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**URBAN DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSES IN
MAINLAND CHINA:
A CASE STUDY OF COLLECTIVE NAIL-HOUSE PROTEST IN
W CITY**

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Urban Development Discourses in Mainland China:
A Case Study of Collective Nail-House Protest in W City

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy

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Abstract

In recent decades resistance against imposed urban demolition staged by affected Chinese citizens have garnered much academic attention. The common theme in most current literature is what are the factors to make an urban protest successful. Two major perspectives are hence concentrated on the unique political structure—e.g., decentralization in post-reform era, and the resource mobilization process in terms of how people have made use of their social networks and the mass media. However, after years of protest, the major agenda of Nail-House protests is still restricted to compensation negotiation. We can seldom find any different demands or alternative city visions. The limitations of Nail-House protests cannot be answered by current literatures. Therefore, this research is designed to inquire into how people understand urban development. Specifically, this research tries to scrutinize how the major agenda of Nail-House protest is framed, whether or not the affected citizens have different visions of urban development, and if so, how these different visions are excluded from the final agenda.

A post-structural approach of discourse analysis is employed in this research to shed light upon how urban discourses serve to justify urban spatial restructuring as beneficial. It is argued that the protests staged by Nail-Houses are often framed by three mainstreams of discourses: 1) the hegemony of economic growth; 2) improvement of urban space through the current trajectory of urban development; and 3) an either-or choice between the state and the market.

In order to look into how citizens interpret urban development, this research is designed as a qualitative study. A typical case of Nail-House protest in W City is focused. Shop owners in the J Street community participated in a collective protest against the redevelopment program. Similar to other Nail-Houses, they have resorted to strategies including mobilizing the social networks and the mass media. After nearly three years of struggle, the collective action ended when most of them accepted the final agreement to relocate to a suburban market with new shops.

This research challenges the dominant urban discourses by unveiling economical and social losses and risks generating from current urban development mode, which are ignored or underestimated. Economic growth cannot be sustained by bulldozer development. Rather, it is at the expense of wasting resources. Small business people are marginalized in this wave of nation-wide urban development. Although a small portion of them can get new shops in suburban market, they cannot continue their original business. Citizens doing small household business have very limited choices to maintain a living. It is rather difficult for the aged business people to return to the labor market. Some hence choose to retire at rather early age. Citizens have trouble but lack of social support or public service to get used to changed life pattern. Traditional communities are disappearing. In the case of small household business people, family problems increase due to a big change of gender division. The public debate between “pro-state” scholars and “pro-market” scholars generates a misleading either-or choice between the state and the market. Legitimacy crisis make many citizens lose faith in policies or laws that claim to protect their rights. Citizens also fear to get involved in public issues. Consequently they turn to bargain for

personal gains and losses, and overlook the meaning of participation. Since the affected citizens in this case are small household business people, they believe in the market system as a fairer one. But they underestimated the risks of the market.

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Chapter I Introduction

In recent years, demolition and forced eviction in the name of “urbanization,” “urban development” and “urban renewal” have resulted in numerous conflicts and protests, in rural and urban areas of Mainland China. The word “Nail-Houses” (*ding zihu* 釘子戶) is commonly used to refer to those people who resist against forceful demolition. The term of “Nail-House” contains a negative meaning. Those citizens who refuse to accept the compensation plan are regarded as “nails” which are obstacles of the onward sweep of urban development. While the development supporters and promoters including local governments and real estate developers are viewed as “hammers” which are in charge of getting rid of these nails.

In some high-profile cases, public pressure may result in a concession shown in a seemingly more reasonable and adequate compensation or even discharge of certain local malfeasants. Referred to as “successful” Nail-House Protests, these cases encourage scholars to scrutinize their protest strategies, how they make use of the political opportunity structure, and the resource mobilization process. These are the two major perspectives employed in the current literatures. Some studies highlight that mobilizing the mass media and other social capital marks the empowerment of grassroots movements. Some are hence optimistic about the emergence of a civil society.

It is argued here, however, that a closer look at these literatures reveals an

“involution” tendency of urban protests in practice. Although regarded as “successful” cases, these Nail-House protests fail to bring substantial institutional changes. In 2011, a new policy was approved. *The Regulations of Housing Acquisition and Compensation on the State-Owned Land* 「國有土地上房屋徵收與補償條例」 failed to slow the pace of forceful demolition and evictions. These fragmented and localized confrontations or protests are restricted to the piecemeal resistance level. What’s worse, too much emphasis placed on resource mobilization leads to a competition to grab the headlines. Even though Chinese citizens have resorted to more and more drastic and violent ways to express their anger towards injustice, their strategies to publicize and “problematize” their suffering are losing effectiveness. A Nail-House raised such a question when he sought help through the Internet as follows: “Is it true that the only way to get heard and noticed is to die?” (Wang, 2012). The “problematization” strategy has been used by local states as a new mode of control. It filters the social problems. Only those who “successfully” enter the agenda of local or upper-level authorities may be chosen selectively to improve the compensation. However, in recent years, more and more Nail-Houses have been charged with “harming the social stability” and forcefully suppressed. The game of carrot or stick has proved to be effective.

The preservation movement of *Enning* Road seems to be a breakthrough (see Huang 2013 for an example). The redevelopment program of *Enning* Road was brought out in 2007. Citizens living in *Enning* Road took part in the preservation of their community. They asked the local government to publicize the development plan of this region. Scholars and the mass media are also mobilized to dig into the

historical value of “*Qilou*” as the origin of Cantonese opera. However, despite this special case, the major agenda of Nail-House protests is still restricted to compensation negotiation after years of resistance. We can hardly find any alternative visions of how to develop the city in these resisting actions. Therefore, this research began with the limitations of Nail-House resistance. When I started my first round of fieldwork, I found that some of the Nail-Houses were aware that they would suffer from some economic or social loss. Some even had a different imagination of how to develop their own community. It became interesting to figure out how these different visions got excluded from the final agreement. Therefore, this research tries to ask how these affected citizens understood urban development, how compensation negotiation became the major agenda of Nail-House resistance, and how alternative visions of urban development were excluded. A post-structural approach of discourse analysis is employed in this research to shed light upon how urban discourses serve to naturalize current urban spatial restructuring as beneficial and unchallengeable. Its accompanying social costs are ignored or justified as “unfortunate but necessary.”

