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## Understanding the Experiences of Relocates During Forced Relocation in Chinese Urban Restructuring

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August 2016

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Understanding the Experiences of Relocatees During Forced Relocation in Chinese Urban Restructuring**

Despite the massive forced relocation of residents during urban restructuring in China, there are no systematic studies on how residents undergo the process. Most studies concerning urban restructuring in China directly equate forced relocation with displacement, which has a negative connotation. This negative view overlooks the multifaceted effects of forced relocation on relocatees. This paper aims to develop a critical understanding of the forced relocation of residents during urban restructuring in China. It takes forced relocation to be a process with changing contents over time, and as a specific type of residential mobility that occurs in the context of urban restructuring. This paper presents a conceptual model that includes different stages and contexts to analyse the experiences of relocatees during forced relocation. It divides the process of forced relocation into three stages – the pre-demolition stage, the transitional stage and the post-relocation stage – and investigates the social, economic, physical, psychological and behavioural dimensions of the experiences of relocatees at the macro and micro levels. We argue that forced relocation in urban China is not necessarily equivalent to displacement. Studying the experiences of relocatees from the household and residential mobility perspectives reveals the dynamic, variable and complex nature of forced relocation.

JEL Classification: O18, R23

Keywords: experience of relocatees, forced relocation, urban restructuring, displacement, residential mobility, China

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# 1. Introduction

The forced relocation of residents, which often occurs in urban restructuring projects around the world, has been criticized for having negative effects on residents and their communities (Atkinson, 2000; Davidson, 2008). Forced relocation is often regarded as equivalent to displacement, which is understood as leading to class transformation in neighbourhoods through the removal of the original low-income/working-class inhabitants and the introduction of the middle class. Some argue that this is the consequence of space-based capital accumulation which affects social class interaction in the current era of neoliberalization and global economic restructuring (Davidson, 2011). Since 1978, large-scale forced relocation of residents and urban restructuring activities have taken place in China, resulting in the movement of residents from their original neighbourhoods to other ‘destination’ neighbourhoods. For example, in the city of Shanghai, roughly 1.1 million households were relocated between 1995 and 2012, and 72 million square metres of housing demolished.

Despite the current slowdown in economic growth, there is still more to come in China. In 2013, the central State triggered the second round of large-scale urban clearance projects, and it is estimated that between 2013 and 2017 approximately 10 million households will have been affected (Author, Date; The State Council of PRC, 2013). Such extensive residential redevelopment projects in China have affected the lives of massive numbers of relocatees (He and Wu, 2005; Wang, 2011). Several scholars have criticized the large-scale property-led restructuring projects in China for causing the displacement of low-income residents (He, 2007; He, 2012; La Grange and Pretorius, 2016; Gong, 2012). Some studies and news reports have shown that conflicts and tensions between people forced to move and local governments or developers arise due to disagreements about urban redevelopment projects or compensation (He, 2012; Hin and Xin, 2011; Sichuan News, 2009). However, other studies have demonstrated real improvements in the relocatees’ living conditions after relocation (Li and Song, 2009; Wu, 2004a; Wu, 2004b). Thus, in general, it could be argued that the effects of forced relocation on relocatees during urban restructuring projects are diverse and not necessarily negative.

However, there are no systematic studies on how forced relocation occurs and how it affects residents in China. Many questions are far from adequately addressed, such as: What are the outcomes of forced relocation?; How does it lead to different outcomes for different residents?; How and why does displacement occur during forced relocation?; and What are the social and policy implications of current forced relocation processes? Moreover, most studies focus on urban restructuring and forced relocation from a macro-meso or political and economic perspectives. Little is known about how individual relocatees experience and cope with forced relocation. In addition, current studies treat forced relocation as a single event, which overlooks the sequence of events that relocatees undergo during forced relocation.

This paper aims to demonstrate the various dimensions of the experiences of relocatees during and after forced relocation in urban China from the household perspective by establishing a conceptual model in which the time sequence of events and their context are central. It divides the process of forced relocation into three stages based on chronological order: the pre-demolition stage, the transitional stage and the post-relocation stage. The following section will discuss the literature on forced relocation and displacement in general and on this basis propose a conceptual model for studying forced relocation. Section 3 will provide some background to the specific context of forced relocation in urban China, while Section 4 will apply the model in its analysis of findings from the current literature on Chinese forced relocation and the experiences of relocatees. The final section will then offer our conclusions.

