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Migrants and the new stage of public housing reform in China

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6. Conclusion and Discussion

Introduction

This thesis investigated urban social processes related to Chinese government attempts since 2010 to expand public housing provision as well as encourage migrants to participate in both the public housing regime and to permanently settle in urban settings. In contrast to previous policies, recent attempts have been considered the revival of public housing development in China (Chen et al., 2013), and have a close relationship with structural transformations in the Chinese economy and rising concerns about increasing social inequalities in cities (Li et al., 2016). In this chapter, the conclusions of the research carried out will be discussed and evaluated. Before that, I will briefly summarize the context of the research.

Since the opening up policy, the urbanization rate of China has leaped from around 18 per cent in 1978 to around 55 per cent in 2014 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2015). Meanwhile, since 2010, the share of migrants in the total urban labour force has jumped to over fifty per cent (China development research foundation, 2010). The transfer of rural-urban surplus labour has provided an inexpensive labour force for the growth of urban manufacturing and service industries, allowing China to build a vast export based economy. Unfortunately, the governments' payment for the economic-contributions of migrants has been poor; they have used the Chinese *hukou* system to restrict migrants' access to decent jobs and urban welfare benefits including public housing, education, health care, pensions, etc (Kuang & Liu, 2012). Inevitably, for a long time, migrants did not see cities as their future home, and to a large extent, they generally minimized their urban consumption and sent savings back to their hometowns (Li et al., 2009).

In the 2010s, however, the national government has appeared to improve the marginalized situation of migrants as the old link between migrants and the city has started to hinder the economic growth in China (Wang et al., 2015). The aging of urban population, the increasing scarcity of low-cost labour and the substantial slowdown of the inflow of migrants have made it difficult for China to maintain its focus on exports. Meanwhile, the burden of relying on government monetary investment to stimulate GDP growth has continued to accumulate. Within this context, the Chinese government established a series of structural reforms, officially called the New Urbanization Plan from March 2014, to revive its economic growth and shift its economic reliance from exports and governmental investments towards domestic demand (The state council of China, 2014). The New Urbanization Plan aims at building a more stable, socially secure and inclusive society for migrants, and to revive urban

economic growth. It announced that 100 million people, equivalent to 30 per cent of the migrant population, will receive an urban *hukou* by 2020. These policies have been established with multiple goals. First, absorbing more rural-urban working age migrants represents a convenient way to maintain the labour supply for urban industry. Second, promising migrants a chance to settle in cities permanently is likely to stimulate them to invest in housing and other goods, which would result in a significant increase in domestic demand. Third, once rural-urban migrants choose to change their official (*hukou*) identity from agricultural to non-agricultural, the government may eventually claim back their rural land. This would provide important new resources for future urban expansion. Given that migrants constitute over 40 per cent of the urban population, if the New Urbanization Plan is realized at a broad scale, the demographic and socio-economic impact of migrants could be very powerful.

One of the top priorities of the New Urbanization Plan is to reduce the barriers for migrants and their families to stay in cities in the long run (The state council of China, 2014). The particular targets are the *hukou* barrier to welfare benefits and access to public rental housing, the only type of subsidized housing that migrants can apply for. However, reforms have had rather limited success at the local level. There has thus been rising interest in whether creating urban inclusiveness would actually be provided for, and accepted by migrants (Huang et al, 2017; Hui et al., 2014). Although *hukou* reforms and access to public housing have long been a concern of academics, very little empirical research has focused on these issues: relaxed *hukou* and an increasing supply of public rental housing (Liu, et al., 2016). Moreover, although both academia and national reports reveal that migrants have expressed an increasing willingness to integrate more in cities (Cao, et al., 2015; Wang & Hu, 2015), their approach towards permanent urban settlement remains an under-researched issue.