In order to approach citizens’ interpretations of urban development, this research is designed as a qualitative study. A typical case study of collective Nail-House protest in W City is employed. Demolition is a sensitive issue in Mainland China, especially when it involves resistance. Since some informants asked to be anonymous, all the names of informants and places in this study are fictitious. No maps of locations are included in this dissertation.

It is typical since it resembles others in the cause of protest, the strategies they

used, and how it came to an end. It took almost thirty years for J Street to shape before the announcement of an upcoming redevelopment program in 2009. It was once a mixed community with both residents and small household businessmen. Since most of the residents in this area were government employees, they had to accept the rather low compensation and moved out. The rest were all businessmen unsatisfied with the low monetary compensation standard. Eight among them decided to participate in a collective protest. They resorted to collective lawsuits, and tried to mobilize their personal social networks, and the mass media. After nearly three years of resistance, they finally accepted a new plan relocating them to a newly developed suburban market with new shops. This case is unique because it involves a special group of people—urban small household businessmen (城市個體戶). Current literatures of urban Nail-House protests pay more attention to the urban residents while giving less consideration to small businessmen.

With a small case, it also looks into different stakeholders, including shop-owners and tenants, decision-makers and their family members, participants of the collective protest and non-participants. In-depth interview is majorly used to get close to how different stakeholders understand urban development and demolition, how they set their objectives and chose strategies, and how they valued the final agreement. Based on the data collected from J Street case, the problems of how the major agenda is restricted to compensation negotiation and how alternative visions of urban development are excluded will be discussed in the following chapters.

Chapter I makes an introduction of this study. It provides the background information of this research including the research question and research

methodology, and also overviews all the chapters.

Chapter II reviews the current literatures on Chinese Nail-House protests. The two major perspectives—political opportunity structure and resource mobilization—will be discussed. Unsatisfied with their assumption that a “successful” Nail-House protest equals better monetary compensation or discharge of certain local malfeasants, this research argues that a cultural turn may help to shed light upon these questions.

Chapter III looks into the cultural turn in urban studies to see how it helps to answer the question of this research. Different strands within discourse analysis, including ideology analysis in orthodox Marxism, Gramsci and hegemony, and Foucault’s conception of knowledge and power are clarified. This research will predominantly make use of a post-structural perspective—a Foucauldian approach of discourse analysis and Gramsci’s hegemony. In Chapter II and III, an analytical framework takes shape. Three mainstreams of urban development discourses are figured out: 1) hegemony of economic growth; 2) discourse of urban space change; and 3) an either-or choice between the state and the market. It is argued that these three mainstreams of urban discourses are influencing and shaping citizens’ understanding of the city and their actions.

Chapter IV looks into the research methodology. This study is a qualitative study since it is designed to approach citizens’ interpretations of urban development. A typical case study is employed, and in-depth interview is the major research method. The strength and limitations of a single case study will be discussed in this chapter.

The subsequent three chapters look separately into each of the prevailing urban

discourses to scrutinize their discursive practices. Chapter VI VII and VIII try to present how citizens' life patterns are changed due to demolition. It also looks into the discursive practices of the prevailing discourses. Even though the model of economic-driven city or the blind pursuit of GDP progress has confronted many critics, it cannot answer how a macro-level ideology influences citizens. Chapter V examines the hegemony of economic growth. It is not only a political ideology in macro level. Rather, the hegemony convinces people that economic growth can be achieved through current bulldozer development mode. In the prevailing narratives, demolition and compensation are nothing more than a business.

Chapter VI is focused on the second urban discourse, which tries to naturalize current urban spatial restructuring as an improvement. In the name of redevelopment, numerous programs claim to improve citizens' living standard or local infrastructure. But these areas are often targeted as beneficial for business, and original communities are replaced by shopping centers. By comparing lives and businesses in J Street community before demolition with the ones afterwards, this chapter tries to present the social costs of demolition. How citizens understand these costs is important to understanding the discursive practice of the prevailing discourse.

Chapter VII is about the role of the state and the market. In recent years, there is a continuous debate among intellectuals in Mainland China about the development mode. Neoliberal scholars argue that there is no limit of the state power, they claim that establishing a free real estate market may help to set some rules of the state. They also ask for political reform. However, some left wing scholars employing a nationalism perspective argue that the state should set more rules of the market. It

evolves an either-or choice between the state and the market. Is that true that we have no other choices? In the case of J Street, I focus on how the affected citizens of the redevelopment plan understand of the local state and the real estate developer.

The final chapter concludes this research, presenting how the findings based on J Street protest answer the question of this research. It highlights some important findings and reflects on the study's limitations, which may inspire future studies.

Chapter II Main Studies on Chinese Urban Protests

In recent decades, protests against imposed urban demolition staged by affected Chinese citizens have garnered much academic attention. The common theme of current literature is what factors help to make an urban protest successful. While some scholars among them emphasize the unique political structure in the post-reform era—decentralization, others try to focus on the resource mobilization process in terms of how people have made use of their social networks and the mass media.