## **2. The experiences of relocatees in urban restructuring: forced relocation and displacement**

Although this paper focuses on forced relocation in urban China, we will first discuss the international literature on this topic in order to arrive at a conceptual model that offers a better understanding of the experiences of relocatees during forced relocation due to urban restructuring. The forced relocation of residents refers to the process by which residents are forced to move from their original neighbourhoods to new destination neighbourhoods due to urban restructuring or social housing redevelopment projects. In most cases, it also involves the demolition of the original dwellings. The forced relocation of residents is usually initiated and implemented by local governments, housing associations or developers. Residents who are forced to move (relocatees) are often involuntarily involved in urban restructuring, and this is often regarded as equivalent to displacement, which contains negative connotations. ‘Displacement’ is defined as the state which:

... occurs when any household is forced to move from its residence by conditions that affect the dwelling or its immediate surroundings, and that: 1) are beyond the household’s reasonable ability to control or prevent; 2) occur despite the household’s having met all previously imposed conditions of occupancy; and 3) make continued occupancy by that household impossible, hazardous, or unaffordable (Grier and Grier, 1980: 8).

Displacement thus focuses on the downsides and problems caused by ‘the involuntary residential dislocation’ process (Marcuse, 1985: 205). On the basis of the definition, it is apparent that the forced relocation of residents is very similar to displacement. Relocatees and displacees are both forced to move involuntary and they have a limited role in the decision-making processes related to residential movement and redevelopment projects (Visser et al., 2013; Kleinhans and Kearns, 2013). In addition, both are passive recipients of the outcomes imposed by urban restructuring

projects. Moreover, the stakeholders (such as developers, local governments, housing associations, landlords and tenants) and their interactions in both a forced relocation and displacement process are very similar.

However, these similarities between forced relocation and displacement during urban restructuring do not mean that the terms are synonymous. In their critical review of displacement, forced relocation and urban restructuring, Kleinhans and Kearns (2013) argued that the process of forced relocation due to urban restructuring is context based, and relocation outcomes are dynamic and diverse over time. Therefore, forced relocation is not necessarily equivalent to displacement (Kleinhans and Kearns, 2013; Kearns and Mason, 2013). Below, we explain several features that make forced relocation distinct from displacement.

Firstly, forced relocation is a process that changes in content over time. The content of forced relocation, including policies and implementation, the stakeholders and their interaction, the social groups targeted or the aims of redevelopment, differ over time (Goetz, 2013). The experiences of relocatees therefore vary over time. Thus, the evaluation of the outcomes of forced relocation should take into account the various stages and the inherent content of each stage, rather than focusing on a static event or unitary measurement. The outcomes for and experiences of relocatees will not necessarily be universally the same (or negative, for that matter) (Allen, 2000; Kleinhans and Van der Laan Bouma-Doff, 2008: 584). Some studies have found that the experiences of relocatees are dynamic and vary as forced relocation proceeds (Popkin et al., 2004). For example, Goetz (2013) followed relocatees from the pre-relocation to the post-relocation period, finding that the experiences, perceptions and responses of relocatees to forced relocation changes over time, as do the outcomes. In addition, the outcomes of forced relocation are multidimensional and can be either positive or negative (Kearns and Mason, 2013; Visser et al., 2013). Some research has found that forced relocation leads to different outcomes for residents with respect to the economic, social and physical realms, such as job opportunities, dwelling conditions and social networks (Kleinhans, 2003; Goetz, 2002; Doff and Kleinhans, 2010). Other studies have revealed that relocatees experience both positive and negative outcomes, reflected in both objective measures of outcomes and residents' perceptions (Visser et al., 2013; Goetz, 2013; Popkin et al., 2004).

Secondly, the forced movement of residents can be considered a specific type of residential mobility which occurs in the context of forced relocation. Relocatees may have behavioural and psychological experiences that are similar to voluntary movers, such as the intention to move, the search for housing and the housing choice. Relocatees also have to face the same physical aspects, such as the resources available and constraints related to the housing market context, their socioeconomic status, such as income and education, and their individual ability to search for information on housing (Kearns and Mason, 2013: 189; Bolt and van Kempen, 2010: 161-164; Kleinhans, 2003; Visser et al., 2013; Posthumus and Kleinhans, 2013; Popkin et al., 2004). Thus, to understand the extent to which residents are forced to move, and

how and why residents have different perceptions and responses, as well as face different outcomes, it is necessary to investigate the experiences of relocatees from a micro and residential mobility perspective (Doff and Kleinhans, 2010; Popkin et al., 2004). For example, studies have found that some residents had intended to move before being forced to move, and they report greater dwelling improvement than those who had not intended to move (Kleinhans and Van der Laan Bouma-Doff, 2008). In addition, some studies have found that high-income relocatees are less likely to move into low-income neighbourhoods, while people from a particular ethnic group tend to relocate to ethnically concentrated neighbourhoods regardless of the level of income or education (Doff and Kleinhans, 2010; Bolt and van Kempen, 2010). These findings show that it is somewhat simplistic to label forced relocation as negative or equate it with displacement, because this ignores the complexity of relocatees' housing behaviour, which may resemble that of regular movers.

