemporary China.

Finally, from a spatial perspective, there are some topics related to the post-reform community governance in urban China which deserve further exploration. For instance, as Harvey (2014) noted, neoliberalism has not eliminated poverty, but rather it has merely exacerbated the gulf between the rich and the poor. This gap is reflected in China through categorisation and classification of residential communities into different grades, such as the resettlement community, public low-rent housing, migrants' enclaves and high-end commercial communities. Chapter 5 evidenced divergent governance models have been applied in resettlement communities and in nearby high-end communities respectively. Based on these findings, the different community governance models toward various types of communities in China could be another lacuna in the current literature which could be productive for exploration both from a theoretical perspective and also in terms of policy implications.

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Appendix 1 – Policy List

	Issued Year	Central/Local level policy	Issuing authority	Name of the document	Key focus area
Policy 1	1998	Central-level	National People's Congress	The People's Republic of China Constitution	N/A
Policy 2	2000	Central-level	the Central Committee	The Western Regional Development Strategy (WRDS)	urbanisation
Policy 3	2002	Central-level	State Development Planning Commission	Notice of the '10th Five-Year Plan' for Western Development Planning	urbanisation
Policy 4	1986	Central-level	the Standing Committee	The People's Republic of China Land Administration Law (LAL)	land expropriation and compensation
Policy 5	1990	Central-level	the Administrative Law	The Administrative Law	dispute resolution on compensation scheme
Policy 6	1995	Central-level	the State Council	Regulations Concerning Letters and Calls	dispute resolution on compensation scheme
Policy 7	2002	Local-level	the Yinchuan Municipal Government	Pilot Scheme of Compensation for Land Expropriation and Relocation in Yinchuan	compensation and resettlement policies
Policy 8	2003	Local-level	the Yinchuan Municipal Government	Regulations on Compensation for Expropriating Collective Land for City Construction	compensation and resettlement policies
Policy 9	2003	Local-level	the Ningxia Provincial Government	Opinions on Speeding Up Urban Construction	encouraging land expropriation
Policy 10	2005	Local-level	the Yinchuan Municipal Government	Implementation Opinions on further Promoting Employment of Land-Lost Farmers	employment
Policy 11	2018	Local-level	the Yinchuan Municipal Government	Implementation Scheme of Building Learning Institution for Farmers in New Era	employment
Policy 12	2006	Local-level	the Yinchuan Municipal Government	Pilot Scheme of Basic Pension for Rural-Urban Displaced People	social insurance
Policy 13	2008	Local-level	the Ningxia Provincial Government	Opinions on Establishing the Social Security for Land-Expropriated Displaced Farmers	social insurance
Policy 14	2012	Local-level	the Ningxia Government Office	Notice of Ningxia Government Office in regard to Increasing the Government Subsidy Retire of Basic Medical Insurance for Urban and Rural residents	social insurance
Policy 15	2010	Local-level	the Yinchuan Municipal Government	Plan of Expropriating the Collective Land and Measures of Compensating for Demolition	Follow-up compensation
Policy 16	2018	Local-level	the Ningxia Provincial Government	Opinions on Encouraging and Guiding Rural Migrants Become Urban citizens and Further Facilitating Urbanisation Process	promoting integration of displaced farmers
Policy 17	2018	Local-level	the Yinchuan Municipal Government	Responses to the Proposal of Further Promoting the Transformation of Farmers into Urban Citizens	promoting integration of displaced farmers
Policy 18	2007	Local-level	the Ningxia Provincial Government	The Coordination and Arbitration Methods for Resolving Dispute over Compensation and Resettlement in Ningxia	dispute resolution on compensation scheme

Appendix 2 – Interviewee List

No.	Name	Gender	Ethnicity	Age	Job	Groups
1	Yun	Male	Han	35	Solicitor	State sector staff
2	Tantan	Female	Han	35	Staff in a residents' committee	State sector staff
3	Yi	Male	Han	40	Driver	State sector staff
4	Shu	Male	Hui	55	Manager in a public zoo	State sector staff
5	Sha	Male	Han	58	Public park employee	State sector staff
6	Lin	Male	Hui	36	Administrative staff in hospital	State sector staff
7	Er	Male	Hui	52	Gateman	Private business employees
8	Guokai	Male	Han	57	Security guard	Private business employees
9	Juhua	Female	Han	48	Street cleaner	Private business employees
10	Guoxiang	Male	Hui	60	Gardener	Private business employees
11	Jiangong	Male	Han	54	Construction worker	Private business employees
12	Hua	Female	Hui	50	Cleaner	Private business employees
13	San	Male	Hui	47	Small shopkeeper	Self-employed displaced people
14	Hu	Male	Han	50	Fruit vendor	Self-employed displaced people
15	Bing	Male	Hui	53	Street food vendor	Self-employed displaced people
16	Huazhang	Male	Han	35	Bakery owner	Self-employed displaced people
17	Chuan	Male	Han	44	Small restaurant owner	Self-employed displaced people
18	Yang	Male	Han	51	Construction business contractor	Self-employed displaced people
19	Huayuan	Female	Han	50	Housewife (used to work as a housekeeper in a hotel)	Not engaged in paid work
20	Kongxian	Female	Han	58	Retiree	Unemployed
21	Gao	Female	Han	48	Housewife (Looking after grandson after quitting her previous job as a hotel housekeeper)	Not engaged in paid work
22	Zhou	Male	Hui	60	Retiree (used to be a village secretary)	Unemployed
23	Liu	Female	Han	60	Retiree (retired from milk factory)	Unemployed
24	Yongmei	Female	Han	59	Retiree (retired from residents' committee)	Unemployed

Appendix 3 – Ethics forms

University of **BRISTOL**
School for Policy Studies

SPS RESEARCH ETHICS
APPLICATION FORM: STAFF and DOCTORAL STUDENTS

- This proforma must be completed for each piece of research carried out by members of the School for Policy Studies, both staff and doctoral postgraduate students.
- See the Ethics Procedures document for clarification of the process.
- All research **must** be ethically reviewed before any fieldwork is conducted, regardless of source of funding.
- See the School's policy and guidelines relating to research ethics and data protection, to which the project is required to conform.
- Please stick to the word limit provided. **Do not attach** your funding application or research proposal.

Key project details:

1.	**Proposer's Name**	Ye He

2.	**Proposer's Email Address:**	yh17185@bristol.ac.uk

3.	**Project Title**	Growing city, resettled people and contesting rights: land expropriation and social integration of displaced farmers in Yinchuan, China

4.	**Project Start Date:**	18/09/2017	**End Date:**	04/04/2023

Who needs to provide Research Ethics Committee approval for your project?

The SPS REC will only consider those research ethics applications which do not require submission elsewhere. As such, you should make sure that your proposed research does not require a NHS National Research Ethics Service (NRES) review e.g. does it involve NHS patients, staff or facilities – see http://www.hra-decisiontools.org.uk/ethics/
If you are not sure where you should apply please discuss it with either the chair of the Committee or the Faculty Ethics Officer who is based in RED.