However, it is argued that a prominent “involution” tendency is shown in Nail-House resistance in recent years, which cannot be explained by current literatures. Interestingly, though, a large number of protests share a common end, either with more monetary compensation or the discharge of certain local malfeasants. Decades of Nail-House resistance have failed to bring institutional and substantial changes. First, these fragmented cases of resistance are localized. Most Nail-House resistance stays at the “piecemeal resistance” level. Second, too much emphasis has been placed on the use of mass media, which comes with severe competition for headline grabbing. Citizens resort to many drastic ways to express their anger and helplessness to attract the public attention. For instance, in September 2010, three people in Yi Huang, Jiangxi Province set themselves on fire to resist forceful demolition. And third, the way Nail-Houses publicize and “problematize” (Ying & Jin, 2000) their struggle has been used by the local state and gradually has become a filter of social problems. Those who can mobilize more social capital find

it easier to get their case solved. It is a common practice for Nail-Houses to compromise after getting a “better” compensation, i.e. more monetary compensation.

Both of the major approaches fail to explain this involution tendency of Nail-House resistance. In their efforts to figure out what factors help to bring about a successful urban protest, the basic assumption is that a “successful” one means to achieve a better compensation or discharge of local malfeasants. This assumption stays unchallenged after years of resistance. Seldom can we see any different demands in their protests, let alone any alternative visions of how the city should be developed. Therefore, this chapter will start with a review of the two dominant perspectives: the political opportunity structure and the resource mobilization process. The third section focuses on the involution tendency shown in Nail-House resistance.

1. Political Opportunity Structure

The first perspective looks into the specific political opportunity structure: decentralization in the post-reform era. “Decentralization” is viewed both as the root of “land-centered” urban development mode, and as the structure shaping citizens’ protest strategies. On the one hand, decentralization is argued to be the cause of a land-centered urban development mode. Fiscal and administrative decentralization leads to strengthening local governments’ role significantly in seeking local economic development. Hence a land-centered urban development mode evolves into being. On the other hand, since the central state is still believed to value social

stability and legitimacy, citizens frequently use the strategy of “problematization” to seek intervention from higher authorities. The following section reviews the political opportunity structure in the post-reform era, i.e. “decentralization.” The second section places specific attention on the “land-centered” urban development mode.

1.1 Decentralization in the post-reform era

Common usage of decentralization can be categorized into three types: *administrative decentralization*, through which the central state permits the authority of its subnational agents to make certain policy decisions, while subject to review and possible veto from above; *political decentralization*, which refers either to empowering local authorities to overrule by upper-level authorities or to subnational officials being chosen by local residents rather than appointed by upper-level governments; and *fiscal decentralization*, which strengthens local governments’ role in the regional pursuit of economic development (Cai & Treisman, 2006: 508).

Before the reform in the late 1970s, China was highly centralized, both administratively and politically. After the reform, China has become more administratively decentralized. Together with the fiscal decentralization reform initiating from the 1980s, it has given subnational governments a certain space to decide their own affairs, develop regional economy, and collect revenues. Politically, however, as pointed out by many researchers (Cai & Treisman, 2006; Yuan, 2012), China has remained highly centralized throughout. On the one hand, the central state has the right to overrule the policy decisions made by local governments. On the

other, the appointments of subnational officials are mainly subject to the approval of higher authorities rather than officials being elected by local residents.

As many researchers have pointed out, the central state and local governments have different concerns. The Chinese governments are not popularly elected and thus lack procedural legitimacy. Therefore, the government has to rely on its good performance to “buttress its power” (Zhao, 2011: 161). The central government is responsible for the operation of the political system and thus has a greater interest in protecting legitimacy. Local governments are concerned about local development—especially economic growth reflected in gross domestic product (GDP) (see Cai&Tresman, 2006; Cai, 2010; Yuan, 2012). A prominent GDP development is argued to be the decisive factor in a local bureaucrat’s career advancement in the current appointment system (see also Yuan, 2008 & 2012).

Thus, current literatures on the influences of this particular political opportunity structure have two foci. One argues that decentralization brings about the “land-centered” urban development mode. The other emphasizes a strategy of “problematization” of protestors aiming to put their suffering on the agenda of higher authorities.

1.2 “Land-centered” urban development

In the 1980s and early 1990s, China initiated a nation-wide urbanization process, which is identified mainly through rural industrialization and town development. Since the mid-1990s, there has been a turn to a new city-based and land-centered

mode of development has been characterized. Before further discussing this land-centered urban development mode, the demolition process in Mainland China should be elaborated. All land in urban areas belongs to the state. Only land use rights can be sold on the market. There are two ways (Figure 1) for the local governments to sell the land use rights of certain districts to the real estate developer.

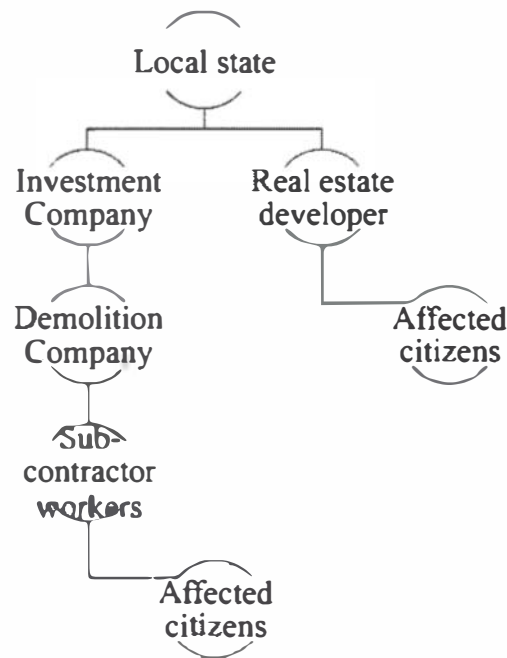


Figure 1: Two ways of land clearance

One is to deliver the land together with the buildings on it to the developer (毛地交付). As shown on the right line in Figure 1, the real estate developer should take charge of deconstructing the buildings and compensating the affected citizens: residents or business people. In the other way which is more common in recent years, local governments clear the buildings on the land first and sell the cleared land to the developer (淨地交付). In this way, the real estate developer does not directly intervene into the demolition process. Usually, local governments will not directly

get involved within the demolition. They would rather sell it to local private demolition companies. As a common practice, the demolition company would hire some sub-contractor worker teams to tear down the buildings. The demolition company would negotiate with the original land users—residents or shop owners about the compensation.

