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**BULLDOZING FOR BUSINESS  
STATE-LED DISPOSSESSION IN THE CONTESTED  
SPACES OF SHANGHAI'S WESTERN OUTSKIRTS**

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**BULLDOZING FOR BUSINESS****State-led dispossession in the contested spaces of Shanghai's western outskirts**

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**ABSTRACT**

In this paper, we document the process of displacement of over 11,000 villagers who were removed from their homes and relocated in modern apartment blocks in order to make way for the construction of a new business district for Shanghai at Hongqiao in the west of the city. We conceptualise this process in terms of a regime of displacement, seeing it as part of a much larger move undertaken by the Chinese party-state to create a fully urbanised society to serve a modernised economy. In this process villagers lose their source of livelihood while the state gains the land from which it is then able to extract maximum profit before handing it over to the business sector (both state-owned and private).

Our research involved interviews with officials and villagers and an extensive questionnaire survey of those who were displaced. We asked villagers about their lives and livelihoods before relocation, about compensation and the process of relocation and about their quality of life and means of making a living after their relocation. In terms of the relocation process our findings underline the multiple injustices that stem from the unequal relationship between the state and the villagers. Previous to their relocation, villagers had made a living through farming and renting out accommodation to migrants. Even though, the authorities had given many relocatees multiple apartments, we found that the former villagers felt high degrees of uncertainty around their ability to make a living. The overwhelming feeling was that while the physical environment had improved they had lost their economic security. The state was thus able successfully to pursue its overall aims of boosting the regional economy of the west of Shanghai and urbanising the population.

**KEYWORDS:** dispossession, regime of displacement, Shanghai, violence, urbanisation.

## **1. BULLDOZING FOR BUSINESS: STATE-LED DISPOSSESSION IN THE CONTESTED SPACES OF SHANGHAI'S WESTERN OUTSKIRTS**

### **1.1 Introduction: megaprojects and displacement in Shanghai**

Urbanisation is an ubiquitous process in contemporary China, much of it involving dispossession and forcible relocation of people in order to conform with the party-state's vision of a reconfigured landscape along 'modernised' lines. The dispossession and relocation occurs in many different areas and for a number of ostensibly different reasons. In this paper, we introduce one salient case in which over 11,000 people were in effect forced to move from their villages into purposely built apartment blocks in order to make way for a new business district in Shanghai. More specifically we examine the detailed mechanism for displacement, focusing on the process of calculating and negotiating compensation and on the lives of villagers before relocation and their expectations and experiences of life afterwards. Our principal finding is that, despite a new living environment that a majority of the displaced villagers acknowledge to be better than the one they were forced to leave, the removal of a reliable source of income in the form of rent and a scarcity of suitable jobs has made them more vulnerable.

Hongqiao, the focus of this study, lies in the west of Shanghai and is one of the largest urban construction projects that China has yet seen. The project has two components. The first is a transport hub, including a new terminus station for high-speed trains linking to the existing airport, which itself has been expanded. This was completed in 2010 and has already become the city's main point of connection with the surrounding Yangtze River Delta with passenger flows of 182 million in 2011, its first full year. The second is a business zone, on which work began in 2009. Considerable effort has been put into the project by the Shanghai Municipal Government, which sees Hongqiao as an equivalent project to Pudong in the east of the city, a project of national as well as regional significance. While Pudong serves to link the Chinese economy to that of the rest of the world, Hongqiao is envisaged as a regional and national equivalent, a focal point for business -- and in particular the higher order service sector -- and transport in the delta region.

The project has had a profound impact on the west of Shanghai – on its landscape, economic development and urban spatial structure. It is a huge national project that has affected a large number of local residents, migrants and owners and employees of small and medium-sized factories and companies, all of whom have been forced to make way for the project. The Hongqiao project was managed by a state-owned organisation, Shenhong Company, set up by the municipal authorities in 2009. It involved the acquisition of 17.7 square kilometres and the demolition of all that stood on this land, including a total of 11 villages made up of 76 smaller communities, involving over 11,000 registered residents, 4000 households and over 1700 enterprises (in addition to an unknown number of unregistered migrants, likely to be half as much again). This represented a new demolition and relocation record for Shanghai.<sup>1</sup>

As for the relocatees, their future lives hinged to a large extent on the amount of compensation they would receive. It is not surprising, therefore, that relocated villagers were very concerned about the compensation mechanism and had both deep fears and high expectations for the relocation. Meanwhile, local government tried to find ways to reduce the cost of relocation and resettlement of residents. Because funding for relocation

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Huacao township government and Minhang District officials, 4 August 2012.

was fixed and compensation was deducted from the budget for the whole project, the amount of compensation payments directly determined the funds available for the project thereby affecting its progress. Compensation, therefore, became the principal concern both of local government and of displaced residents.