Social care research projects which involve NHS patients, people who use services or people who lack capacity as research participants need to be reviewed by a Social Care Research Ethics Committee (see https://www.hra.nhs.uk/planning-and-improving-research/policies-standards-legislation/social-care-research/). Similarly research which accesses unanonymised patient records (without informed

consent) must be reviewed by a REC and the National Information Governance Board for Health and Social Care (NIGB).

Who needs to provide governance approval for this project?

If this project involves access to patients, clients, staff or carers of an NHS Trust or Social Care Organisation, it falls within the scope of the Research Governance Framework for Health and Social. You will also need to get written approval from the Research Management Office or equivalent of each NHS Trust or Social Care Organisation.

When you have ethical approval, you will need to complete the research registration form: http://www.bristol.ac.uk/red/research-governance/registration-sponsorship/study-notification.html
Guidance on completing this form can be found at: http://www.bristol.ac.uk/red/research-governance/registration-sponsorship/guidance.pdf. Contact the Research Governance team (research-governance@bristol.ac.uk) for guidance on completing this form and if you have any questions about obtaining local approval.

Do you need additional insurance to carry out your research?

Whilst staff and doctoral students will normally be covered by the University's indemnity insurance there are some situations where it will need to be checked with the insurer. If you are conducting research with: Pregnant research subjects or children under 5 you should email: insurance-enquiries@bristol.ac.uk
In addition, if you are working or travelling overseas you should take advantage of the university travel insurance (see http://www.bristol.ac.uk/secretary/insurance/travel-insurance/).

Do you need a Disclosure and Barring Service check?

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) replaces the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). Criteria for deciding whether you require a DBS check are available from:
https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service/about

You should specifically look at the frequency, nature, and duration of your contact with potentially vulnerable adults and or children. If your contact is a one-off research interaction, or infrequent contact (for example: 3 contacts over a period of time) you are unlikely to require a check.
If you think you need a DBS check then you should consult the University of Bristol web-page:
http://www.bristol.ac.uk/secretary/legal/dbs/

5. If your research project requires REC approval elsewhere please tell us which committee, this includes where co-researchers are applying for approval at another institution. Please provide us with a copy of your approval letter for our records when it is available.

Not applicable.

6. Have all subcontractors you are using for this project (including transcribers, interpreters, and co-researchers not formally employed at Bristol University) agreed to be bound by the School's requirements for ethical research practice?

Yes

No/Not yet   Note: You must ensure that written agreement is secured before they start to work. They will be provided with training and sign a detailed consent form.

Not applicable **X**

7. If you are a PhD/doctoral student please tell us the name of your research supervisor(s).

Professor Misa Izuhara

Professor Patricia Kennett

Please confirm that your supervisor(s) has seen this final version of your ethics application?

Yes **X**

No

8. Who is funding this study?

Self-funding

If this study is funded by the ESRC or another funder requiring lay representation on the ethics committee and is being undertaken by a member staff, this form should be submitted to the Faculty REC.

Post-graduate students undertaking ESRC funded projects should submit their form to the SPS Research Ethics Committee (SPS REC).

9. Is this application part of a larger proposal?

No **X**

Yes

If yes, please provide a summary of the larger study and indicate how this application relates to the overall study.

10. Is this proposal a replication of a similar proposal already approved by the SPS REC? Please provide the SPS REC reference number.

No	**X**
Yes	

If Yes, please tell us the name of the project, the date approval was given and code (if you have one).

Please describe any differences (such as context) in the current study. If the study is a replication of a previously approved study. Submit these first two pages of the form.

ETHICAL RESEARCH PROFORMA

The following set of questions is intended to provide the School Research Ethics Committee with enough information to determine the risks and benefits associated with your research. You should use these questions to assist in identifying the ethical considerations which are important to your research. You should identify any relevant ethical issues and how you intend to deal with them. Whilst the REC does not comment on the methodological design of your study, it will consider whether the design of your study is likely to produce the benefits you anticipate. **Please avoid copying and pasting large parts of research bids or proposals which do not directly answer the questions.** Please also avoid using *unexplained* acronyms, abbreviations or jargon.

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1. **IDENTITY & EXPERIENCE OF (CO) RESEARCHERS:** Please give a list of names, positions, qualifications, previous research experience, and functions in the proposed research of all those who will be in contact with participants

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Name: Ye He

Position: Second-year PhD candidate in School for Policy Studies

Qualifications: B.A. in Public Finance and B.A. in Business English at Tianjin University of Finance and Economics, China (2008-2012);

M.Sc. in Development Management (Public Economic Management and Finance) at University of Birmingham, UK (2012-2013);

PhD completed trainings in University of Bristol from 2017-2019:

- Philosophy and Research Design in the Social Sciences (Compulsory course, 27/09/2017-29/09/2017)
- Introduction to Quantitative Research Methods in the Social Sciences (Compulsory course,19/10/2017-02/11/2017)
- Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods in the Social Sciences (Compulsory course, 24/11/2017-13/12/2017)
- Further Approaches to Qualitative Research (Optional course, 07/02/2018-09/02/2018)
- Migration, asylum and human rights: EU and global policy perspectives (Optional course, 18/01/2018-22/01/2018)
- Researching Poverty, Inequality and Social Exclusion (Optional course, 20/03/2018-08/05/2018)
- Data analysis software workshops – Nvivo (Workshop, 23/07/2018)
- Mixed methods training course for PGR students (1-day training, 01/05/2018)
- Potential Energy - Presenting with Impact (BDC Seminar, 23/01/2019)

Previous research experience:

- 2012-2013: I conducted a qualitative research as part of my master thesis entitled: 'Study on the land-lost farmers' employment problems in the process of peri-urbanisation in Pudong, China'. I conducted semi-structured interviews with government officials and residents in Pudong and use survey data to explore the impact of the 'Pudong New Area Development Policies' on residents' employment status.
- 2013: I participated in a fieldwork in Baku, Azerbaijan (funded by University of Birmingham) to explore social injustice which result from income gap in Baku. We conducted semi-structured interviews with governmental officials, NGOs and State Oil Company of the Republic of Azerbaijan.
- 2014-2015: I took part in a research entitled 'the study on policies which promote rural migrant workers to become urban residents during urbanization process in Ningxia' (provincial-level research project funded by Ningxia Government, China). We reviewed six policies related to Household registration, education, employment, public health, housing and social welfare and assess the impact of these

policies on promoting rural migrants to access different social-economic rights and facilitate their role transformation from rural people into urban residents. A research paper has been published on a Chinese academic journal in 2016.

- 2016-2018: I worked as a project director and conducted a research titled 'The taxation reform– from business tax to single value added tax, and its Impact on small – medium sized business in Ningxia' (a provincial-level research project funded by Ningxia Department of Education, China). I interviewed eight financial executives from four different companies to examine the impact of VAT reform policies on their business profit. An academic paper has been published on a Chinese journal in 2017.
- 2019: I conducted a project entitled 'The reconstruction of urban space and the impact on rural-urban migrants in Ningxia' (a university-level research project funded by Ningxia University). I carried on reviewing government documents on urban planning and space reconstruction in Ningxia from 1999-2019 in this research.