The research undertaken and presented in this thesis aimed at filling the above research gaps. Taking Chongqing, so far the first city that has carried out a massive and inclusive public rental housing programme and that has made intensive efforts to enable migrants to acquire an urban *hukou* as an example, this thesis provides a timely analysis on the local implementation of the New Urbanization Plan and migrants' response to it before and after the policy transition. The theoretical contribution of the thesis related to first, linking the development of the housing system in China to the framework of the changing welfare state, second, exploring a re-organised government-market relationship which has, for the first time, helped the revival of public housing provision in China, and third, providing new insights into the roles that institutional reforms have played in influencing migrants' urban integration. More precisely, the objective was to examine whether the relaxed public housing policy and

inclusive *hukou* system have encouraged migrants' preferences for public rental housing and, the further step, to come up with a plan to settle in cities permanently. We divided the research into four questions, and answers to each research question are elaborated on below.

Answers to the Research Questions

Public housing in China, the perspective of welfare regimes

Chapter 2 applied the framework developed by Hoekstra (2003) to link the housing system in China to the welfare regime theories elaborated by Esping-Andersen (1990) and Holliday (2000, 2005). The results show that, overall, the housing system in China has developed from a social-democratic or socialist welfare regime to a more market-orientated one, with elements of the corporatist regime involved in the transition. The housing system in China has shared characteristics that reflect both western and eastern welfare regime constellations. These features varied across different stages in economic growth and societal development. The current housing system demonstrates elements of both social-democratic and productivist regimes. It is split into two sub-systems targeted at local residents and migrants, respectively, with the former focusing on social protection and the latter focusing on social investment. Our city level comparison between Chongqing and Beijing on contemporary public rental housing provision shows that, although the two cities have established contradictory policies and different scales of housing provision to migrants, policies share similar productivist welfare regime elements. Local governments have linked access to public rental housing to the needs of the local labour market, and the ultimate goal has been to facilitate local economic growth. The comparison shows significant diversity of the housing system within the national context, (in our study, either friendly for migrants, as in Chongqing, or strict, as in Beijing), a finding that is consistent with the phenomenon of 'variegated capitalism' or a 'hybrid system' in China (Wang & Murie, 2011).

The Chongqing public rental housing programme: structure, incentives and stability

Public housing provision in China provides a laboratory to re-examine and re-interpret the consociation of the national state, local governments and the market. That is because the contradictory institutions and forces in China: the developmental state at the central level, entrepreneurial local governments and growth-oriented marketization, can also be shown in other countries, especially in East and Southeast Asia (Ronald & Doling 2014; Kwon, 2005). Chapter 3 examined the provision structure of, and political and economic incentives behind the public rental housing programme in Chongqing. It showed that the emergence of the Chongqing programme was a result of a series of necessary pre-conditions. The specific political and economic role that Chongqing played in China, especially in the vast western

part of China, gave Chongqing a basis from which to establish possible reforms for the public rental housing programme. Moreover, the distorted political incentives of Bo Xilai, the previous municipal party secretary of Chongqing, played an important role in enforcing the financing of the public rental housing programme: expanding land-based finance, pushing forward *hukou* and '*dipiao*' reforms (see Chapter 3 for details) and empowering state owned enterprises in borrowing money from banks. Ultimately, Bo Xilai tried to use the programme as a rhetorical tool in his quest to secure a seat on the politburo standing committee.

The Chongqing programme brings us a new perspective on the development of public services in a market-oriented economy in the socialist society of China. It reveals that, instead of extending the role of the market, local governments may strengthen their control of markets and resources to enable greater cooperation between governmental and market actors in promoting public services. This cooperation reflects features of 'neo-liberalisation with Chinese characteristics', localized neo-liberalisation and state neo-liberalisation (Harvey, 2005; Tang, 2014). Moreover, we expressed concerns about the radical reforms which facilitated the construction of public rental housing, like land finance, the *hukou* reform and the *dipiao* policy. These concerns include the strategy of using land to obtain large loans and then relying on the appreciation of land prices to repay the loans, blindly transforming jobless migrants into urban citizen, putting rural migrants in an unfair land market.