## **2. PLACING CHINA IN DISPOSSESSION DISCUSSIONS**

Before discussing the empirical results of the field work in more detail, the paper now sets out the conceptual framework within which this research was conducted. That primitive accumulation and David Harvey's (2003) re-articulation of the concept as accumulation by dispossession have purchase beyond a notional neoliberal heartland, even if with some qualifications, has been amply demonstrated in various settings. Writers have set accumulation by dispossession within the context of structural adjustment programmes and the pauperization of the Global South (see, for example, Bush, 2007). Mike Davis (2006) has written about the creation of a growing urban proletariat living in vast urban slums, while Saskia Sassen (2010) delineates two processes in the operation of accumulation by dispossession, extraction and expulsion, arguing that for each type of extraction that occurs, there is an act of expulsion that sees people removed from their homes and displaced from their livelihoods. For Tom Gillespie (2016), the act of dispossession, at least in a Global South city like Accra, involves above all expulsion, expulsion from home, from urban territory and from the place of work. This he calls accumulation by urban dispossession. Michael Janoschka and Jorge Sequera, for their part, see "accumulation by displacement" as best reflecting the characteristics of gentrification in South American cities (2016, p. 7). In an East Asian context, writers such as Seong-Kyu Ha (2004) and Hyun Bang Shin and Soo-Hyun Kim (Shin and Kim, 2016) have represented urban restructuring in South Korean cities in terms of speculative urbanization based on the demands of capital accumulation.

Much of the commentary on the social consequences of urban restructuring in China is cast in the rather technical terms of demolition and relocation (see, for example, Li et al., 2014) as they accurately translate the very widely used Chinese term *chaiqian*, which itself is made up of two characters, the first of which means to demolish and the second to move. Much work is focused around demolition and eviction and compensation versus relocation (Ho, 2013).

Amongst the few to relate this discussion to Marxian theoretical parameters of dispossession and accumulation are Hyun Bang Shin and Michael Webber. Shin (2016) sees accumulation as the sine qua non of urbanisation: without accumulation of land there is no possibility for the speculative developmental activities that enable local governments to function and ensure economic growth. Accumulation of land involves dispossession through expropriation of housing and use rights. Dispossession, indeed, "is key to China's speculative urbanisation" (2016, p. 484). It is required in order to create the market for property that not only enables economic growth driven by speculative urbanisation but also allows political elites to reap political as well as economic dividends. It is "top officials, overseas investors and domestic industrialists as well as the emerging middle-class" (2014a, p. 513) who benefit from accumulation.

In this paper, we embrace Webber's sense of accumulation as a totalising project but reject his apparent understanding of the market as an institution independent of the agency of the party-state (2008a; 2008b). Our argument builds on that of Shin (2016); we too see urbanisation as the driving force behind the dispossession and accumulation processes. We highlight the failure of the state to respect the rights of relocated villagers to a secure livelihood; and while we agree that this urbanization process is based on speculation, we see its primary objective as being ideological, that of a modernization understood through

the prism of urbanization. What we see in China, we argue, is indeed a form of accumulation by dispossession, but it is more specifically dispossession for state-led urbanization.

As we explain below, dispossession is the first and the most crucial stage in the sequence of events and procedures that go to make up the process of forcible state-led urbanization. Dispossession has its chronology, its geography and its methodology -- its when, where and how. The triggers are prestigious events like the 2008 Beijing Olympics (Broudehoux, 2007), the 2010 Shanghai World Expo and the Asian Games held in Guangzhou also in 2010 (Shin, 2014b). Further large-scale acts of dispossession accompany the hundreds of massive urbanisation projects on urban peripheries, from industrial and science parks to university towns and new urban centres such as Kunming New City and Zhengdong (Li *et al.*, 2014; Xue *et al.*, 2013). Hongqiao, which we consider here, is one such project.