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2. STUDY AIMS/OBJECTIVES [maximum of 200 words]: Please provide the aims and objectives of your research.

This research is mainly to explore the long-term impact of development-induced displacement on the displaced people's lives and sense of belonging after 15 years of resettlement in Yinchuan. Specifically, this research aims to explore the underlying forces and rationales that drive urban spatial production and displacement in Yinchuan, and to examine the process that displaced people practice their right and integrate into the host community.

The research aims lead to four research objectives:

1. Investigate the rationales and processes leading to urban spatial change in Yinchuan.

2. Explore the impact of displacement and resettlement on the lives and sense of belonging of displaced people.

3. Examine the extent to which displaced people adapt or resist government's spatial policies, and the actions they take to express their claims and get access to rights.

4. Explore the role of different stakeholders in promoting displaced people's social integration into the host environment.

RESEARCH WITH HUMAN PARTICIPANTS
(If you are undertaking secondary data analysis, please proceed to section 11)

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3. RESEARCH METHODS AND SAMPLING STRATEGY [maximum of 300 words]: Please tell us what you propose to do in your research and how individual participants, or groups of participants, will be identified and sampled. Please also tell us what is expected of research participants who consent to take part (Please note that recruitment procedures are covered in question 8)

This qualitative research includes three-stage data collection from multi-sources:

1. Stage One - Document analysis:

- Review economic, geographic and demographic data on Ningxia Statistical Yearbooks from 2002 to 2018 to identify the context and establish patterns of development-induced displacement in Yinchuan;
- Review mainstream local newspaper reports (Ningxia Daily Newspaper and Yinchuan Evening News) and public opinions from Sina microblog to compare the mainstream announcements and public opinions on the impact of displacement and resettlement on displaced people's lives;

- Review government documents, including Yinchuan overall city planning (1996-2010) and (2011-2020); displacement, resettlement and compensation policies (2002-2010) and urban-rural integration policies (2002-2018) to examine local government's views on urban expansion, displacement and resettlement, and assess the efforts they made to facilitate social integration of displaced people.

2. Stage Two - Stakeholder interviews:

I will employ purposive sampling to recruit 9 stakeholders, including:

- 1 sub-district officer;
- 2 residents' community leaders;
- 2 staffs from NGOs;
- 1 manager from property developer;
- 1 manager from property management company;
- 2 managers from employment agencies.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with them to explore attitudes and experiences of the impact of displacement, and how they had been involved within displaced people's integration into the host community.

3. Stage Three - Interviews with displaced people:

I will select 24 displaced people to have interview drawing on the following criteria:

- age ranging from 35-60;
- both Hui (minority) and Han (majority) people;
- males and females;
- whose farming land was expropriated by the Chinese government between 2002-2005 because of development projects construction;
- resettled in government-funded resettlement community A for more than 15 years.

They will be further stratified into 4 groups by their employment types, which includes 6 self-employed displaced people, 6 state sector staff, 6 private business employees and 6 unemployed or not engaged in paid work displaced people.

4. **EXPECTED DURATION OF RESEARCH ACTIVITY:** Please tell us how long each researcher will be working on fieldwork/research activity. For example, conducting interviews between March to July 2019. Also tell us how long participant involvement will be. For example: Interviewing 25 professional participants for a maximum of 1 hour per interview.

- The fieldwork will run between May and October 2019.
- Document analysis will be conducted in May.
- Pilot interviews will be conducted in June.
- 9 stakeholder interviews will be conducted between June to early July. Each interview will take for approximately 1 hour.
- 24 semi-structured interviews with displaced people will be carried on from July to October. Each interview will take for approximately 1-1.5 hours.
- Transcribing and preliminary data analysis will be finished by November 2019.

5. **POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND TO WHOM: [maximum 100 words]** Tell us briefly what the main benefits of the research are and to whom.

This research will potentially benefit displaced people in Yinchuan. On one hand, positive and negative long-term impacts of urban expansion and displacement on displaced people's lives and sense of belongings in host community will be identified. Also, current service gaps, people's difficulties in integrating into

host community and their expectations will be indicated, which will potentially provide evidence for policy making to narrow service gaps and promote integration of displaced people into host community. On the other, case study in an economically less-developed minority area in China which is never been studied internationally will fill in the academic research gap.

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6. **POTENTIAL RISKS/HARM TO PARTICIPANTS [maximum of 100 words]:** What potential risks are there to the participants and how will you address them? List any potential physical or psychological dangers that can be anticipated? You may find it useful to conduct a more formal risk assessment prior to conducting your fieldwork. The University has an example risk assessment form and guidance : http://www.bristol.ac.uk/safety/media/gn/RA-gn.pdf and http://www.bristol.ac.uk/safety/policies/

RISK	HOW IT WILL BE ADDRESSED
Example 1: Participants may be upset during the interview *Example 2: A participants may tell me something about illegal activity*	*Example 1: If a participant gets upset I will stop the interview at that time. I will give participants information about support services at the end of the interview.* *Example 2: The information sheet and consent form will warn of the limits of confidentiality and I will have a confidentiality protocol (submitted to the committee).*
Displaced people may feel loss, angry or nostalgic when talking about their experience.	Participants information sheet and informed consent will be signed before conducting interviews. I will carefully choose appropriate words in questioning on sensitive topics and allow interviewees to feel free to pause or end the conversation if they suffer from emotional impact and uncomfortable feelings. Supporting services, including local emergency telephone numbers,120 for First Aid and 110 for serious emergencies, will inform every participant before interview.
Participants may worry that their responses and activities that against government will be identified by others.	All participants will be informed that their responses are strictly confidential and anonymised. Participants' names and place names will be replaced by fictional ones to avoid identification. Also, government officials in senior positions will not be considered as interviewee referrers, which can minimise the influence of power relationships.
Displaced people may feel dissatisfied and unhappy if they become aware that someone else received more compensation than themselves.	All of the information got from interviewees will be fully confidential and will not be mentioned to others in any cases. Also, each interview will be conducted separately in different places chosen by interviewees to avoid comparison between interviewees.
Participants may feel obliged to take part in the interviews.	I will try my best to relieve potential 'obliged' pressure for participators in this research. First of all, all of the interviewees are voluntarily participant in this research based on informing them potential benefits and harms arising from research. Besides, I will not use gatekeepers to contact potential participants, which could avoid power relations between them and minimise the potential obliged pressure for approaching participants. In addition, the research aims, potential use of research, benefits and harms, limits of confidentiality and principle of voluntarily participation will be clearly stated in recruitment letter and participant information sheet to avoid misleading information and potential pressure. I will leave 5 days after sending recruitment letter and participated information sheet for them to decide on whether or not to participate in research.

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Participant's activities in relation to harming themselves or others might be disclosed.	I will inform participants the limits of confidentiality in both Participant Information Sheet and Informed Consent form. If participants disclose information in relation to harming themselves or others, I will discuss with my supervisors to see whether the activity should be report or not.

*Add more boxes if needed.