Thirdly, the institutional, economic and social contexts in which forced relocation is embedded, as well as relocatees' personal characteristics, are also related to their experiences (Chen and Lai, 2013; He, 2014). Forced relocation is accompanied by constraints but also includes resources unique to relocatees, which makes their experience different from that of voluntary movers. For example, the institutional context, such as the compensation criteria and the time span of the relocation process determined by local governments, affect relocatees' mobility experience. In addition, the social context, such as social movements or media demands for public participation in urban restructuring projects, also affects the experience of relocatees (He, 2014). Although relocatees are forced to move, they have a certain amount of freedom to act as a positive agent, which helps to alleviate the stress and disruptions resulting from their forced relocation. Relocatees may develop positive coping strategies in response to the stress caused by forced relocation, rather than passively accepting everything that forced relocation imposes on them (Kleinhans, 2003; Posthumus and Kleinhans, 2013; Weinstein and Ren, 2009). Some studies have found that those who feel in control or positive about forced relocation may end up satisfied with their new dwelling and consider the process as having a healthy outcome; some relocatees even see forced relocation as a chance to improve their housing situation (Allen, 2000: 450; Kleinhans, 2003: 487). However, there are also relocatees who cannot effectively respond to or make choices during forced relocation, especially those who have limited resources and face multiple life problems, such as the aged, people on low incomes or with low levels of education, or particular ethnic groups (Kleinhans, 2003; Posthumus and Kleinhans, 2013; Popkin et al., 2004).

Thus, it can be argued that the experiences of relocatees during forced relocation are multifaceted and the reasons for this are complicated. The assumption that forced relocation is equivalent to displacement tends to overlook this complexity and diversity. As mentioned above, forced relocation is a process that changes in content over time, rather than a static event.



Moreover, different dimensions of the experience of relocatees may differ over time, depending on the context of the forced relocation and an individual's or household's features.

Based on the literature discussed above, we present a conceptual model for understanding the experiences of relocatees during forced relocation in urban restructuring (Figure 1). The model focuses on the individual resident's experience in various dimensions, over time and in different contexts, dividing forced relocation into three stages: the pre-demolition stage, the transitional stage and the post-relocation stage. The context is also divided into macro and micro levels. The macro level concerns the institutional, social and economic context in which forced relocation and urban restructuring are embedded, and conceives of the movement of relocatees as a specific type of residential mobility. The micro level concerns the individual's and the household's socioeconomic features. The experience of individuals during forced relocation also occurs across similar dimensions to the experience of regular movers: the social, physical, economic, behavioural and psychological domains. These dimensions of experience also change over time within the context of forced relocation. Below, this model will be used to explore the experiences of relocatees during forced relocation in the Chinese urban context. The following section explains the general background of forced relocation in urban China.

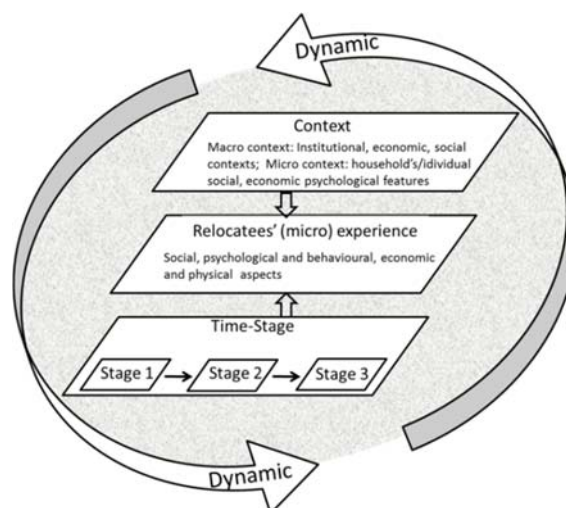


Figure 1. Conceptual model for understanding the experiences of relocatees during forced relocation in urban restructuring: time, context and individual experiences

Source: Authors

### 3. Forced relocation in urban China

We identified 51 articles on forced relocation and urban restructuring in China, which is a relatively small number considering the scale of forced relocation in China. Based on the framework mentioned above, Section 4 will explain the experiences of relocatees on the basis of an analysis of these articles, looking at their experiences in the social, physical, economic, behavioural and psychological dimensions at each stage. In addition to these 51 articles, we also

searched for articles that were related to residential experiences and urban redevelopment in China to gain a general understanding of the background to the experiences of relocatees.