The methods of dispossession and the closely entwined act of displacement are generally seen as conflict-ridden (Wong, 2016; Shih, 2010) and violent (Sargeson, 2013; see Janoschka and Sequera, 2016, p. 15, for a similar argument in the Latin American context). This is an exercise in state power necessitating no consultation with those affected (Lin, 2015) and constant uncertainty concerning the timetable; Hsing calls it “phase-by-phase demolition” (2010, p. 193). It is lacking therefore in transparency, and given that deals are often brokered on a household basis, it is highly divisive (Ho, 2013). Resistance is widespread but scattered and bound by its own rituals (Cai, 2008; Shao, 2013). It is riddled with ambiguities around ownership and rights; the rights and interests of migrants, for example, are hardly ever considered (Lin, 2015). Institutional diversity encourages informal processes, tending to harm the interests of village households (Wu *et al.*, 2013).

Our detailed study of Hongqiao enables us to set out a picture of what we call the Chinese displacement regime in the belief that the size and location of Hongqiao in Shanghai enables us to extend these ideas more broadly across the territory, given that Shanghai enjoys a special place in the ‘icono-topography’ of state-led modernization and urbanization in China (Wu 2003; Cartier 2015). We argue here that China has a distinctive displacement regime, but one that shows some similarities to patterns in South Korea and elsewhere. The distinctive nature of China’s displacement regime stems in the first place from its institutional structure. The party-state, operating what is best described as state capitalism, continues to enforce a double system of territorial and social division. That is to say, in the first place, all land is categorized as either urban or rural, and the country’s inhabitants are similarly divided into those who are registered residents of rural areas and of urban areas. Urban land is owned by the state, while rural land is owned by collective organizations, but in neither case is this a straightforward situation, especially in regard to the precise nature of the collective, and it is only the state that is allowed to develop land, meaning that rural land must first be transferred. With this in mind, China’s displacement regime can be broken up into its sequential components, dispossession, negotiation and contestation, and relocation, each of which will be examined in one of the sections that follows.

## **2.1 Dispossession: life before the Hongqiao project**

We start our investigation into the forced move of villagers to make way for the Hongqiao project by examining their accounts of the ways they lived and earned a livelihood before their move. This, in other words, is an account of dispossession. We look here primarily at the environment for the villagers’ everyday life, their living conditions and their income situation prior to relocation. All those registered residents who were displaced by the Hongqiao project came from Minhang District, and most of them from Huacao Township,

a lower tier administrative territory within the district. They were all compensated and resettled in Aibo Community, a move that was initiated in July 2009.

Before the development of the Hongqiao project, Minhang District in the far west of Shanghai had been peripheral to the economic development of the city; it was a peri-urban area with a low rate of urbanisation, classified as rural, meaning that the land was formally owned by village committees unlike the land in Shanghai's central districts, which has always been classified as urban and owned by the state. Huacao, as one of 12 townships within the jurisdiction of Minhang District, was semi-rural and semi-urban, characterised by a mix of a large number of small-sized private and collectively owned factories, farmland and scattered settlements on the fringe of Shanghai. The overwhelming majority of residents surveyed held rural *hukou* (household registration certificates), with only a minority of 6% holding urban *hukou* before relocation, although it should be noted that relocatees were given urban *hukou* after relocation.

One important aspect which had repercussions for the compensation process was the densification of the area due to the building of 'extra-legal' housing in the compounds of villagers' residences for the accommodation of migrant workers attracted by the presence of factories (Chung, 2010). The increasing number of factories in Huacao Township provoked an influx of floating workers attracted by new job opportunities and demand for rooms to rent increased dramatically. The lack of planning or response from the local state to provide housing was gradually filled by local villagers, who started to build or expand housing (generally upwards) on their own farmland without land-use planning and government permission. This was confirmed by our interviews, with almost 90% of villagers relating that they had built extra housing for rent by the time of relocation, and with some families earning more than 10,000 RMB each month from rents.<sup>2</sup> This additional living space became crucial in generating income to support the villagers' living costs, but the fact that these were considered illegal buildings by Minhang District Government caused repeated difficulties in the process of relocation in terms of compensation. The illegal nature of this housing was used as a tool by Minhang District Government to coerce villagers into moving. Finally, almost all the illegal living space was compensated at half the price of legal buildings.<sup>3</sup>

### **3. THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS: DISSEMINATE, SURVEY, NEGOTIATE AND MAKE COMPENSATION DEALS**

Displacing, compensating and relocating over 11,000 residents and workers is a hugely complex process undertaken by various arms and branches of the state. The main actors in this process in Hongqiao were Minhang District Government, Huacao Township Government, Hongqiao project headquarters, a series of 'arms-length' bodies set up by Minhang District Government to oversee relocation and negotiation, village committees and Xinhong Street Committee, which was responsible for social issues in the Aibo Community after relocation. In the following paragraphs we explain the different activities and functions that these state actors undertook.