7.	**RESEARCHER SAFETY [maximum of 200 words]:** What risks could the researchers be exposed to during this research project? If you are conducting research in individual's homes or potentially dangerous places then a researcher safety protocol is mandatory. Examples of safety protocols are available in the guidance.

RISK	HOW IT WILL BE ADDRESSED
Example 1: Interview at the participant's home.	*Fieldwork safety protocol will be followed. A colleague will know the start and approximate finish time of the interview. If there is no contact from the researcher, they will ring the researcher. If no contact is made the confidential address details will be accessed and the police informed.*
Interview with displaced people who are employed may take place during non-working time.	Fieldwork safety protocol will be strictly followed. I will inform a second person (a local friend or a family member) about the time of each interview. No interview will be conducted after 9pm. I will commute to the interview location by public transports. Also, I will carry a mobile phone with me and keep it on just in case for emergency help. I won't tell others except the interviewee where the interview is, the address of the interview location will be in a sealed envelope and only opened by my local contact if I'm not in contact. As a standard protocol, I will ring my contact after the agreed interview time, if I don't ring and my contact can't get hold of me, they will ring the police.
Interviews at the participant's home.	Fieldwork safety protocol will be strictly followed. I will inform a second person about the time of interview. I won't tell others except the interviewee where the interview is, the address of the interview location will be in a sealed envelope and only opened by my local contact if I'm not in contact. As a standard protocol, I will ring my contact after the agreed interview time, if I don't ring and my contact can't get hold of me, they will ring the police. I will register a new local telephone number exclusively for this research to contact participants, and I will inform a local friend this number. I will keep both of my personal and research mobile phone on just in case for emergency help.
Interviews may cause emotional distress on research.	I've got some trainings to handle psychological distress during my 1st and 2nd year of PhD study. Also, I will monthly report my research progress and emotional reactions to my supervisors during fieldwork in China. If I experience serious anxiety or depression, I know I could seek for help from University of Bristol. I am aware of the Big White Wall is a digital support service available 24/7 which will help me to deal with mental stresses in fieldwork.

8. **RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES [maximum of 400 words]:** How are you going to access participants? Are there any gatekeepers involved? Is there any sense in which respondents might be "obliged" to participate (for example because their manager will know, or because they are a service user and their service will know), if so how will this be dealt with?

I will employ purposive sampling to recruit participants for stakeholder interviews. Potential stakeholders will be identified from the official websites of different organisations and will be contacted directly through their email or office telephone number which can be found on organisation website. After briefly introducing about this research in email or phone call, a participant information sheet will be sent by a follow-up email to give them more details about the research if they are interested in participating.

In terms of accessing to displaced people, I will put a recruitment letter into residents' letter boxes in Community A and ask them to contact me if they meet the recruitment criteria and interested in participating. Also, I will give a short introduction to residents' committee, a grass-roots organisation of self-governance by residents themselves on the basis of residence, about my research and see whether I can post notices on notice board in Community A to recruit participants. My contact information will be shown on the notice. Potential participants who are interested in my research could contact me directly and I will send a participant information sheet by emails to them. Interview time and location will be discussed after making sure their participation willingness.

If I cannot access to enough participants through this method, snowball sampling strategy will be used. After having interview with some of the residents and becoming more familiar with the community, I will get to know some of residents and build rapport and trust with them, who might refer me more participants. A recruitment letter and a participated information sheet will be sent by the referrers to potential interviewees. And they can contact me if they agree to participate.

I will try my best to relieve potential 'obliged' pressure for participators in this research. First of all, all of the interviewees are voluntarily participant in this research based on informing them potential benefits and harms arising from research. Besides, I will not use gatekeepers to contact potential participants, which could avoid power relations between them and minimise the potential obliged pressure for approaching participants. In addition, the research aims, potential use of research, benefits and harms, limits of confidentiality and principle of voluntarily participation will be clearly stated in recruitment letter and participant information sheet to avoid misleading information and potential pressure. I will leave 5 days after sending recruitment letter and participated information sheet for them to decide on whether or not to participate in research.

9. **INFORMED CONSENT [maximum of 200 words]:** How will this be obtained? Whilst in many cases written consent is preferable, where this is not possible or appropriate this should be clearly justified. An age and ability appropriate participant information sheet (PIS) setting out factors relevant to the interests of participants in the study must be handed to them in advance of seeking consent (see materials table for list of what should be included). If you are proposing to adopt an approach in which informed consent is not sought you must explain in detail why this is not considered to be appropriate. If you are planning to use photographic or video images in your method then additional specific consent should be sought from participants.

In terms of stage one, document analysis, all of the documents I mentioned above are publicly available and can be obtained through different official websites. As for some compensation policies which is not available online, they can be accessed by visiting local government office. Under the requirement of making government affairs public and open by Chinese central government, I will contact local government and submit a request letter to request the access to written policies.

In terms of the interviews with different stakeholders and displaced people, all of them will voluntarily take part in this research based on fully informed the research aims, topic themes, potential risks and benefit, confidentiality, anonymity, data use and storage, and potential use of research result. Before conducting interviews, a written participant information sheet will be given, and a written consent form will need to be singed if they agreed to participate. Accurate and easy to understand words will be used in the consent form to avoid misunderstanding. In the cases where participants are not

literate, their digital record of their verbal consent will include at the start of the interview transcript. The content of both forms will be orally explained without misleading to ensure their full understanding.

Please tick the box to confirm that you will keep evidence of the consent forms (either actual forms or digitally scanned forms), securely for twenty years.	X

10. If you intend to use an on-line survey (for example Survey Monkey) you need to ensure that the data will not leave the European Economic Area i.e. be transferred or held on computers in the USA. Online Surveys (formally called Bristol Online Surveys) is fully compliant with UK Data Protection requirements – see https://www.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/

Please tick the box to confirm that you will not use any on-line survey service based in the USA, China or outside the European Economic Area (EEA).	N/A

11. DATA PROTECTION: All applicants should regularly take the data protection on-line tutorial provided by the University in order to ensure they are aware of the requirements of current data protection legislation.

University policy is that "personal data can be sent abroad if the data subject gives unambiguous written consent. Staff should seek permission from the University Secretary prior to sending personal data outside of the EEA".

Any breach of the University data protection responsibilities could lead to disciplinary action.

Have you taken the mandatory University data protection on-line tutorial in the last 12 months? https://www.bris.ac.uk/is/media/training/uobonly/datasecurity/page_01.htm

Yes	X
No	

Do you plan to send any information/data, which could be used to identify a living person, to anybody who works in a country that is not part of the European Union?
See https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/data-protection-and-brexit/data-protection-if-there-s-no-brexit-deal/the-gdpr/international-data-transfers/)

No	X	
Yes		If **YES** please list the country or countries:

Please outline your procedure for data protection. It is University of Bristol policy that interviews must be recorded on an encrypted device. Ideally this should be a University owned encrypted digital recorder (see http://www.bristol.ac.uk/infosec/uobdata/transcription/).