As reviewed earlier, local governments have been involved in the pursuit of economic growth—especially GDP progress—sparked by fiscal decentralization. Municipal government can no longer rely on state budgetary allocation for urban development projects. Despite various urban development trajectories, a common feature is to adopt a “place-making” and “place-promotion” strategy (Ho & Lin, 2003: 682). In this specific urban trajectory, increased urbanization is achieved through the upgrading or expansion of the urban built environment under the banner of intensifying certain cities’ regional and global competitiveness. Central to this pursuit of this ‘land-centered’ development is the utilization of urban land as a source of capital formation (Lin, 2007: 1832). Chinese local governments have the power of expropriation, allocation, and conveyance over urban land resources.

In this trend of place-making and place-promotion development, large projects are constructed including urban redevelopment projects, flagship old districts revitalization, or constructing a central business district (CBD). What comes along with large demolition and residential relocations is physical change and land use transformation. Claiming to enhance local competitiveness, this land-centered development is easily manipulated by unscrupulous local officials for their political career advancement and by real estate companies (Wu; Xu&Yeh2007: 83).

The land-centered urban politics is regarded as the most important inner motive behind the spectacular expansion of cities since the mid-1990s and the numerous cases of demolition and eviction in recent years. It has been found that in many cities, the leasing of land use rights has contributed 30 to 70 percent of local revenue and has therefore become a main source of capital formation to finance development (Ho & Lin, 2003: 707). For instance, Yu city in Zhejiang Province gained ¥2.19 hundred million from land leasing, however, the land compensation fees were only ¥5.91 million –2.7% of the total income from land leasing (*Business Week*, 2004).

The soft budget constraint further exacerbates the situation, as pointed out by Wu Fulong. Land-centered development is often undertaken in a way that goes beyond the legal and budgetary constraints of the local state, which leads to debt-burdened local finance and social conflicts (Wu *et al.*, 2007: 306).

2. Resource Mobilization

As reviewed above, decentralization is not only a macro-level political structure, but also significantly shapes citizens' resistance. Current resisting actions by Nail-Houses are commonly aiming at problematization—to make their suffering and resistance “a problem” for the local or upper-level authorities. Under this circumstance, the question is how to achieve the intervention from upper-level authorities in a favorable way. Those Nail-House protests achieving more monetary compensation or the exemption of certain local malfeasants are referred to as “successful” ones, which encourage scholars to scrutinize their mobilization and

organization process, sometimes in comparison with other “failed” cases (see He, 2005; Cai, 2010 for examples).

When formal methods like petitions (*xinfang* 信訪) are blocked or have been proved to be invalid, protestors resort to various other kinds of resources. Current literatures are mainly focused on two kinds of resources: social networks (solidarity within the protest group or the personal connections—*guanxi*—with those in important positions) and the mass media. This section looks into both of them.

2.1 Social networks

One important resource is social networks. In case studies, scholars examine the social networks and how citizens mobilize them focusing on both horizontal and vertical social networks. Horizontally, social networks among certain participants, like the residents in the same community or the workers in the same factory help to promote group solidarity and thus encourage potential participants to join in collective action. Group solidarity is supposed to better sustain collective actions without being fragmented by selective government incentives. Those collective actions with weak solidarity are easier to collapse when local governments take the differentiating strategies. A collective protest with more participants involved is believed to enhance the bargaining power, but it also risks of being politically sensitive. Social networks in a vertical sense resemble the meaning of *guanxi*. Chinese society is characterized by its permeation of interpersonal relationship—*guanxi*. Resisting actors try to make use of their personal connections

with those in important positions including officials from local or upper-level governments, famous lawyers, or journalists.

Current literatures have a common focus: how horizontal or vertical social networks help to enhance Nail-Houses' bargaining power. Horizontally, what happens to the pre-existing community when the collective protest activities come to an end is seldom studied. The fact is that the community will always collapse and dismiss. Current literatures on vertical social networks overlook a large number of protestors who lack this kind of "social capital." Inequality is reproduced and enlarged through vertical networks.

2.2 The mass media

In 2007, a case of Nail-House protest in the southwestern municipality of Chongqing was honored as the "Coolest Nail-House in History". A picture (Figure 2) of a two-story brick house appearing to teeter precariously on a narrow mound of earth surrounded by a massive excavation pit that would be developed into a shopping mall soon got public interest. The news reports successfully made this individual protest into a heated public topic. The protest ended when the household received another house as compensation.

Scholars have listed the following factors as more likely to gain intervention from the upper-level authorities: casualties in the protest (e.g., death of participants during the demolition process); media exposure; and the number of participants in the protest (Hess, 2010: 914). The former two factors help to generate public

pressure on the local or upper-level authorities, while the last may be politically sensitive as discussed previously.



Figure 2: The "Coolest Nail-House" in Chongqing (Source: Southern Weekly, March 30, 2007) (重慶“最牛釘子戶”，南方週末，2007年3月30日)

After Chongqing's case of the “Coolest Nail-House in History,” scholars have been optimistic about the influence of the mass media—especially new media—in changing the protest landscape. Some in this trend are convinced that the new techniques help to bring about a civil society. Hess (2010) argues that innovative, media-savvy protest entrepreneurs have become increasingly effective in adopting symbols and ideas with cultural resonance in order to shape frames of injustice. Through the use of mass media, the urban protestors try to reach a larger audience, to win sympathy and hence generate pressure on the real estate developers and local

governments.