Most studies, news report and regulations concerning forced relocation in China focus on homeowners – unlike the literature on Western Europe and the US, which predominantly focuses on tenants living in social or public housing. In China, the experiences of relocatees during forced relocation vary depending on the social, economic and institutional contexts. Generally, relocatees come from low to middle income social groups. They are mainly from the inner-city neighbourhoods, work-unit (*danwei*) communities, urban villages, old public housing estates or suburban villages. These neighbourhoods have relatively appealing locations (e.g. high land value) and are in a run-down physical condition, which make them a priority for redevelopment by local governments and/or developers. Table 1 shows the types of neighbourhoods, their location and their residential composition. Relocatees in these neighbourhoods are forced to move because their homes are being demolished for redevelopment projects, such as old inner-city redevelopment, shantytown redevelopment or public infrastructure construction.

Table 1. Targeted neighbourhoods for demolition

	Traditional inner-city neighbourhood	Danwei community	Urban village	Suburban village
Owners	Inner-city citizens/Local housing bureau	SOE or COE or their employees	Rural farmers	Rural farmers
Ownership of the land	Stated-owned land	Stated-owned land	Collectively owned land (by the villagers)	Collectively owned land (by the villagers)
Location	Inner-city centre	Old industrial area	Between inner-city centre and urban periphery	Urban periphery

Source: Summarized from related literature such as He (2012); He and Wu (2007); Wu (2004b); Wu (2004a); Ma (2012); Hin and Xin (2011); Li and Song (2009)

In China, the institutional context has a significant influence on the experiences of relocatees. During forced relocation, institutional factors, such as the compensation criteria and the implementation of forced relocation stipulated by local governments (sometimes with developers), affect these experiences. Generally, relocatees have to choose between two types of compensation: in-kind and monetary compensation. In-kind compensation means relocatees receive housing as compensation, while monetary compensation means that relocatees are given money for their dwellings. Local governments or developers determine the value of the dwellings that are to be demolished based on the housing conditions (e.g. housing size and location of neighbourhood) and the local housing market (Chen and Lai, 2013). The choices that relocatees make concerning compensation directly affect the outcomes of forced relocation (Hu

et al., 2015). If they choose in-kind compensation and the value of their new housing is higher than that of their old dwelling, they must pay the difference; if the value of the demolished housing is higher than that of the new one, relocatees then either receive additional financial compensation or are given better housing. If relocatees choose monetary compensation, local governments and/or developers determine the compensation based on their assessment of the value of the dwelling that is going to be demolished.

The economic context, especially the local housing market situation, thus also influences the experiences of relocatees, insofar as the amount of compensation is based on local housing prices. The local housing market and the relocatees' income also influence their ability to purchase housing. In addition, the social context, such as public opinion about the redevelopment project and the degree of public participation in the decision-making process, affects the experiences of relocatees. In the following section, these experiences will be examined across three stages of forced relocation: the pre-demolition stage, the transitional stage and the post-relocation stage (each stage will be fully explained in the following section).

## **4. Understanding the experiences of relocatees during forced relocation and urban restructuring in China**

Based on the conceptual model and the existing literature, this section reviews the experiences of relocatees during forced relocation across three stages: the pre-demolition, the transitional stage and the post-relocation stage. We will examine the issues that the existing literature discusses in relation to each stage, demonstrating the various dimensions of experience during forced relocation and urban restructuring. We will also reveal the gaps in the current literature that could be addressed in future studies of forced relocation in the Chinese context.