If you lose research data which include personal information or a data breach occurs, you MUST notify the University immediately. This means sending an e-mail to data-protection@bristol.ac.uk and telling your Head of School. See additional details at http://www.bristol.ac.uk/secretary/data-protection/data-breaches-and-incidents/

> The UK Data Protection Act (2018) include potential fines of up to €20,000,000 for not protecting personal data – so please provide details about how you plan to ensure the protection of ALL research data which could be used to identify a living person.

Only the researcher, myself, have access to the data in this research, including documents, digital recordings, interview notes, interviewee booklets, interview transcripts and their translated version. The digital recordings of interviews will only be available to the researcher for making transcript and research analysing use. Participants can have access to their own interview records if they request.

All interviewees are anonymised. Participants' names will be replaced by identification codes in fieldwork notes and only anonymised data without identification codes will be archived and shown in the final thesis and other potential publications. Personal information, such as job position, address or date of birth will not be shown on any files that open to public. Location names and company names will be replaced by fictional ones as well. All data will be anonymised and kept confidential, unless participants are at risk of harm.

All interviews will be recorded on an encrypted recorder and saved in University of Bristol server as soon as possible via remote desktop. Paper documents will be placed in securely locked locations. All of the data will be for only academic research purpose by the researcher only.

12. CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY	Yes	No
All my data will be stored on a password protected server	X	
I will only transfer unanonymised data if it is encrypted. (For advice on encryption see: http://www.bristol.ac.uk/infosec/uobdata/encrypt/device/)	X	
If there is a potential for participants to disclose illegal activity or harm to others you will need to provide a confidentiality protocol.	X	
Please tick the box to **CONFIRM** that you warned participants on the information and consent forms that there are limits to confidentiality and that at the end of the project data will be stored in a secure storage facility. https://www.acrc.bris.ac.uk/acrc/storage.htm	X	

> Please outline your procedure for ensuring confidentiality and anonymity.

In order to avoid identification of specific people and specific context, all research participants are anonymised. Participants' names will be replaced by identification codes in fieldwork notes and only anonymised data without identification codes will be archived and shown in the final thesis. Personal information, such as job position, address or date of birth will not be shown on any files that open to public. Location names and company names will be replaced by fictional ones as well. All data will be anonymised and kept confidential, unless participants are at risk of harm. As soon as no more data is needed from interviewees, all identifiable information will be removed.

In order to protect confidentiality, only I have access to the data in this research, including documents, digital recording, interview notes, interviewee booklets and interview transcripts. The digital recordings of interviews will only be available to the researcher for making transcript and research analysing use. Participants can have access to their own interview records if they request. All digital data will be stored safely on the university server, and paper documents will be placed in securely locked locations. All of the data will be kept in the University of Bristol's research storage drive for twenty years.

DATA MANAGEMENT

13. Data Management

It is RCUK and University of Bristol policy that all research data (including qualitative data e.g. interview transcripts, videos, etc.) should be stored in an anonymised format and made freely and openly available for other researchers to use via the data.bris Research Data Repository and/or the UK Data Archive. What level of future access to your anonymised data will there be:

- Open access?
- Restricted access - what restrictions?
- Closed access - on what grounds?

This raises a number of ethical issues, for example you MUST ensure that consent is requested to allow data to be shared and reused.

Please briefly explain;

1) How you will obtain specific consent for data preservation and sharing with other researchers?
2) How will you protect the identity of participants? e.g. how will you anonymise your data for reuse.
3) How will the data be licensed for reuse? e.g. Do you plan to place any restrictions on the reuse of your data such as Creative Common Share Alike 2.0 licence (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/uk/)
4) Where will you archive your data and metadata for re-use by other researchers?

The anonymised data in this research will be restricted access by other researchers. The audio recordings, interview transcripts, and government documents that cannot be accessed from online sources will be restricted access.

1) The data preservation and sharing will be clearly indicated in informed consent form and participants information sheet which will be agreed and signed by research participants before conducting interviews.

2) All interviewees and opinions from media sources are anonymised. Participants' names will be replaced by identification codes in fieldwork notes and only anonymised data without identification codes will be archived and shown in the final thesis or in other potential publications. Personal information, such as job position, address or date of birth will not be shown on any files that open to public. Location names and company names will be replaced by fictional ones as well. As soon as no more data is needed from interviewees, all identification information will be removed. The anonymised data, including audio recording, interview transcripts and government documents which cannot be freely accessed from online sources will be restricted access and not allowed other researchers to re-use.

3) 4) The date will be stored and managed in data.bris Research Data Repository under license (Non-Commercial Government Licence for public sector information). The data will be applied and processed as restricted data in the data.birs Research Data Repository. The data is made available to approved bona fide researchers only, after their host institution has signed a Data Access Agreement.

SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS

14. Secondary Data Analysis

Please briefly explain (if relevant to your research);

(1) What secondary datasets you will use?
(2) Where did you get these data from (e.g. ESRC Data Archive)?
(3) How did you obtain permission to use these data? (e.g. by signing an end user licence)
(4) Do you plan to make derived variables and/or analytical syntax available to other researchers? (e.g. by archiving them on data.bris or at the UK Data Archive)
(5) Where will you store the secondary datasets?

(1) In this research, Ningxia statistical yearbooks is the secondary data which will be analysed. Secondary data is not the main research data in this research and it is only collected for mapping the context information and tease out local urbanisation process in terms of geographic, economic and demographic changes.
(2) These data can be obtained from online sources and it is totally open to the public. Survey data in relation to geographic, economic and demographic changes from 2002 to 2018 will be accessed from official websites of the National Bureau of Statistics of China and the Bureau of Statistics of Ningxia database.
(3) They are open data available online.
(4) No.
(5) The secondary datasets will be securely stored in University of Bristol's data repository, data.bris research data repository.

PLEASE COMPLETE FOR ALL PROJECTS

15.	**DISSEMINATION OF FINDINGS [maximum 200 words]:** Are you planning to send copies of data to participants for them to check/comment on? If so, in what format and under what conditions? What is the anticipated use of the data, forms of publication and dissemination of findings etc.? .

> I will not send copies of data to participants for them to check or comment on. The data in this research will be used in final PhD thesis which will be submitted to the School of Policy Studies, University of Bristol. And the research findings will be used in my conference presentation, conference paper, journal and book publications. Also, as a lecturer in University of Ningxia, China, I will present my research findings in my department for academic purpose, which may potentially attract more academic interest. Besides, the research findings might be used to apply for projects of Social Sciences Fund in local level or in national level in China which may potentially contribute to the development of compensation and integration policy of displaced people in Yinchuan.

16.	**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**: Please identify which of the following documents, and how many, you will be submitting within your application: Guidance is given at the end of this document on what each of these additional materials might contain.

Additional Material:	NUMBER OF DOCUMENTS
Participants information sheet (s)	1
Consent form (s)	1
Confidentiality protocol	1
Recruitment letters/posters/leaflets	1
Photo method information sheet	N/A
Photo method consent form	N/A
Support information for participant	N/A
3rd party confidentiality agreement	N/A

Please DO NOT send your research proposal or research bid as the Committee will not look at this

SUBMITTING AND REVIEWING YOUR PROPOSAL:

- To submit your application you should create a <u>single Word document</u> which contains your application form and all additional material and submit this information to the SPS Research Ethics Administrator by email to sps-ethics@bristol.ac.uk

- If you are having problems with this then please contact the SPS Research Ethics Administrator by email (sps-ethics@bristol.ac.uk) to discuss.