Some researchers like Hess (2010) regard Nail-House protests as the representative of a new terrain of “land rights-centered protests.” They argue that thanks to the establishment of the Property Law and the protestors’ creative use of the mass media, their rights can be successfully defended. However, the scholars’ optimism is based on an ignoring of those who lack these kinds of social capital, which will be further challenged in the next section. The establishment of property law together with mobilization of mass media cannot stop an involution tendency of urban protests.

3. Involution of Urban Protests

Both of the above two approaches fail to reveal and explain the involution tendency of urban protests in recent years which can be identified through the following three aspects. First, Nail-House protests are mainly restricted to local and fragmented scales. A large urban social movement of Nail-House resistance, predicted by many scholars, has not yet arisen. Second, a severe competition for headlines emerged between Nail-House protestors. And third, the strategy of problematization has become a filter of social problems. Too much emphasis placed on social capital reproduces and enlarges the social inequality. This section will look into these three aspects.

3.1 “Piecemeal” resistance

Despite the expansive scope of protest in China today, scholars have reached a broad consensus that the outbreak of protest in contemporary society, while frequent and often highly charged, has emerged as a fragmented and localized phenomenon. (Hess, 2010: 91)

Some researchers studying state owned enterprise (SOE) workers try to explain why the declining material conditions for these workers, together with their frequent but localized contentious actions, have failed to coalesce into a larger, more coherent mass movement (see Lee 2007 for an example). Some of them try to link this failure to the influence of market economy hegemony. Ching Kwan Lee (2007) argues that the decentralization in the post-reform era and geographic unevenness of economic development provide opportunities to re-enter the labor market, which results in a disunited and localized protest landscape. Lee terms these fragmented or factory-based protests “cellular activism.”

Similarly, numerous cases of Nail-Houses’ resistance in recent years are restricted to local areas. After reaching a seemingly more adequate compensation, or with the exemption of local malfeasants from prosecution, Nail-Houses protests come to an end. That is one of the weaknesses of the political opportunity structure perspective and the mobilization paradigm. Even though both approaches try to find out a protest might succeed, they fail to examine what constitute a “successful”

protest. Without scrutinizing how these protestors interpret urban development, current literatures seem to pre-suppose that resistance against demolition is only aimed at enhancing bargaining power.

3.2 A competition for headlines

The emphasis placed on the strategy of “problematization” to mobilize resources and utilize current political opportunity structures has already generated competition among Nail-House protestors for media headlines. Protestors have to resort to more and more drastic and often violent ways to gain public sympathy and pressure. However, this focus on mobilizing resources—or making use of social capital—has diverted attention from criticizing urban crisis.

Mayer (2003) criticizes the prevailing discourse of “social capital” in urban development. Politicians, scholars, and activists have highlighted the concept of “social capital” as the manifestation of grassroots empowerment and citizen participation. However, Mayer challenges that rather than fulfillment of grassroots empowerment, it is part of a new mode of governance (Mayer, 2003: 108). The impression is of a fair competition confronting each Nail-House, implying that through mobilizing enough resources and making effective use of them, protestors are empowered. “Successful” protests are those which enhance their bargaining power through seizing the political opportunity, making rightful use of it, and being flexible enough to mobilize different kinds of resources. All the poor and powerless groups who lack access to social capital need to do is to “increase their ‘stock’ by

becoming more competitive, hard-working and disciplined” (Mayer, 2003: 123). However, as Mayer argues, this diverts attention away from welfare crisis or urban crisis. Without any alternative visions of the city, the modern Chinese “enclosure movement” appears to be inevitable.

Since few studies have been done to examine the tendency of urban protests, we try to grasp it through mass media reports. In the Chongqing case in 2007, the Nail-House family can achieve their goals thanks to the use of law and mass media. In the following years, however, numerous protests committed to more and more radical ways to express their anger and hopelessness. In 2009, a woman named Tang Fuzhen set herself on fire confronting forced demolition of her own house. In 2010, in Yihuang, three family members climbed onto the roof of their house and burned themselves. Despite this, it has been increasingly difficult to attract public sympathy in the fast consumption of information nowadays. Mass media stories of Nail-House protests mainly concentrate on the protestors’ sufferings, or their creativity in using different resistance strategies. The storylines never reached how these protests end and why.

3.3 Problematization: a “filter” of social problems

Discussions above show that the importance of “social capital” and “resource mobilization” is acknowledged by both Nail-Houses themselves and the scholars. They shape citizens’ resisting actions. Problematization is used to place local or upper-level authorities under public pressure so as to get protestors’ concerns on the

government's agenda. However, it is argued here that the process is problematic since it has become a "filter" of social problems. Only the cases that manage to enter the agenda of upper-level authorities will get the opportunity to be chosen to ease the public pressure, and to maintain the social harmony (*weiwēn* 維穩). The problem of urban crisis due to the bulldozer development is neglected.

In this perspective, single cases that have fruitful social capital (e.g. interpersonal relationship—*guanxi*—with some influential government officials) or successfully gain public attention will be chosen selectively for concession to ease the public pressure. However, institutional improvement can hardly be achieved through this means. Both protestors and intellectuals often appraise this as success of Nail-houses protests, but it should instead be interpreted as a strategic blend of concession and tolerance. The trick, as pointed out by Mayer (2003) is to both address and suspend the fundamentally different situation and to both raise social and political issues and dissolve them into economic perspectives.

Besides, upper-level or central state regulation of local governments' blind pursuit of GDP without considering the costs from the upper-level or the central state has been shown to be weak. It has been reported that even though certain government officials will be discharged when forced demolition results in casualties, those officials will soon recover (*Southern Weekly*, April 8, 2010). For instance, in 2011, the official in Yihuang self-immolation incident was appointed to the position of be a bureau chief in another city.