We can think of the involvement of these actors in the complex process of relocation in terms of various phases. First came an information phase, involving the diffusion of information and propaganda trying to convince villagers to move. This was followed in order by surveys of land and housing, negotiations and bargaining, compensation deals,

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<sup>2</sup> 10 RMB are worth about £1 or \$1.50.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with an official from Minhang District Government, 8 August 2012.

relocation to temporary housing, the start of construction, choice of housing type and finally the first moves to the new Aibo Community in July 2009.

In order to promote the relocation scheme, a series of preparatory tasks was undertaken by Minhang District and Huacao Township governments. The relocation headquarters were established by Minhang District Government on 11 April 2006. This was made the command centre for the displacement and relocation of local villagers and factories. A mobilization meeting was held by Minhang District Government on 18 August 2006. Shen Jun, deputy mayor of Shanghai Municipal Government, attended the meeting, indicating the importance that the city's government placed on the task of relocation. From then on, the brunt of the relocation project was gradually shifted from Minhang to the relocation headquarters of the new Hongqiao hub, with Huacao Township Government undertaking the major task of relocation under the aegis of the relocation headquarters. The party committee secretary for Minhang District was nominated as head of the relocation headquarters and of Huacao Township Government. A relocation team with 650 officials from various departments of Minhang District and Huacao Township governments and village leaders from village committees was established and divided into 12 groups, with each allotted to one of the villages to be displaced (and one group working on two villages). These were called 'relocation working groups'. Each group was in charge of collecting land and housing information from the affected villagers' families and companies. This involved the controversial process of measuring up and agreeing on the size and dimensions of the land and properties of the villagers and factory owners so that a compensation fee could be established. The relocation working groups acted as a shield to deal with the problems of the villagers and protect officials at higher levels (Jiang *et al.*, 2016; Ho, 2013).

The process of displacement started with a reaching out by the state towards the affected residents, informing them of the situation and of the purported benefits of relocation. To this end, three open letters were sent, one each for affected local villagers, factory owners and migrant workers, in order to encourage them to leave. The letters to local villagers stressed the benefits of becoming urban residents in the new modern living quarters and public facilities of Aibo. At more or less the same time, public propaganda meetings were held in each village to introduce the process of negotiation around displacement, compensation and relocation. In addition, some promotional materials about the benefits of demolition and relocation were distributed in the villages to persuade villagers to leave. After those public meetings, relocation group teams negotiated with villagers on a household level with each household head and factory owner.

In the process of relocation, Minhang District Government adopted a strategy of 'divide and rule'. Relocation working groups negotiated with household heads on a private basis rather than negotiating publicly with the villages as a whole (Shin [2016] and Ho [2013] both describe a similar process). The amount of compensation for each family was kept confidential; villagers were not allowed to publicise their compensation payments. Relocation working groups had households due for relocation sign secret deals. In addition, 'relocation rewards' were promised to families who moved out early. Families, therefore, faced pressure to sign relocation contracts quickly. In this way resistance from households was weakened.

The urgency of the relocation task was driven by the need to have the Hongqiao transport hub operating in time for the opening of Shanghai Expo on 1 May 2010. The relocation had to be finished within the prescribed period in 2009, so the initial moves to win villagers over, undertaken by Minhang District Government shortly before it handed over duties to Huacao Township Government, were of particular importance. Great play was made of the

fact that local villagers would be resettled in the purpose-built Aibo Community, which had the important advantage of being very near to the Hongqiao hub, thus assuaging villagers' concerns that they might be relocated far away from their former homes as has frequently happened in Shanghai and elsewhere. Secondly, Minhang District Government published the community planning provisions, which presented visual impressions of the inside of the resettlement housing in order to let relocatees have a real image of their new housing. This step played a significant role in convincing villagers to accept the relocation.