- Your form will then be circulated to the SPS Research Ethics Committee who will review your proposal on the basis of the information provided in this single PDF document. The likely response time is outlined in the 'Ethics Procedures' document. For staff applications we try to turn these

around in 2-3 weeks. Doctoral student applications should be submitted by the relevant meeting deadline and will be turned around in 4 weeks.

– Should the Committee have any questions or queries after reviewing your application, the chair will contact you directly. If the Committee makes any recommendations you should confirm, in writing, that you will adhere to these recommendations before receiving approval for your project.

– Should your research change following approval it is <u>your responsibility</u> to inform the Committee in writing and seek clarification about whether the changes in circumstance require further ethical consideration.

Failure to obtain Ethical Approval for research is considered research misconduct by the University and is dealt with under their current misconduct rules.

Chair: Beth Tarleton (beth.tarleton@bristol.ac.uk)
Administrator: Hannah Blackman (sps-ethics@bristol.ac.uk)
Date form updated by SPS REC: January 2019

Participants Information Sheet (PIS)
(English version for stakeholders)

Research project Title: **Growing city, resettled people and contesting rights: land expropriation and social integration of displaced farmers in Yinchuan, China**

- **Who is conducting this research?**

The researcher, Ye He, is a PhD candidate of School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol, UK. My research is a self-funded project which is independent of any organisation or agency. This research is the main part of my PhD thesis, which is supervised by two professors of School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol, and fully complied with the research procedure guidelines and ethical guidelines of University of Bristol.

- **What is the purpose of the study?**

My research aims to understand the living condition and sense of belongings of development project-induced displaced people in Yinchuan. With your help, this research aims to provide the first-hand understanding of the impact of displacement on displaced people's life and will potential provide evidence for policy makers making future policies to help displaced people.

- **Why have I been invited to take part?**

You have been invited to participate in this research because you have involved in providing service that could influence the lives of displaced people in resettlement community.

- **What will happen if I take part?**

You would participate in this research on a voluntary basis. Before interview, you will receive a participant information sheet and a topic guide by email, and you will sign a consent form if you agree to have interview. After getting your consent, you will be invited for an interview with me for approximately 1 hour in the location chosen by you. You are free to refuse to answer any question and you have the right to request erasure of your personal data at any time and for any reason. Your interview will be digitally recorded if you agreed to do so.

- **Will your interview be confidential and anonymous?**

Yes. All interviewees are anonymised. Participants' names will be replaced by identification codes in fieldwork notes and only anonymised data without identification codes will be archived and shown in the final thesis. Personal information, such as job position, address or date of birth will not be shown on any files that open to public. Location names and company names will be replaced by fictional ones as well. All data will be anonymised and kept confidential, unless participants are at risk of harm. In order to protect confidentiality, only the researcher will have access to data documents, such as interview notes, interviewee booklets and digital recordings. The digital recordings of interviews will only be available to the researcher for making transcripts and analysing use. Participants can have access to their own interview records if they request. All digital data will be encrypted and stored in the university server with security passwords, and paper documents will be placed in a securely locked location.

- **What are the limits of confidentiality in this research?**

I will make the best efforts to protect confidentiality of the research. Your data will be kept confidential unless there is a risk of harming to yourself or others, potential accidents with the possibility to harm yourself or others will be discussed with the research supervisor in the first instance, my supervisor will decide whether the confidentiality needs to be broken. If breaking the confidentiality is necessary, this would be communicated to you as soon as possible. The process will fully be complied with the ethical guidance of University of Bristol.

- **What will my information be used for?**

The information you provide is only for academic purpose, which is mainly for generating and organising ideas in her PhD thesis. Also, the information you provide might be used in the researcher's conference presentation, conference paper, academic paper, academic reports, book publications and academic projects application reports. The research has been approved by the SPS REC.

- **Further contact details for general enquiries and for any complaints about the research practice**

If you have any concerns or questions in regards of this research, please contact the researcher via either email: yh17185@bristol.ac.uk, or phone: +8613519206918 (only for use of this research).

If you have any further question or concern, please contact my first supervisor Professor Misa Izuhara via email: m.izuhara@bristol.ac.uk.

Participants Information Sheet (PIS)

(English version for displace people)

Research project Title: **Growing city, resettled people and contesting rights: land expropriation and social integration of displaced farmers in Yinchuan, ChinaLiving conditions and the sense of belonging of the displaced farmers in Yinchuan, China**

- **What is the purpose of the study?**

With your help, my research aims to understand the living condition and sense of belongings of the displaced people in Yinchuan, who were resettled from the rural area into the city because of economic development. This research aims to provide the first hand understanding of this social phenomenal and will potential provide evidence for policy makers for future policies to help the live of the displaced people.

- **Why have I been invited to take part?**

You have been invited to participate in this research because you meet the recruitment criteria and experienced displacement process.

- **What will happen if I take part?**

You would participate in this research on a voluntary basis. Before the interview, you will receive a Participant Information Sheet and you need to sign a consent form if you agree to participate. After getting your consent, you will be invited for an interview with me for approximately 1 to 1.5 hours in the location chosen by you. During the interviews, several questions related to your displacement experience and current living condition will be asked. You are free to refuse to answer any question if you feel uncomfortable or suffer from emotional impact. You have the right to request erasure of your personal data at any time and for any reason. Your interview will be digitally recorded if you agreed to do so.

- **Will your interview be confidential and anonymous?**

Yes. All interviewees are anonymised. Participants' names will be replaced by identification codes in fieldwork notes and only anonymised data without identification codes will be archived and shown in the final thesis. Personal information, such as job position, address or date of birth will not be shown on any files that open to public. Location names and company names will be replaced by fictional ones as well. All data will be anonymised and kept confidential, unless participants are at risk of harm. In order to protect confidentiality, only the researcher will have access to data documents, such as interview notes, interviewee booklets and digital recordings. The digital recordings of interviews will only be available to the researcher for making transcripts and analysing use. Participants can have access to their own interview records if they request. All digital data will be encrypted and stored in the university server with security passwords, and paper documents will be placed in a securely locked location.

- **What are the limits of confidentiality in this research?**

The researcher will make the best efforts to protect confidentiality of the research. Your data will be kept confidential unless there is a risk of harming to yourself or others, potential accidents with the possibility to harm yourself or others will be discussed with the research supervisor in the first instance, my supervisor will decide whether the confidentiality needs to be broken. If breaking the confidentiality is necessary, this would be communicated to you as soon as possible. The process will fully be complied with the ethical guidance of University of Bristol.

- **What will my information be used for?**

The information you provide is only for academic purpose, which is mainly for generating and organising ideas in her PhD thesis. Also, the information you provide might be used in the researcher's conference presentation, conference paper, academic paper, academic reports, book publications and academic projects application reports. The research has been approved by the SPS REC.