The filtering of social problems fails to bring about substantial institutional changes or progress. Here, Cai's (2010) argument that urban protest contributes to

policy adjustment can be challenged by the fact that the new *Regulations of Housing Acquisition and Compensation on the State-Owned Land* approved in 2011 fail to stop the pace of forced demolition and eviction.

4. Concluding Remarks

In sum, studies on urban protests in post-reform China mainly employ two perspectives. One is focused on the political opportunity structure. Decentralization is regarded both as the background of the land-centered urban development trajectory in recent decades and as what shapes the resistance strategies of problematization. The other perspective, accordingly, looks into the micro level of the resource mobilization process, scrutinizing how Nail-Houses make use of social networks and the mass media.

Neither of these two perspectives can reveal and explain an involution tendency shown in Nail-House resistance. Making use of social capital does not guarantee the empowerment of grassroots movements. Rather, localized and fragmented protests are restricted to the “piecemeal” resistance level. Most Nail-House protests end similarly. It is widely accepted with few critiques that a better monetary compensation standard or discharge of local officials can always put an end to a protest. The large urban social movement as discussed by Manuel Castells in 1983 in his book *The City and the Grassroots* has not come yet, despite years of Nail-House resistance. In addition, the emphasis on mobilizing resources or social capital diverts the attention away from urban crisis to a competition among protestors for headlines.

Those who lack enough access to social capital are overlooked and viewed as lacking competitiveness. Therefore, problematization has become a filter of social problems since in this process social inequalities are inherited without challenges. The fact is hardly any substantial and institutional progress can be achieved.

Even though the two perspectives try to figure out what makes a successful urban protest in Mainland China, a few assumptions stay unchallenged. They take it for granted that a “successful” urban protest means no more than a better monetary compensation. Consequently, they follow the path likely to enhance their bargaining power. The core of such an involution tendency is that after decades of Nail-House resistance, the major agenda is still restricted within a framework of compensation negotiation. Seldom can we see any anti-growth coalition or movement, even though the GDP-driven development model has encountered critiques. Nor have we seen alternative visions of how to develop the city. Therefore, this research questions how citizens understand urban development, specifically it questions why the major agenda of Nail-House resistance is restricted to the framework of compensation negotiation, and how alternative visions of the city are excluded.

Chapter III Theoretical Orientation

As reviewed in the last chapter, both main approaches in the literatures on current Nail-House resistance are focused on figuring out what contributes to a successful protest. Their basic assumption, however, is that a “successful” one means either to achieve a better monetary compensation or discharging certain local malfeasants. Neither can explain the questions of this research: why the major objective of Nail-House resistance is restricted to the agenda of compensation negotiation, and how alternative visions of the city are excluded. It is argued here that they never challenge what urban development is.

Currently the dominant urban development in China claims to be based on the modern urban planning theories evolving from the works of the Chicago School. Since the 1930s, Robert Park and his associates at the University of Chicago such as Ernest Burgess and Louis Wirth, established the theory of human ecology. According to human ecology, changing urban space is a competition for the best location. Cities grow as functioning systems in the process of such a biotic-like evolution. Unconscious competition between different social groups involves “invading, defending and dominating the natural areas to which they are functionally best adapted” (Saunders, 2001: 40). However, Chicago School human ecology has been challenged for its Social Darwinist orientation. It takes urban planning and space changing as a natural and neutral process covering the social inequalities it inherits and generates.

Different from Chicago School scholars who overlook power and social inequalities, Marxists include spatial relations in the critiques of capitalism. Orthodox Marxists use the segregation between the capitalists and the working class to explain urban problems. They also use ideology analysis to explain how the ruling class developss and make use of ideologies to sustain their power. Orthodox Marxists are criticized for over-simplifying the urban conflicts and its economic determinism. Orthodox Marxism overlooks the varieties and forms of social inequalities and segregations, including gender and race. Neo-Marxists like David Harvey (1973, 1985) and Manuel Castells (1977, 1983) highlight the spread of industrial capitalism as the context of restructuring of space.

Some urban sociologists employing a post-structural perspective argue that a cultural turn helps to overcome the limitations of structuralism. Discourse is highlighted as an active component of urban process and changes. Since the early 1980s, cultural geographers have engaged in questioning the meaning making, interpretations and representations of cities.

This chapter presents the theoretical orientation of this research. Firstly, it talks about different strands within cultural geography. After clarifying their difference, it explains the research approach. Gramsci's theory of hegemony and a Foucauldian approach of discourse analysis will be employed. Secondly, this chapter considers different issues of discourse analysis in Western urban studies. The third section of this chapter will explain how three major themes are categorized as: the hegemony of economic growth, the urban space improvement discourse, and the debate between the pro-market and pro-state approaches.

1. Different Strands within Discourse Analysis

As mentioned above, since the early 1980s, geographers have engaged in studying the meaning and interpretations of the city. A cultural turn helps to reveal the “inter-subjective meaning and iconography of urban landscape”(Lees, 2002: 106). Scholars like Fairclough (1992) and Lees (2004) indicate that there are different strands within discourse analysis. Ideology, hegemony and discourse are key concepts used to explain the interaction between the social production of knowledge and the “perpetuation” of power relations (Stoddart, 2007: 193). This section looks into these three strands separately: ideology analysis in orthodox Marxism; Gramsci’s theory of hegemony; and a post-structural—more specifically, Foucauldian—approach of discourse analysis.

1.1 Ideology analysis in orthodox Marxism

The main concern of ideology was due to the failure of the proletarian revolutions to overthrow capitalism. The concept of “ideology” is used by Marxists to term the dominant values and ideas in a given society coming from the ruling class—capitalists’ interests. And what we perceive as “true” knowledge is actually ‘false consciousness’—the mystification of the market. The ideological power flows in a relatively unidirectional manner from the ruling class to the subordinate classes. In this process, the social construction of capitalist relations is naturalized. However, the ideology analysis is challenged on the basis of its economic determinism, rigid

class division, and the problematic definition of ideology.