### **4.1 Stage 1: the pre-demolition stage**

The first stage of forced relocation is the pre-demolition stage. At this stage, relocatees have not moved out of the dwellings, but have been informed by the government or developers that their dwellings are going to be demolished. Relocatees negotiate with developers or local governments about compensation, and they also work on issues such as what to agree to and when to sign the compensation contract. The interactions between different stakeholders involved at this stage are very intense. Some studies have found that relocatees are marginalized and have little influence on the decision-making process in relation to restructuring and forced relocation, while developers and local government dominate the process and displace original low-income residents to the urban periphery (He and Wu, 2005; He and Wu, 2007; Ren, 2014; Shin, 2014). In addition, some studies have found that disputes and conflicts between relocatees and developers and local governments arise about issues such as redevelopment plans and compensation criteria (He, 2012; Hin and Xin, 2011; Hu et al., 2015).

Some scholars argue that the essence of the interactions between different stakeholders at this stage concerns the mobilization of social relationships in the context of, and against the accumulation of space-based capital, and they regard the relocatees' strong response as a claim to 'the right to the city'; including the rights to the equitable distribution of the social benefits of development and to engage in decision-making (Qian and He, 2012; Weinstein and Ren, 2009). These studies highlight the mechanism of urban restructuring and the forced relocation process from a macro-meso and economic-political perspective. However, these studies tend to overlook the individual experiences of relocatees with respect to the social, economic, psychological and behavioural dimensions of forced relocation.

At this stage, the experience of relocatees at the behavioural level is quite intense. Ownership of property and a land-use right are the only resources that residents can utilize against forced relocation (Zhang, 2004). As mentioned above, relocatees can choose the compensation (in-kind or monetary) that they prefer. To some extent, their choice of compensation is based on factors that are similar to those taken into account by regular movers. For example, some studies have found that when choosing compensation, relocatees take their life course, affordability and the location of the relocation neighbourhoods into account (An, 2007; Ho, 2013; Luo, 2012; Ma, 2012; Song, 2015). At the same time, however, their choices are also constrained by the institutional factors in which forced relocation is embedded (Ho, 2013; Hu et al., 2015). For example, relocatees have to consider the amount of compensation they will receive from the local government and/or developer based on the compensation criteria (Ma, 2012). Most conflicts between relocatees and the local government and/or developer at this stage are about the amount of compensation.

Some studies have found that relocatees expect more financial compensation than the local government and/or developer intend to provide (He and Asami, 2014). In addition to direct confrontation, relocatees also use other strategies in an attempt to increase the amount of compensation (He, 2014; Ho, 2013; Hu et al., 2015; Song, 2015). Firstly, relocatees can choose the timing of their signing of the contract that transfers their land-use right to the local government and/or developer (Ma, 2012; Weinstein and Ren, 2009; Shi and Zhu, 2013). However, this may be influenced by various factors. For example, in order to promote the pace of demolition and motivate relocatees, some local governments and developers use arguments such as 'the earlier you leave, the more benefits you will get; the later you leave, the fewer benefits you will get; refuse to leave, and you will get nothing' (Shi and Zhu, 2013: 76). They also provide more positive incentives for those who sign the land-use right transfer contract at an early stage. As a result, some relocatees choose to sign the contract earlier. However, there are also those who do not sign the contract until the last moment, because they believe that by doing so the local government and/or developer will offer them more compensation than other relocatees (Ho, 2013; Ma, 2012).

The second strategy is related to the relocatee's network (Ho, 2013). The amount and the type of compensation that relocatees receive are supposed to depend on the compensation criteria and the size of the demolished housing and/or relocation household. However, some relocatees mobilize their network to increase the amount of compensation (Liaoning Daily, 2015). Thirdly, in another strategy to increase the amount of compensation, some relocatees attempt to increase their household size or construct more illegal buildings (Luo, 2012; Wu et al., 2013). Last but not least, at this stage, relocatees might organize online or real-world associations to exchange information or launch collective action against forced relocation (Erie, 2012; He, 2012; Song, 2015; Wang, 2009).

At this stage, it is not only the compensation choices that concern the relocatees the most (the study of which is absent from most of the literature in this field on China): the experiences of relocatees in the social dimension, such as their attachment to and interactions within the original neighbourhoods, also affect their response to forced relocation. For example, Gilroy (2012) found that older residents in an old inner-city neighbourhood that was facing demolition had a strong attachment to the neighbourhood and were not willing to move. She further explains that this may be because the elderly now heavily depend on the long-term mutual help they provide one another in their neighbourhoods due to the changes in living arrangements and family support in current urban China (Gilroy, 2012). However, there are also controversial findings that demonstrate that strong attachment to the neighbourhood does not mean a strong desire to stay. Wu (2012) found that the longer residents live in an old neighbourhood, the stronger their neighbourhood attachment is, but the more they want to move. Other studies have argued that it is the physical conditions of a neighbourhood that greatly affect residents' attachment to place in current urban China (Li et al., 2012; Zhu et al., 2012). Zhu et al. (2012) also found that intensified social interaction – which was considered a major source of attachment to place – is regarded as less important now in urban China. These findings reveal that currently in urban China, attachment to the neighbourhood has multiple dimensions (including both the social and physical spheres), and these different dimensions play different roles for different social groups and affect their housing behaviour differently.