Preferences for public rental housing among migrants in Chongqing

Based on retrospective data collected in Chongqing in 2013 and government released data available from the website of the public rental housing bureau (2013-2016), chapter 4 examined factors related to the stated preference for public rental housing, the behaviour of putting the stated preference into action, and the intensity or persistence of the action, as expressed by the number of times people applied for public rental housing. Results reveal that the gap between the stated preference for public rental housing and the actual access to public rental housing was large among migrants in Chongqing. Although the public housing programme in Chongqing has managed to accommodate a large population of migrants, consistent with experiences in other cities, a mismatch still existed between the public rental housing policy and migrants' status and housing demands. For instance, dissatisfaction regarding the distance between public rental housing and work/school and concerns over the success rate of housing allocation lotteries and over the stability of policy related to the revealed preference for public rental housing negatively. Application criteria that require applicants to provide proofs of a stable occupation and being able to pay social security insurances was still a main barrier for migrants to access public rental housing. Comparing with those migrants who stayed in private rental housing, migrants stayed in the employer

supplied housing were less likely to be willing to move into public rental housing. A larger dwelling and a location not close to industrial parks are conditions that motivated migrants to persist in applying for public rental housing. However, such types of public rental housing have been in short supply in Chongqing.

Permanent Urban Settlement of Migrants in Chongqing

Based on the survey data, in chapter 5 we examined whether policy transition has influenced migrants to settle in ‘Chongqing city’ permanently. As expected, in the first two years of policy transition, migrants became more likely to state a preference for permanent urban settlement in ‘Chongqing city’. However, occupancy in public rental housing did not greatly encourage migrants to really strive for permanent urban settlement. It even discouraged many of them to realise such a preference through buying a public rental housing unit. This shows that migrants who actually lived in public rental housing might have become dissatisfied with either public rental housing or the associated welfare benefits of public rental housing. Only disadvantaged migrants were more likely to make efforts to achieve permanent urban settlement through buying public rental housing. Moreover, the *hukou* system created a dichotomy between intra-provincial rural–urban migrants and other categories. Priority has been given to the former because of the economic benefits that these migrants may bring to local governments via exchanging their rural assets for permanent urban settlement. Older migrants treated permanent urban settlement as the guarantee of accessing the local old-age pension programme, and would be more likely to state such a preference. These results indicate that in the near future, there might be a concentration of disadvantaged and jobless migrants in public rental housing neighbourhoods.

Discussion

The research presented in this thesis, and the conclusions drawn from it, produced much material for continued discussions on welfare regimes, the housing provision structure, access to public rental housing, and access to cities. This will facilitate new debates about the New Urbanization Plan. The thesis pointed out that the Chinese government has treated the expansion of public housing as a solution to multiple problems, including the economic downturn, the slowing growth of domestic demand, a growing shortage of the urban labour force, and increasing social inequalities between local residents and migrants, as well as between advantaged and disadvantaged migrants. There remain many obstacles to the process of realizing national goals, such as conflicts between the national and local governments, the lack of political and economic incentives for local governments, the poor quality of public rental housing, inequalities regarding access to public rental housing, and dissatisfaction with

public rental housing. The thesis addressed the issues above, and I will discuss them further below. We also consider some shortcomings of the thesis and suggestions will be given for future research.

Thoughts about research on housing provision structure

The Chongqing programme demonstrates how local government apparatus tap into market resources for the efficient construction of public rental housing. The realization of the programme requires a level of coercive power of the municipality and a high degree of cooperation between the government and the market. Since 2011, other Chinese cities too have established experiments, working out modes in which market sectors take major responsibility in investment in public rental housing programmes. However, the de facto achievements have been limited and the goals of housing reform often remain rhetorical. It is important to note that some reforms in Chongqing established in 2011, like the *hukou* reform and the consolidation of state owned enterprises, have been mirrored in the New Urbanization Plan established in 2014. However, conflicts still exist in the process of implementing the New Urbanization Plan. Therefore, further studies are required on both the policy rhetoric and the policy practices regarding the development of public housing and *hukou* reform in China.