Marx's model of ideology is based on historical materialism, which asserts that material reality is the foundation of social consciousness. Based on the different ownership of the means of production, the most important power relationship is generated between the capitalist class and the working class. A common ideological process happens with the move from use values towards a system of exchange values. Marx depicted a commodity "fetishism" within which the objects produced by labors are divorced from that productive labor and relocated in the economy of exchange value within a capitalist mode of production (Stoddart, 2007: 196). Thus, the consent from the working class is earned. This ideological process obscures the central importance of labor and hence naturalizes the capitalist relations or production.

Wages are another illusion for the working class. Workers exchange their labor for wages, which they use to purchase the commodities that they produce but are owned and sold by the capitalists. These "fake" ideologies secure the willing participation of the working class in their own domination. As for the resistance, it must take a primarily material form from the orthodox Marxism perspective. People can only challenge and overcome the ideology of capitalism through transforming the economic substructure of society.

The conception of ideology is criticized for being too unitary and totalizing. Ideology analysis is challenged and criticized for its economic determinism, rigid class division and its term of ideology as something "fake". Firstly, ideology is treated as an effect of economic structures. Ideology is usually placed in a "secondary position in relation to something which must function as the

infrastructure or economic or material determinant for it” (Foucault, 1980: 84).

The rigid class division has also been criticized. Based on different ownership of the means of production, society is divided into two classes: capitalists and the working class. Ideological power flows in a relatively unidirectional way from the capitalists to the working class. Within this process, there is little space for the working class to resist. Any resistance must take a material form.

Finally, ideology is claimed to be something “fake”, which is problematic at least in two ways. It hints at the existence of “true” knowledge. Ideology is a sort of “negative element” which obscures the subject’s relation to truth (Foucault, 2000[1994]: 15). However, Foucault challenges the division between “true” or “false” knowledge; rather he describes how “truth” is produced out of the power relations. In addition, the idea that ideology is fake is problematic due to the question of who define what is truth. Only those in power have the right to define the truth. Hence the power relationship is naturalized and fixed, which would take the risk of authoritarianism.

1.2 Gramsci and hegemony

Antonio Gramsci and his successors reinterpret the concept of ideology and offer a more flexible concept of hegemony. While ideology seems to be transmitted wholesale and unidirectionally to the working class, hegemony emphasized the negotiated and compromised “common sense” between the capitalist and the proletariat.

The conception of hegemony is rooted in Gramsci's distinction between coercion and consent. Gramsci argues that consent is an alternative power mechanism. Coercion refers to the capacity of violence owned by the state. Different from previous power mechanisms, which emphasize the importance of coercion, Gramsci argues that consent is achieved through hegemonic power. "Consent" is achieved not only by shared material interests but also through persuasion. People are convinced to subscribe to the social values and norms of an inherently exploitative system. Thus, hegemony is based on participation and voluntarism instead of threat of punishment (Stoddart, 2007:201). "Common sense" is hence of great importance. Coercive power is the exclusive domain of the state, while the institutions of "civil society," like the church, schools, the mass media, or family help to produce, shape and disseminate hegemonic power.

Unlike Marx who insists on a material base for resistance, Gramsci suggests that a revolutionary seizure of the means of production cannot guarantee a substantial and radical social change in modern capitalist society. Gramsci argues that a prolonged cultural "war of position" is decisive for resistance, when subordinated classes or subaltern groups realize the common sense they take for granted and their own capacity to crystallize new hegemony.

Methodologically, research under this strand emphasized the role of "discourse coalitions" in urban politics and policy-making process. Researchers use narratives to scrutinize rhetoric of phrase to discover particular narrative structures and agenda framings, and how "storylines close off certain lines of thought and action at the expense of others" (Lees, 2004: 103).

For Gramsci, hegemony is a temporary “deal” and alliance between different social groups through which consent is achieved. A “historical bloc” of the ruling-class can hence sustain leadership over other subordinate classes. Compared to ideology, hegemony is not a static entity. And since hegemony contains the possibility for change, a counter-hegemonic bloc of subordinate classes is possible. Such a protest, accordingly to Gramsci, can be gained within civil society. While Gramsci’s model of hegemony departs significantly from the orthodox Marxist conception of ideology, it remains grounded in a Marxist framework within which class is the decisive structure.

Post-structural scholars challenge the structural orientation. On the one hand, power relationship is determined by the class structure. However, from a post-structural perspective like Foucault’s, power is relational, not decided by the social structure. On the other hand, the conception of structure-determined subjectivity is problematic. Foucault criticizes that a transparent and unified conception of human subjectivity is presupposed to function either easily deceived by the operation of ideology or hegemony, or capable of breaking decisively with false beliefs or winning the war of position and hence attaining enlightenment and emancipation (Howarth, 2000: 128).

1.3 Foucault: power, knowledge and discourse

A Foucauldian approach of discourse analysis draws on post-structural theories which treat discourse as a process through which “truth” and identities get

constructed. While Marxists—either orthodox or neo-Marxist—embed the power relationship within the division of ownership over production means, Foucault offers an alternative conception of power. In criticizing the Marxist structure-determined power relationship, Foucault offers an alternative conception of power. Firstly, power is not only a macro-level social phenomenon. Power operates throughout a multiplicity of sites at various local levels. Power is not pre-determined by the structure as a tool or weapon to maintain the control of one dominant class over other subordinate classes. Rather, it flows in multiple directions. Moreover, Foucault argues that the notion of a “Great Refusal” in the Marxist sense of a proletarian revolution is untenable (Stoddart, 2007: 205).