Political-economic theories explain the mechanisms that induce forced relocation and urban restructuring, and demonstrate from a macro perspective why there are tensions and conflicts between different stakeholders at this stage. At the same time, the ways that relocatees cope with forced relocation are more complex and do not all end in confrontation. Individuals have different coping strategies, make different compensation choices and have different attitudes to residential mobility, which are all important, not only at this stage but also insofar as they greatly affect the experiences of relocatees in the following stages.

## **4.2 Stage 2: the transitional period**

Stage 2 is the transitional stage. At this stage, residents move out of their original neighbourhoods, but do not move immediately into relocation neighbourhoods. This stage is especially significant to those who choose in-kind compensation, because these relocatees have to wait for a certain period of time before they can move into the relocation neighbourhood. Local governments and/or developers usually promise to rehouse relocatees within a certain time (Song, 2015; Chen and Lai, 2013), and they are given monetary compensation which is used to rent temporary accommodation. Some local governments stipulate that the length of the transitional period must not exceed a certain number of months/years. For example, Xiamen Municipality requires local governments to rehouse residents within 3 years. Nevertheless, in reality, the length of this stage greatly depends on whether the designated dwellings for rehousing have been completed. Clearly, if relocatees are provided with and/or choose dwellings that are completed, this stage may not be very long; but if these dwellings are under construction, they will have to wait for their completion. For example, in one project in Shanghai, the local government provided existing dwellings as in-kind compensation (Xuhui District Government, 2015), meaning that those who chose in-kind compensation needed to wait only three months and were given a one-off three-month rental subsidy payment for the transitional stage. In contrast, in another redevelopment project in Shanghai, the relocation dwellings were still under construction (Jingan District Government, 2015), and the relocatees therefore had to find a transitional dwelling and wait until the relocation dwellings were ready.

Very few studies focus on the experiences of relocatees at the transitional stage of forced relocation. Only sporadic news reports suggest that the long duration of the transitional stage can cause distress to some relocatees (Nandu News, 2015; People.cn, 2013). This lack of interest in the literature does not mean this stage is not significant to relocatees. In fact, there are many uncertainties embedded in this period which affect the experiences of relocatees. Firstly, as suggested above, the time span of this stage can vary, ranging from several months to several years depending on the project and the related local regulations. The expected length of residence in a neighbourhood affects many aspects, such as residents' movement behaviour, their attachment to place, residential satisfaction, investment and neighbourliness. However, little is known about how the different durations of the transitional stage affect the experience of relocatees across different dimensions.

Secondly, not only does the time span vary, in some cases the time span is completely uncertain, and it may even turn out to be quite different from what the local government or developer promised in the first stage. It is also apparent that the actual time span may differ from that expected by the relocatees. For example, in some cases, relocatees have waited for more than five years (some even ten years), due to delays in the construction of the relocation dwellings (Xinhuanet, 2014; Xinjing News, 2013; People.cn, 2013). During these long periods, the relocatees have to rent dwellings (Xue et al., 2015), which creates challenges for people in

disadvantaged social groups in particular, such as the aged, disabled or people on low incomes. News reports have suggested that some aged relocatees have died while waiting to move into the relocation neighbourhoods because the transitional stage was so long (Nandu News, 2015; Xinjing News, 2013). Thirdly, whether the compensation fee for the transitional stage can meet the needs of relocatees or not is also unknown. Overall, few studies focus on how the length and the uncertainties of the transitional stage affect relocatees. Clearly, these issues are important for a better understanding of the experience of relocatees, especially for the disadvantaged social groups involved.

It is apparent from the above that relocatees have to cope with new situations and uncertainties at this stage. In particular, they need to find a place to live during this stage. Usually, when making their housing choices, they have to consider the constraints of forced relocation, such as the amount of rental compensation provided by the evictors and the duration of the transitional period. In addition, they also have to take into account their own socioeconomic situation. Only sporadic evidence suggests that at this stage some relocatees choose to stay with their relatives or friends (Fang and Zhang, 2003). Few studies focus on resident housing behaviour during this stage. Many questions are far from adequately studied, such as: What housing choices do relocatees have at this stage? How and why do they make certain housing choices? and, How does their housing experience at this stage affect their subsequent housing behaviour and residential experience?