(1) Possible effects of the New Urbanization Plan

Our examination of the housing provision structure in Chongqing before 2013 logically did not take into account the institutional changes brought about by the New Urbanization Plan since 2014. Relevant future research may consider the impact of the Plan. For instance, it may be interesting to evaluate the current strategy of strengthening decentralized governance, which may actually prohibit the revival of public housing in China. Since the establishment of the New Urbanization Plan, the Chinese state has carried out a series of reforms. It put unprecedented pressure on, and gave much autonomy to local governments and forced them to engage with the growing housing difficulties faced by low- and low-to-middle income households. Goals of the New Urbanization Plan have been very ambitious. From 2012 to 2020, the state intends to expand the coverage of its public housing provision from 12.5 per cent to over 23 per cent of the urban population. Meanwhile, it aims to transfer 200 million migrants to cities by the year 2020 (The state council of China, 2014). However, means of achieving these goals have been vague. National guidelines for overcoming existing dilemmas in organising the investment in welfare development remain very unclear and impractical. The state holds the general principle that local governments should create their own financing arrangement to promote public housing without harming local economic growth. This institutional structure may worsen the relationship between national and local governments, and both sides may try to pass on the responsibilities to each other.

Chinese local governments actually have a tradition of being very pragmatic and perfunctory in increasing their material inputs in public housing since the decentralisation and tax reform (Zou, 2014). This relates to a complex institutional foundation, including the GDP dominated assessment of local performance, a preference for short-term return at the local level, property rights ambiguity, the recentralisation of fiscal revenues, decentralisation of economic decision making and land management, and local land based finance (Wu, 2002; Zou, 2014). Over forty years, local government investment in social welfare and the urban infrastructure has mainly relied on profits from land financing. The New Urbanization Plan calls for reduced reliance on land financing but does not suggest effective ways to ensure smooth public rental housing construction. Under this policy, along with the increasing scarcity of urban land and the increasing difficulties in land financing to support public investment, local governments have often considered spending land resources on public housing inadvisable. They prefer supplying less expensive land to industries and commercial business, even at a cost below that of acquisition, because there is a positive external effect on land values and taxation in their surroundings. These issues need to be considered in future studies on housing governance in China as well.

The institutional reform of the New Urbanization Plan has inevitably contributed to widespread informalities and irregularities in local governance. Apart from an incomplete and weak implementation of urban welfare, there may also have been intensive practices and even ill-considered reforms creating trouble at the local level in a very short period of time. This can be illustrated with the public rental housing programme, the *hukou* reforms and the *dipiao* policy in Chongqing. Admittedly, political incentives of Bo Xilai played a crucial role in the Chongqing programme. He tried to use the programme as a tool to achieve a higher political position, and exerted coercion over state-owned enterprises and market actors to realize his goals. Our study reveals that, under the Chinese political regime, political incentives of local governments have played an essential role in local policy implementation. With regard to the development of not-for-profit programmes, their role may even have been more important than the economic incentives provided. In other words, in the Chinese context, one of the keys for developing public rental housing might be the incentives, rather than the capabilities of, local governments. The Chongqing municipality announced that the investment in public rental housing (100 billion *yuan*) would bring about 400 billion *yuan* in GDP growth to Chongqing. Of course, not every local authority would have such strong incentives as Bo Xilai had, and there remain concerns over the feasibility and sustainability of the Chongqing programme. However, it reveals a possible direction for developing public rental housing. Unfortunately, the New Urbanization Plan does not pay sufficient attention to stimulating the political incentives of local governments. Local governments are requested to make their own

plans on public housing provision based on their specific ‘situations’. While they get rewards from the state if they fulfill the national construction targets, they are not seriously punished if they fail.

(2) Some emerging changes in public housing provision

The thesis also addressed the ways in which the Chinese government has exaggerated their achievements in public rental housing development in order to quell public concern over related social problems. Government reports on public housing development have always been positive. The statistics reveal that there has been a consistent increase in the total amount of subsidized housing in the 2010s. However, a closer look at the figures reveals that the increase in public rental housing has actually been limited. For instance, in 2015, the national government aimed to provide 7.4 million subsidized housing units, while the resettlement of squatters only added up to 5.8 million units – an increase of 1.1 million from the previous year (The state council, 2015). The remaining 1.6 million units of subsidised housing consisted of economic affordable housing and various sources of public rental housing, and only a tiny part of the latter was open to migrants. Future research should take this into account when using statistical data regarding the development of public rental housing. Some of the approaches in developing public rental housing, recognised as ‘tricks’ in this thesis, have been legalized since the New Urbanisation Plan. For instance, local governments have been encouraged to build public rental housing on collectively-owned rural land (Zou, 2014). Many issues concerning the property rights shared between urban housing developers and rural land owners, the compensation enjoyed by rural land owners, and the provision structure, require further examination.