- **Further contact details for general enquiries and for any complaints about the research practice**

If you have any concerns or questions in regards of this research, please contact the researcher via either email: yh17185@bristol.ac.uk, or phone: +8613519206918 (only for use of this research). If you have any further question or concern, please contact my first supervisor Professor Misa Izuhara via email: m.izuhara@bristol.ac.uk.

Informed Consent

Research project Title: Growing city, moving people and accessing rights: land requisition and social integration of internally displaced farmers in Yinchuan, China

Please tick the appropriate boxes   **Yes**   **No**

1. Taking part in the study

I have read and understood the study information, or it has been read to me. I have been able to ask   ☐   ☐
questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer   ☐   ☐
questions and I can withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason.

I agree to have this interview recorded.   ☐   ☐

2. Use of the information in the study

I understand that information I provide will be used in Ye He's PhD thesis. Also, the information you
provide might be used in her conference presentation, conference paper, academic reports, journal   ☐   ☐
and book publications. In addition, she will present research findings in her department meeting for
academic purpose, and the research findings might be used to apply her future research projects.

I understand the research is confidential and my personal information that can identify me, such as my   ☐   ☐
name or where I live, will not be shared beyond the study team.

I agree that my information can be quoted anonymously in research outputs.   ☐   ☐

3. Future use and reuse of the information by others

I agree that the information I provided will be deposited in the form of anonymised transcripts in   ☐   ☐
stored in University of Bristol's data repository, data.bris.

I understand the limits of confidentiality of the research.   ☐   ☐

Name of participant [IN CAPITALS]   **Signature**   **Date:**

_____   _____   _____

If you have any further questions, please contact the researcher, Ye He, via either email:
yh17185@bristol.ac.uk, or phone: +8613519206918 (only for use of this research).

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and, to the best of my
ability, ensured that the participant understands to what they are freely consenting.

Name of researcher [IN CAPITALS]   **Signature**   **Date**

_____   _____   _____

Confidentiality Protocol

All personal information will be anonymised to avoid the identification of participants. Participants' names will be replaced by identification codes in fieldwork notes and only anonymised data without identification codes will be archived and shown in the final thesis. Other identifiable information, such as job position, address and date of birth will not be shown on any files that open to public. Location names and company names will be replaced by fictional ones to avoid identification as well. As soon as no more data is needed from interviewees, all identifiable information will be removed.

In order to protect confidentiality, only the researcher will have access to data documents, such as interview notes, interviewee booklets and digital recordings. The digital recordings of interviews will only be available to the researcher for making transcript and research analysing use. Participants can have access to their own interview records if they request. All digital data will be encrypted and stored on the university server, and paper documents will be placed in a securely locked location.

The data will only be used by the researcher only for academic research purpose. Except for using in the researcher's PhD thesis, other potential use could be in the researcher's conference presentation, conference paper, academic reports, journal and book publications and application for research projects in local level or in national level in China. The data provided by interviewees will be deposited in the form of anonymised transcripts in stored in University of Bristol's data repository, data.bris research data repository.

The limits of confidentiality in this research will be informed to participants in advance. Confidentiality will not be breached unless participant disclose information in relation to harming themselves or others. I will discuss with my supervisors as soon as possible after any incident to see whether the activity should be report or not. If breaking the confidentiality is necessary, this would be communicated to the participant as soon as possible. The process will fully be complied with the guidance of University of Bristol.

Recruitment letter

[Date]
[recipient]

Subject: Inviting to participate in a PhD research project

Dear [recipient],

My name is Ye He. I am a PhD candidate in School for Policy studies in University of Bristol, UK. I write this letter to invite you to participate in my PhD research project entitled: 'Living conditions and the sense of belonging of the displaced farmers in Yinchuan, China'. This research is a self-funded project which is independent of any organisation or agency. This research is supervised by two professors of School for Policy Studies and fully complied with the research procedure guidelines and ethical guidelines of University of Bristol.

This research aims to explore the long-term impact of development-induced displacement on the displaced people's living condition and sense of belonging. This research will fill in research gaps of lacking research in Yinchuan, and even in Ningxia, in international-level academic research, and will potentially provide evidence for policy makers to identify the availability and absence of service that could facilitate social integration of displaced people into host community.

You are invited to participate in this research if you are:

- Between the age of 35-60;
- Previous farming land was expropriated by the Chinese government between 2002-2005 because of development projects construction;
- Living in community A for more than 15 years.

Participation is voluntary and there is no consequence for choosing not to involved in. You will be fully informed about the research and sign a consent form before interview. In this research, personal information will be anonymised and fully confidential. If you agree to participate, you will be invited for an interview with me for about 1 hour in the location chosen by you. You are free to refuse to answer any question. You will have a small gift to thank for your participation.

I would be grateful if you agree to take part in this research. Please contact me by email, phone call or message if you're interested in participating in this research. Thank you for your attention on this matter.

My contact details: email: yh17185@bristol.ac.uk; phone: +8613519206918

Sincerely,
Ye He
PhD Candidate,
School for Policy Studies,
University of Bristol

Topic guide for interviews with stakeholders

The following questions will be asked in Chinese in interviews. The sequence of the questions might be adjusted to match interviewees' respondence. More questions might be generated during interviews. Before each interview, I will introduce myself and the research briefly, and ask for participant's permission to audio record our conversation.

Categories	Topic guide for interviews with stakeholders

Sub-district officers	Main concern: the implementation of resettlement and compensation policy over time and the effects of policies, and the relationship with residents' committees and district government
	
	1. General information about the interviewees and their organisation
	
	    (1) About your organisation:
	
	• Could you tell me about your organisation (for example, staff size, organisational structure, the functional responsibilities, especially the works in association with residents in Community A)?
	
	    (2) About you:
	
	• Can you please tell me about your role and how long have you worked in this position?
	
	2. The process of implementing displacement and the following-up resettlement policies
	
	• Could you tell me about the policies that have been implemented regarding to improving displaced people's living condition?
	
	• What is the process of making these policies? In what ways the public opinions have been involved and considered in the process of making these policies?
	
	• What are the main challenges in implementing these policies?
	
	3. The impacts of displacement and resettlement policies
	
	• How about the feedbacks of implementing these policies? And what do you think of these feedbacks?
	
	• In your opinion, what are the benefits and unfavourable effects of introducing displacement on displaced people's life?
	
	• In your view, how far do you think these policies are successful or not? Why?
	
	4. Policy improvement
	
	• In your opinion, is there any part of policy need to be changed, or the way policies was implemented need to be changed in any way? Why and how?
	
	5. Work with residents' committees and district government
	
	• What is the relationship between your organisation and residents' committees / district government?
	
	• Could you elaborate on your organisation's workflow or process for completing a specific tasks or projects in relation to residents in Community A (for instance, providing the professional trainings and solve the residents' disputes)

	Finishing off: Do you want to add anything else?

Community leaders	Main concern: the efforts residents committee made to deal with displaced residents' issues and the effectiveness of their work.
	