The experiences of relocatees in this stage can also affect their general attitudes towards local governments and/or developers. A policy review paper on forced relocation in China shows that the uncertain duration of the transitional period has negative effects on residents' trust of local governments (Author, Date). This in turn has consequences for relocatees' perceptions of and reactions to forced relocation. Most empirical studies on forced relocation have focused on the experiences of relocatees at the pre-demolition and the post-relocation stages, especially the latter. The transitional stage has long been neglected. We have argued here that the transitional stage is an essential part of forced relocation, which requires more in-depth study focusing on relocatees' housing choices and coping strategies, especially in the light of the uncertainties of this stage.

### **4.3 Stage 3: the post-relocation stage**

In Stage 3, the relocatees have been relocated to their new neighbourhoods. By studying the experiences of relocatees in these relocation neighbourhoods, it is possible to trace and compare the initiations and effects of the various redevelopment projects. Similar to Western countries, the reasons for forced relocation in China have swung between economic and social motives. Since 1978, economic growth has become the overriding objective in China, and it has motivated local governments and developers to promote large-scale urban development and redevelopment for profit. Some studies argue that these large-scale developments have social costs, especially

for relocatees (Fang, 2006; Gong, 2012; He, 2012; Li and Yuan, 2008). These studies emphasize that relocatees are displaced because they are relocated to neighbourhoods with poor standards of both housing and neighbourhood management. Some studies have argued that the economic situation of some relocatees worsens because they are relocated to the urban periphery, which has poor accessibility to public facilities (Day and Cervero, 2010). This increases commuting costs and the time required to access job opportunities and/or the city centre (Day and Cervero, 2010). They have also argued that this also results in low residential satisfaction of relocatees.

However, other studies have found positive effects of forced relocation. Some studies comparing living conditions before relocation with the new living conditions, found relocatees were satisfied with improved dwellings and neighbourhood conditions after their relocation (Li and Song, 2009; Xia and Zhu, 2013). By comparing different kinds of movers – voluntary, involuntary – with stayers, some studies further discovered that relocatees are more satisfied with their housing and neighbourhood conditions than stayers, and relatively less satisfied than voluntary movers (Day, 2013; Li and Song, 2009). In addition, the level of relocatees' satisfaction with the housing and neighbourhood conditions is not much lower than that of voluntary movers (Li and Song, 2009).

The experiences of relocatees at this stage can also be differentiated in terms of their moving intention and attachment to place in relation to the relocation neighbourhood. Some studies have found that before demolition, residents show strong neighbourhood attachment and have a desire to stay in their old neighbourhoods long term, while after relocation, relocatees are less attached to their relocation neighbourhoods and their social interaction within the neighbourhood has also been reduced (He and Liu, 2013). Similarly, Luo (2012) further demonstrated that after relocation some relocatees decide to move back or closer to their original neighbourhoods, rather than stay in the relocation neighbourhood. It was argued that this is because relocatees are more familiar with their original neighbourhood and perceive that they have more job and better education opportunities there (Luo, 2012). It is not surprising that the resources and opportunities offered by the original neighbourhood affect the post-relocation housing behaviour of relocatees because the functional dimension of a place has also been found to affect residents' attachment to place and housing behaviour in general (Raymond et al., 2010; Scannell and Gifford, 2010).

In the US and some Western European countries, urban restructuring and forced movement have been used as instruments to change the residential composition of neighbourhoods and to achieve greater social mixing. Although in China this was not the original intention of development, the large-scale urban redevelopments and forced relocation have also generated similar outcomes. This is evident in the current ongoing national programme for the redevelopment of shantytowns, in which the central government is encouraging local governments to purchase dwellings on the housing market rather than construct relocation neighbourhoods to compensate relocatees. As a result, forced movers and regular movers are



more likely to live in the same neighbourhoods. ‘Regular movers’ here refers to residents who voluntarily move into relocation neighbourhoods and purchase housing on the housing market. Generally, this results in three types of relocation (destination) neighbourhoods, based on residential composition. Relocates may be moved into:

1. A relocation neighbourhood that only consists of relocates from the same original redevelopment neighbourhood.
2. A relocation neighbourhood that consists of relocates from *different* original redevelopment neighbourhoods.
3. A relocation neighbourhood that consists of relocates from one or more redevelopment neighbourhoods and regular movers.