### **3.1 Concerns and contestation around compensation**

Compensation was the most vexed issue in the process of relocation for villagers, and monetary and housing compensation were the most important part of the whole compensation package, directly affecting their future lives. According to local officials and village leaders, the question that villagers most frequently asked was, "How much compensation funding can my family get based on the compensation standard". In addition, local villagers had been worrying about how many apartments they would obtain from the relocation and were confused by the evaluation process employed by officials. When we interviewed villagers, they told us that the evaluation form was so complicated that they were totally confused and remained so even after receiving explanations. As for housing compensation, the number of apartments they could expect to get was the most practical problem when it came to the complicated evaluation standards.

Villagers were particularly concerned by issues of fairness around compensation; they tried to compare the compensation payments they received with those of their neighbours. Because of the lack of transparency and the case-by-case way in which the compensation was negotiated, there were further worries from villagers around the timing of when to finally agree to sign the compensation contracts. Villagers worried that the earlier they signed their contract, the less compensation they would receive and so they held back. This wait-and-see attitude was countered by Minhang and Huacao governments with the incentive policy referred to above. Villagers signing a contract within a fixed period of approximately two years were promised relocation subsidies and rewards; villagers who waited lost out on the reward. This proved to be a device that successfully nudged villagers towards signing. Villagers also complained to us of unfair compensation treatment because, they claimed, those local officials from Huacao Township Government and village leaders who were also relocatees won more compensation. In particular, they criticized village leaders for getting a greater number of apartments through relocation.

The task of relocation was finished within four years from its start in August 2006. All relocatees who signed a contract obtained their resettlement apartments before or during 2010. Eight households, however, refused to sign because they were dissatisfied with the compensation. They appealed to Shanghai Municipal Government and then, in person, to the central government in Beijing. By the end of 2015, three families had still not reached a final agreement for compensation with Minhang District Government, even eight years after their forced removal and the demolition of their homes.<sup>4</sup> There were a number of serious protests after relocation. Over one thousand relocated villagers gathered in front of the offices of Huacao Township Government and Xinhong Street Committee, and in the Hongqiao high speed rail and airport terminal buildings on a number of occasions in 2011 and 2012 including on China's National Day and during the National People's Congress as well as during its local equivalent to protest about low compensation and a lack of job opportunities. Such protests are not uncommon -- there were 180,000 'mass incidents' in 2010, the last year for which official figures have been published (Kennedy, 2012; Lee and

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with a Minhang District Government official, 28 September 2015.



Zhang, 2013; Hou, 2014). Nevertheless, our informants in the Minhang District Government told us that these demonstrations caused particular concern because Hongqiao was seen as Shanghai's flagship project. The authorities then introduced an additional inducement to each relocated households, a monthly payment of 200 RMB, but threatened to rescind the payment to families that had been protesting. The protests subsequently petered out.<sup>5</sup>

### **3.2 After relocation: the new Aibo Community**

After signing contracts for compensation and relocation, because resettlement housing in the Aibo Community was at least three years off completion, all villagers were given RMB 500 per month and told to find temporary accommodation in the open market or share with relatives. The elderly were given state accommodation provided by Minhang District Government.<sup>6</sup> Once the housing was complete, relocated villagers and their families 'returned' to a place that was actually close to where they had been living previously, but without land and a source of income -- and in a completely different environment (see Li *et al.*, 2014, for a similar case in Guangzhou).

The relocatees were settled in five villages of the new Aibo Community which go by the names of Aibo Village 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. Aibo Community is a newly built modern residential community located in the north-west corner of Hongqiao business zone. There are more than one hundred 13-storey buildings in the five 'village' areas of the Aibo Community, with most relocatees housed close to others from the same village. Based on the results of interviews and our survey in the Aibo Community, a majority of relocated villagers admitted that their living environment had improved compared to what it had been, and they were satisfied with their new apartments. The Aibo Community is equipped with various facilities which are normally only to be found in gated communities in urban areas. Fitness facilities and green spaces have been provided by local government, and an activity centre was built for relocatees for weddings and other ceremonies.