This thesis only focused on the development of public rental housing, neglecting homeownership-oriented public housing. Both national and local governments have been motivating the market sector to fill the investment gaps in public housing development. However, except for pressure from the government, economic objectives still drive the incentives of market actors, when they are active in public housing investment. Therefore, homeownership-oriented public housing, like the squatter resettlement programmes and ‘limited price housing’, has been more interesting for the market. Financial burdens on building these housing types have been smaller than building public rental housing. For instance, resettlement schemes are part of urban renewal plans and demolished housing can mostly be found at good locations, which have high commercial value. This ensures a sufficient compensation to both the investors and displaced households. Moreover, monetised squatter resettlement stimulates displaced households to buy commercial housing. Vacant and unpopular housing is also allocated to displaced households as compensation. These all help deal with the oversupply of market housing. In contrast to that, public rental housing does not

bring in considerable market benefits either in the short run nor in the long run. The repayment of loans mainly relies on the rent from housing units and on other real estate income in public rental housing neighbourhoods. Meanwhile, there have been increasing difficulties regarding the maintenance of public rental housing neighbourhoods. There is a lack of funding for repairs and upgrading of the public facilities, and there are complexities in rent collection and checking the eligibility of the residents. Future research, therefore, should also pay attention to the reluctance of market sectors to invest in public rental housing.

Social exclusion and the New Urbanization Plan in China

The New Urbanisation Plan seems to have provided the migrant population a set of supporting housing policies and a stronger position with regard to access to urban citizenship. Unfortunately, the research in this thesis reveals that the interests of migrants are still secondary to the interests of business. Local governments use urban *hukou* transfers as a ticket for accessing welfare benefits and target their distribution to migrants who directly contribute to economic growth. Moreover, the New Urbanisation Plan may also bring new conflicts and cultivate social exclusion to urban in China. Below, we express some concerns and criticisms over the key findings of the thesis, and suggest some future research directions to improve the insights in this field.

(1) Inequalities between targeted and non-targeted migrants

The thesis demonstrated that, although the standards and regulations for accessing public rental housing have been different across Chinese cities, they reveal elements of a productivist regime, which has created inequalities between targeted and non-targeted migrants. In Beijing, migrants with advantages in occupation skills, education level or wealth accumulation are prioritized. The image of Chongqing is more complicated. The privileged migrants in Chongqing have been either migrants with a stable occupation and able to pay insurance contributions or intra-provincial rural–urban migrants who exchange their rural assets for an urban *hukou*. The former provides a more ‘desirable labour force’ for urban industry and the latter brings new land resources for future urban use.

As the fundamental ideology of the New Urbanisation Plan is to enhance domestic consumption by providing urban citizenship to migrants, priorities are given to existing migrants who have already realised a fairly stable life in cities, rather than disadvantaged migrants who actually are more likely to prefer public rental housing and permanent urban settlement. The *hukou* reform aims at legalizing the stay of these disadvantaged migrants in cities, and the provision of public rental housing aims to facilitate this process. Criteria for getting access to permanent urban settlement are still related to occupation, wealth and length of stay. However, chapter 5 shows that those migrants who stated a preference for permanent

urban settlement might not really access public rental housing. This indicates that the targeted migrants may already have managed to find solutions for their housing problems themselves. The welfare benefits provided by the New Urbanisation Plan may not be sufficiently attractive and helpful for such migrants. This may undermine the roles that public services play in improving the livelihood and citizenship of all migrants in cities, and may further increase inequalities between migrant categories.