The experiences of relocates in these different types of relocation neighbourhoods varies. Some studies imply that relocation neighbourhoods with a concentration of relocates of low socioeconomic status are more likely to become deprived urban enclaves (Day, 2013; Fang and Zhang, 2003; Fang, 2006; Gilroy, 2012; He and Wu, 2007; He, 2010; He, 2012). In addition, others have found that in mixed relocation neighbourhoods, relocates encounter problems such as the uneven spatial distribution of community facilities between relocates and regular residents (Fang, 2006: 677; Song, 2015). Other studies have found that conflicts between relocates and regular movers become evident over time, due to differences in terms of lifestyle, shared values and behaviour within the neighbourhood (Fang, 2006; Gong, 2012; Li and Li, 2010). It has also been suggested that even when fighting for their common interests against real estate management companies, relocates and regular movers cannot work together because they do not have the same norms and behavioural patterns (Gong, 2012; Li and Li, 2010).

The existing literature on the experiences of relocates at Stage 3 has shown that it has various dimensions, and they may experience both positive and negative outcomes after relocation. In addition, large-scale urban restructuring activities generate different neighbourhood types and different forms of organization in relocation neighbourhoods. These further affect the nature of interaction between different types of residents. These findings inspire us to reconsider the experiences of relocates and the process of forced relocation from the perspectives of displacement, social mixing and spatial segregation.

## **5. Conclusions and implications for future research**

This paper aimed to gain greater insight into the experiences of relocates during forced relocation in urban China. Overall, very few studies focus on this topic, despite the tremendous number of relocates in urban China. By analysing the existing literature and discussing issues that concern relocates, we have shown how forced relocation has effects on various dimensions

of individual experience over time (three different stages) in the Chinese context. The paper also identified the following gaps in the existing literature. Firstly, most studies focus on the experiences of relocatees in the post-relocation stage, overlooking the pre-demolition and transitional stages. Secondly, by analysing the various dimensions of individual relocatee's experiences which are discussed in the existing literature, we found that most studies focus on relocatees' physical and economic experience of forced relocation, while the experiences of relocatees in the social, psychological and behavioural domains are far from adequately studied. As a result, the diverse roles (e.g. the active role) and strategies used by relocatees during forced relocation are overlooked. While some studies focus on relocatees' relationship with their neighbours and the built environment (the neighbourhood), there is still a general lack of research on how and why relocatees have certain social interactions within different neighbourhoods.

This paper proposed a framework that considers the time sequence, context and individual experiences in various dimensions to explore the diversity, complexity and variety of experiences of relocatees in forced relocation in general. This framework can also contribute to a better understanding of the experiences of relocatees in the Chinese context. In urban China, a huge number of people from various social groups have been affected by the wave of capital accumulation through continuous and rapid spatial development and consumption, with residents having been forcibly relocated for over two decades. While studies that focus on the political-economic dimensions of forced relocation provide us with a macro perspective on the issue, here we studied forced relocation from an individual perspective. This helps to capture the underlying micro-level processes on which the macro-level, space-based capital accumulation is based. We also considered forced relocation to be a process with changing contexts, and highlighted the importance of focusing on the various moments in time when exploring the experiences of relocatees. Breaking down the time dimension reveals the sequence of events that individuals/households experience and the various factors that affect the experiences of relocatees at different stages, and thus helps us to gain a better understanding of how the changing contexts or surroundings affect relocatees. Tracing the experiences of relocatees across time thus uncovers the dynamics and complexity of relocation.

Overall, the experiences of relocatees during forced relocation are multifaceted and are not necessarily equivalent to the experience of displacement. The conflicts and tensions between relocatees and other stakeholders during this process show that relocatees may resist the process and appeal to their rights to enjoy the benefits of the urban redevelopments. However, this appeal also includes how relocatees mobilize their resources to influence the process and outcomes of forced relocation. Relocatees might be displaced and may face negative outcomes due to forced relocation and urban restructuring. However, displacement is only one of the effects of forced relocation, and there may also be neutral or even positive effects. To improve the policies, the implementation and the outcomes of forced relocation, it is important to keep the negative effects

of forced relocation and displacement in mind. However, at the same time, a balanced and critical perspective on the individual experiences of relocatees is also important, insofar as it helps to identify both the advantages and disadvantages of the current processes of forced relocation and urban restructuring.

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