	1. General information about the interviewees and their organisation：
	
	    (1) About your organisation?
	    • Can you please tell me about your organisation (when was the residents' committee set up, the staff size, organisational structure, the responsibilities of your organisation)?
	    (2) About you:
	    • Can you please tell me about your role and how long have you worked in this position?
	
	2. Information about residents in Community A and their post-displacement lives
	    • Could you please share a bit of your working experience in association with displaced residents in Community A?
	    • What changes have residents experienced over years? (for example, in terms of their living condition, housing, employment, professional trainings attainment, health insurance and pension)
	    • How do the displaced people feel about the displacement and the compensation provided to them? In your opinion, what are the impacts of displacement on residents' lives? And what are the main challenges for them to adapt to new environment?
	    • What do they think about their post-displacement lives?
	
	3. Experience of dealing with residents' disputes in Community A
	    • What are the typical disputes that the residents have in different stage of displacement? How do these disputes been discussed in your organisation and resolved?
	    • What feedbacks have you received in terms of addressing residents' issues?
	
	4. The work with the local government departments
	    • What kinds of residents' opinions and demands are usually conveyed to the local government? Which department? What happened then?
	    • What do you think of the current policies and schemes in relation to improving the post-displacement life of residents? And how does your organisation involve in the policy-making process?
	
	5. Finishing off: Do you want to add anything else?

Managers of NGOs	Main concern: the efforts NGOs made to provide different services and resources to displaced people.

	1. General information about the interviewees and their organisation：
	(1) About your organisation:
	• Can you please tell me about your organisation (when was your organisation set up, the staff size, organisational structure, the responsibilities of your organisation)?
	Who is funding the organisation? What do you think of the funding?
	(2) About you:
	• Can you please tell me about your role, responsibility and how long have you worked in this position?
	2. About the work in associate with helping displaced people
	• Can you please tell me your experience in working and helping displaced people? What feedbacks did you receive and what do you think of the effectiveness of the services you provided?
	• What kind of difficulties displaced people met have been addressed by your organisation? And why these difficulties need to be resolved by your organisation?
	• What are the difficulties or obstacles have you ever faced when providing services? If so, how did these difficulties been addressed?
	• How does your organisation interact or collaborate with other institutions (such as other NGOs, SOs, residents' committees and the local government)?
	• Are there any areas where services for displaced population are? And who do you think should take the responsibility of filling in these gaps?
	4. Finishing off: Do you want to add anything else?

Managers of property management company	Main concerns: scope of services, quality of services and difficulties in providing service to Community A.
	
	1. General information about the interviewees and their organisation：
	    (1) About your organisation:
	• Can you please tell me about your company (For example, when was your organisation set up, staff size, funding resources and the structure of your company)?
	    (2) About you:
	• Can you please tell me about your role, responsibility and how long have you worked in this position?
	2. The service provided in Community A
	    (1) Scope of services
	• Please tell me the services you provide in Community A.
	• Tell me about your daily work in Community A.
	    (2) Quality of services

	• What feedbacks have you received from residents about your service? How do you feel about these feedbacks? • How much property management fee do you charge (per month or per year)? What do you think of the price compared to similar companies in the same district? • What are the main areas/facilities that residents usually concerned about? Why? • What is the process of collecting property service charge? Do residents pay service charge on time? And what do you usually do if they do not pay the fee on time? (3) Difficulties in providing service • What are the main difficulties in your work? How do you address these difficulties? • How does your company interact with residents' committees and the local government agencies)? What do you think of these interactions? 3. Finishing off: Do you want to add anything else?

Managers of employment agencies	Main concerns: The local job market and labour market regarding to displaced people
	
	1. General information about the interviewees and their organisation :
	
	    (1) About your organisation:
	• Can you please tell me about your organisation (when was your organisation set up, the staff size and the service you provide?)
	    (2) About you:
	• Can you please tell me about your role, responsibility and how long have you worked in this position?
	
	2. The situation of local labour market
	
	• Tell me about the job market available to displaced people and what is the general employment status of displaced people?
	
	• What are the main concerns and expectations of displaced people when looking for a job?
	
	• What do you think of the effectiveness of your work in introducing jobs to displaced people? (For example, how many displaced people come to your organisation seeking employment services each month? Additionally, what proportion of these individuals are able to successfully secure employment, and what factors contribute to the challenges faced by those who are unable to do so?)
	
	• In your opinion, what barriers displaced people faced when hunting for jobs?
	
	3. The perceptions of employers
	
	• From your experience, what are the main expectations and concerns of employers when hiring displaced people?
	
	• In your opinion, is there any gap between the expectations of employees and employers? And does it affect the employment status of displaced people?

	• In your opinion, in what ways can improve the employment situation of displaced individuals? • Who should take responsibility for improving the employment status of the displaced group? 4. Finishing off: Do you want to add anything else?

Topic guide for interviews with displaced people

The following questions will be asked in Chinese in interviews. The sequence of the questions might be adjusted to match interviewees' respondence. More questions might be generated during interviews. Before each interview, I will introduce myself and the research briefly, and ask for participant's permission to audio record our conversation.

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1. About you:

- Name (changed to pseudonym)
- Age
- Ethnicity
- *Hukou* status (rural or urban *Hukou*)
- Family members
- Employment status
- Education level
- When you moved here and where you moved from

2. Resettlement experience and post-displacement lives

    (1) The displacement experience and residing in Community A
- Please tell me some of your experience of displacement.
- Please tell me about your years living in Community A.
- Compared to your previous life in rural village, what do you think of the life in the city?
  (2) Employment:
- Can you please tell me about your working experience (and your family member's working experience if you would like to share)? And why do you choose this job/these jobs? What job benefits can you access? What do you think of your current job?
  (3) Education:
- What are some of the educational or professional training programs you have completed, and how do you feel about them?
  What's your children's experience of education in city (if the interviewee has child/children)? What differences have you found between education in rural area and in the city?
  (4) Health care/ social welfare:
- What's your (or your family member's) experience of accessing health care in city? How does it compare to your previous experience in rural area? Any insurance could cover the medical expenses and what do you think of the insurance?
- Can you please tell me your experience of accessing urban pension schemes? How do you feel it compared with rural schemes?
  (5) Leisure time activities and social networks
- What do you usually do in your leisure time? And who do you usually associate with in your leisure time?
- How does living in the city affect your leisure time activities and social networks?

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(6) Overall opinion

- Have you ever felt that you have been discriminated against for being displaced? If so, could you give me an example if possible?
- Generally speaking, do you prefer to live in city or rural area? And why?

3. Addressing post-displacement issues

- What do you think of the compensation you have got for losing farming land when you look back?
- What do you think of the of the post-displacement supports you received from the government or other institutions since you moved to Community A?
- What kinds of supports do you think are crucial but still have not been provided? Why?
- If you are dissatisfied with government policies or community services, what actions do you take to address your concerns? Why?
- Tell me some of you experience of involving in addressing community affairs (such as community leader election).

5. Finishing off: Do you want to add anything else?