The other inequality that has been revealed is between intra-provincial rural–urban migrants and inter-provincial rural–urban migrants. As discussed in chapters 4 and 5, the former have been privileged by the local government because of the economic benefits they were likely to gain from reclaiming their rural assets, after the migrants had claimed urban citizenship. Inter-provincial rural–urban migrants would not contribute to their destination cities in the same way because of the Chinese land management law. Eventually, they have to return their rural assets to the village community they belong to. In 2011, nearly 80 per cent of migrants have flown to the Eastern regions of China, and in these areas, inter-provincial migrants accounted for over 67 per cent of the migrant population (National Population and Family Planning Commission, 2012). There has been ongoing discussion on who should pay for the welfare benefits of these migrants, the national state, the city that receives migrants, or the regions where the rural assets of migrants are returned to? This phenomenon of favouring intra-provincial rural–urban migrants has not been popular in first-tier cities like Beijing because in these cities the urbanization rate is extremely high, which makes the price gap between rural and urban land much smaller. However, it has been popular in second-tier and third-tier cities as these cities still have more undeveloped land to profit from and to generate government revenues.

This thesis did not include involuntary migrants, but we would like to briefly address the dichotomy between voluntary and involuntary migrants here. Involuntary migration is a practice of policy-based incorporation that provides urban citizenship to rural residents in the process of land acquisition. The process has no selection on occupation, education and income, and is only tied to the land of the involuntary migrants. Therefore, it also brings a considerable number of low-skilled involuntary migrants who become jobless and live on government compensation after receiving an urban *hukou*. This has been considered ‘urbanization with joblessness’. In contrast, permanent urban settlement of voluntary migrants is featured as ‘urbanization with middle class’ or ‘the elite-based selection’. It is estimated that the population of involuntary migrants would increase to 100 million in 2020 (Huang, 2010). Concerns should also be raised about the livelihood of involuntary migrants in China.

The hukou reform and the permanent urban settlement plan

The spatial imbalance between targeted and non-targeted cities in connection to the New Urbanisation Plan is also an issue. The Plan has nominated the third-tier and fourth-tier cities as the main cities to carry out *hukou* and housing reforms. It also authorised cities to come up with their own regulations by which migrants can enjoy urban benefits. However, and in contrast, first and second tier cities, the large coastal cities, have proposed stricter requirements that favour migrants with a high education level or work skills at the expense of low-skilled migrants. They turned out to have fewer restrictions on permanent urban settlement. The national government intends to use *hukou* and housing policies to re-allocate the migrant population among Chinese cities. However, the fundamental driving force of migration has been the concentration of more job opportunities, higher salaries, good-quality resources and public services in the destination cities. Although the Chinese state has carried out many policies to narrow the gap between larger coastal cities and the third-tier and fourth-tier cities, the former have still been more attractive to migrants. In 2015, nearly 75 per cent of the migrant population was concentrated in eastern regions of China (National Population and Family Planning Commission, 2016). Unless this resource bias is re-addressed and social services and infrastructure are more equitably available across the country, the strategy of setting higher entry requirements may not help large cities in coping with the massive influx of migrants. Setting a quota to artificially guide migrants to third and fourth tier cities may not work either because it doesn't seem to be what migrants want.

Very little research has examined how migrants in China actually wish to settle in cities, and in what types of cities? Moreover, there has been a lack of research testing whether the national goal of bringing 200 million migrants to cities by the year 2020 is reasonable. As the value of rural land keeps rising, migrants would actually like to maintain their original status for over more years before they make a final decision on their settlement. If reforms on *hukou* and public rental housing would not absorb enough migrants as urban citizens, local governments may use the New Urbanisation Plan as an excuse to push more rural migrants off their land. In such a case, conflicts would emerge in the process of taking away the rural assets of migrants while promises of compensation are defaulted on. Problems may arise as conflicts between vulnerable individuals and mighty government or business interests. However, disagreements can also be caused by the corruption of local governments and village collectives, and migrants who are bargaining for compensation.