These and other facilities were also designed to attract other, non-relocatee residents to the Aibo Community. Initially the first phase of the Aibo Community was built to house the relocatees. As we know, villagers got more than one apartment so many of them started to sell or rent their secondary dwellings on the open market, bringing in new people attracted by employment opportunities in the Hongqiao project. This was formalised when a second phase was started in 2013 to attract new urban residents with higher incomes and educational backgrounds to create a mixed community.<sup>7</sup> Companies such as China National Offshore Oil Corporation and Wanke Property had been moving into the Hongqiao business district, and some of their younger employees rented apartments in the Aibo Community. But as their number grew, employees of these large companies predominantly took to buying apartments in the numerous gated compounds built around the Aibo Community, meaning that many of the relocatees' multiple apartments stood empty.<sup>8</sup>

The social infrastructure in Aibo Community was prepared with some care. In the first place, a new good-quality public high school affiliated to Shanghai Foreign Language University was established in Aibo Community, greatly improving the quality of educational provision in the area. Second, due to a relatively high proportion of elderly

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<sup>5</sup> Interview, 29 July 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Interviews with relocated villagers, 28 July 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Hongqiao Business Zone Management Committee and Shenhong Company officials, 10 January 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Interviews with an official from Hongqiao Business District Management Committee and a tenant, 28 September 2015.

people, a nursing home was built to cater for senior citizens, as well as a market and some hotels. In addition, a number of public government agencies were located in Aibo Community, including new Hongqiao Township Government offices, a police station and hospital. In terms of transportation, a bus service linking Aibo to the Shanghai city centre and other townships of Minhang district was established; the Hongqiao transport hub has two underground lines linking it to the city centre (but the stations are a long walk from Aibo). All in all, we were left in no doubt both by relocated villagers and village leaders that the living environment in Aibo Community was superior to that which had been left behind.

Despite all the new facilities in Aibo, an overwhelming majority of relocatees (94%) told us that they had lost out through the process of relocation as they had been deprived of the good standard of living they derived from rent and land dividends. When asked what the biggest change was after their relocation, over half gave reduced income as an answer. Interviewees tended to respond that they could live without advanced facilities but not without jobs and rental income. When comparing their lives before and after relocation, villagers maintained that they were more concerned about their income and job opportunities as sources of livelihood rather than about improving the living environment.

How relocated villagers earn their living after relocation has become an urgent problem for local governments in Shanghai and, indeed, throughout China. They have in effect become landless peasants as a result of the sheer scale of urbanisation in China in the past three decades. For relocated villagers whose only skills are in farming there is no way to make a living once they run out of compensation funds, and this has gradually become a serious social problem (Chen, 2013; Zhang, 2010).

#### **4. CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS: DISPLACEMENT AS PART OF TERRITORIAL REIMAGINING**

In this paper, we have used the results of an extensive survey of displaced villagers and interviews both with those who have been displaced and with officials in Hongqiao to tell a detailed story of how people are forcibly removed en masse from their homes and relocated elsewhere and what these people feel about their lives before and after the move. Our research has highlighted the inadequacy the measures taken by the state to create an appropriate environment within which relocatees could establish a new livelihood. We have conceptualized this whole process in terms of a displacement regime that is made up of a number of overlapping phases -- of dispossession, negotiation and contestation, and relocation. We argue that the party-state's displacement regime is an intrinsic part of its project to modernize by urbanizing, involving widespread dispossession on the road to state-led modernization and urbanization.

Central to our study has been an examination of the process of calculation, negotiation, compensation and relocation. On this, as we have shown and others too have argued, villagers were given no voice (Lin, 2015). While some local government officials went out of their way to explain the relocation and support them during the relocation, the villagers themselves were at no point given any choice in the matter, other than whether they wished to receive compensation in the form of new housing or in monetary form, and even this choice was offered in one hand and taken away in the other. Protest was considered the only way for relocated villagers to fight for their interests, but the authorities stood firm, apparently seeing firmness as the best way to maintain social stability (Cai, 2008; Lee and Zhang, 2013). In a move similar to that noted by Ho (2013), local government officials initiated a series of negotiations with individual households, never revealing their hand openly. Indeed, we agree with Shin (2016) that the state, appearing to offer 'generous'

compensation in the form of multiple apartments, has learnt to dispossess efficiently, winning consent when it was not using covert coercion in its displacement regime.

While relocated villagers gained nothing except apartments, the state took away the land and housing that formed the basis of their living in order to convert the land into a platform from which it could extract maximum profit as part of the project to construct at Hongqiao a new CBD for Shanghai. While large-scale urban development projects in and around Chinese cities like Shanghai differ in some aspects, they contain many similarities. They differ, for example, in that city centre dispossession normally involves the dispersal of residents to distant suburbs, but they all involve significant denials, denial of a voice in proceedings, denial of timely and transparent information on compensation, indeed denial of choice in nearly all matters affecting the relocation. All of this and more -- denial of the right to protest, for example -- is the consequence of the state's non-negotiable vision of an urbanised territory as the incarnation of a modern economy.

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