The change from migrants to urban residents is not a simple issue of shifting *hukou* identity and gaining access to urban welfare, even though these are important too. Relocation and dramatic changes in their livelihoods will often be a shock to migrants. It relates to the life and occupation trajectory of the family, their sense of belonging to the city, adaptation to

an urban life-style, status in the labour market, and so on. However, the key problem of the New Urbanisation Plan is that it does not intend to raise the capacity of migrants who settle in cities. It just aims at attracting migrants who want to settle in cities. Similarly, the ultimate goal of the New Urbanisation Plan is to boost the consumption level of migrants. However, the government has not established means for migrants to increase their income. The government intends to accomplish the shift from low-consumption to high-consumption migrants via upgrading the urban industry and expanding the service sector. The current conflict is that, on the one hand, migrants are aware of their importance for urban industry and know their economic rights in rural areas, while on the other hand, the New Urbanisation Plan does not ensure migrants equal access to, and fair payment for their urban work, as well as sufficient compensation from handing over their rural assets to the rural community. These conflicts will likely negatively impact on the participation of migrants in the New Urbanization Plan. Moreover, the rapid, massive and concentrated construction of public rental housing and other welfare goods and services, like schools, carry great risks, including social dislocation, concentrated poverty and misguided investment. The fraught history of social housing projects in America and Europe would be a warning to China. In contrast with the popularity of public rental housing in Chongqing, there have been notable vacancies in some other cities, and this contradiction needs further exploration. Finally, I would argue that economic incentives are still dominant in the implementation of the New Urbanisation Plan, and it is still too early to call the New Urbanisation Plan a people-centred plan which brings with it greater equity and builds an inclusive society.

Shortcomings of the selection of Chongqing and Data collection

Although the thesis has addressed the representativeness of the city of Chongqing, there are also some limitations regarding that selection. Compared with other cities, Mr Bo Xilai, the Communist Party secretary of Chongqing between 2007 and 2012, has used rare and extreme personal power to ensure the realization of the housing programme. The programme should, however, not be ascribed to the strength of one person. After Bo Xilai was found guilty of corruption and left Chongqing in 2013, as we described in Chapter 5, the Chongqing programme is still running and has achieved its goals before 2016. So far, other cities in China have not achieved such a massive construction of public rental housing. From this perspective the scale of the Chongqing housing programme might not be very representative, but in the meantime the main scheme of the provision, such as cooperation between the state-owned-enterprises and market sectors, and *hukou* and land reforms that assisted the programme, has already been imitated by a range of other cities.

Second, the definition of ‘the Chongqing city’ requires some discussion. With its territory reaching 82400 km², Chongqing actually should be treated as a province in China. To make the empirical study comparable with other city-level studies, in terms of urbanisation stage, population structure and economic status, we selected the core nine districts of Chongqing as our survey area. The selection was based on a common recognition of the urban planning of Chongqing. Statistics also provide other classifications of the core of Chongqing, like the old core six district zone which is smaller than, and inside of, the core nine district zone. There is also the ‘one-hour economic zone’ which is bigger than and includes the nine district zone. Third, due to a lack of data, when introducing ‘Chongqing city’, we did not consider the net migrant population of that area. It has been shown that the net migrant population of the whole territory of Chongqing has been negative. However, a certain proportion of Chinese large cities have had a positive net migrant balance. It may be a good idea for future research to distinguish cities also by their net migrant population, as this factor reflects the attractiveness of a city for migrants and also partially indicates the population structure of a city.

Third, the main survey conducted as part of this thesis in 2013, was realized only two years after the establishment of the Chongqing programme. At that time, the future of public rental housing policy was very promising. The municipality still declared that public rental housing would be sold to qualified households at a discounted price after a five-year rental period. The application requirement was also relaxed in 2012. These are important considerations for interpreting the research in this thesis. It seems relevant to conduct follow-up surveys to look at how residents’ attitudes have changed along with the development of the housing programme in Chongqing. In that regard, efforts should also be made to include migrants who returned to their hometowns during the study period. These migrants have now been excluded, and this may cause some bias in our results.

Finally, as the actual achievement of permanent urban settlement among migrants was still rare when we conducted the survey, the thesis could only reveal the initial attitudes of migrants towards the policy transition. We should be aware that these initial preferences might not always result in actual practices.

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