In sum, power from a Foucauldian perspective is relational. Different from the Marxist argument that any resistance must take a material form aiming at seizing the means of production, or Gramsci’s emphasis on a “war of position,” Foucault argues that wherever a power mechanism exists, there are always opportunities of resistance. Insofar as power necessarily involves resistance, power relations are fluid and always potentially reversible. Power is not stable, but rather is a constitutive process involving multiple force relations immanent in the sphere within which they operate and constitute their own organizations:

[A]s the process which, through ceaseless struggle and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or even reverse them, as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another, and

lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general designs or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies. (Foucault, 1976: 92)

Foucault argues that it is through the production of knowledge that power is exercised. Even though manifold power relations exist which “permeate, characterize and constitute the social body” (Foucault, 1980: 93), these power relations cannot be established without the production and circulation of knowledge.

Criticizing the Marxist conception of ideology as something “fake” which hints the existence of “truth,” Foucault argues that there is no ultimate “truth.” Rather truth is produced through “regimes of truth,” within which acceptable formulations of problems and solutions to these problems are generated. Through the constructing process of the exercise of power, people are subjected to the produced truth. Truth brings out laws upon which we are “judged, condemned, classified, determined in our understanding, destined to a certain mode of living or dying” (Foucault 1980: 94). Hence, the production of knowledge, including professional knowledge, is not a neutral process but a manifestation of the exercising of power.

1.4 Discourse analysis

The goal of discourse analysis is to figure out “how mechanisms of power have been able to function” (Foucault, 1980:100). Foucault is not concerned with power in its central positions including questions like “who owns the power,” but power at its

extremities in capillary forms. In other words, the central concern is how power is exercised.

Discourse analysis involves an important process of discursive practices, focused on figuring out availability and use of different discourses within which “a given area of social life could be constituted and the use of one rather than another to establish or reproduce a power gradient” (Sapsford, 2006: 262). Sapsford (2006) identifies three kinds of discursive practices. One is to “normalize” certain problems, solutions, or storylines as acceptable, and to regard some others as “improper.” Another kind involves the action orientation, positioning, and contestation within which both statements and actions are generated. And a third kind is the way in which the dominant discourse deals with its potential threats or resistance, either re-mobilizing previous dominant discursive forms or colonizing and changing a currently dominant one, either changing the current agenda, or internalizing the prescribed subjectivity, or following it superficially while maintaining a different way of defining the situation in private (Sapsford, 2006: 265).

This chapter uses both of Gramsci’s conception of hegemony and a Foucauldian perspective of discourse analysis. Since this research is focused on how the affected citizens in an Nail-House protest interpret urban development, it will not employ an orthodox Marxist ideology analysis. The ideology analysis is too rigid in suggesting the ruling class transmits the dominant ideologies wholesale to the subordinate classes.

A Foucauldian approach of discourse analysis helps to answer the research question. For instance, following Foucault’s conception of power, this approach may

grasp why current urban trajectories have not yet been challenged after years of Nail-Houses struggles. Foucault's discussions on the relation between power and knowledge help to deconstruct modern urban planning theories. And through the discursive practices, Foucauldian analysis may reveal how Nail-Houses understand urban development, set their prime objectives, sacrifice other demands, and overlook the potential losses and risks.

It should be pointed out that in the special Chinese context, power is largely achieved through coercion rather than consensus. Hence this research also employs a Gramscian approach of hegemony.

2. Discourse Analysis in Urban Studies

A cultural turn entered the field of urban studies in the 1980s. Cultural geographers have paid special attention to how cities are represented through meaning makings and interpretation. Discourse is treated as a decisive factor in understanding urban processes and changes. Many studies have been conducted to discuss and challenge the urban discourses in the Western context.

2.1 The myth of growth

The myth of economic growth has been criticized in many studies. Studies reveal that the underlying motive for the urban renewal plans is the economic growth, even though most plans claim to improve the living standard of citizens. Logan and

Molotch (1987) used the concept of “growth coalition” in their work *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place*. They distinguish different meanings of housing. Housing is viewed not only as of “use value” for living, but also as a commodity of “exchange value.” Therefore, a growth coalition is achieved among different land-based elites in order to drive urban politics ‘in their quest to expand the local economy and accumulate wealth’ (Jonas and Wilson, 1999: 3). Hence, this kind of urban process is actually the commodification of land, which places more emphasis on the exchange value and neglects the use value of housing.

Logan and Molotch (1987) argue that a distinctive feature of the governance of North American cities is the manner in which locally dependent capitals form into coalitions to articulate strategic policy visions for the future of their cities. These coalitions, pressing for development that serves their interests, lobby the local state to follow policies for growth. Logan and Molotch (1987) characterize these coalitions as “growth machines” (Boyle, Rogerson, 2001: 412). Inevitably, to a large degree this entails an interpretation of the city consistent with the “New Urban Politics” (NUP) discourse.

Boyle and Rogerson (2001) talked about the city trajectory of Sydney in their works. They studied the multiple ways in which the notions of ‘power’ and ‘discourse’ interweave with the production and legitimation of city development trajectories. The existence of protests which focus upon the extent to which local economic strategies are diverting resources away from local welfare provision and towards the assistance of selective capitalist interests. Harvey calculates that this amounts to nothing less than a transition from urban managerialism to urban

entrepreneurialism (Harvey, 1989a), and points to the macro-economic shifts across the economy from labor to capital, which it brings. (Boyle and Rogerson, 2001: 413)

The (NUP) discourse claims that current urban development is faced with the globalization of capital. The fluid capital, which can switch its locations globally, has given birth to an inter-city competition to get investment. David Harvey (1989) emphasized another important factor in addition to the globalized investment—consumer expenditure. A “New Urban Politics” is raised in such circumstances, arguing that the fundamental concern of the urban development is the degree of “marginality/ centrality of the city in relation to the global capital” (Boyle & Rogerson 2001: 404). The NUP discourse centers represents cities as commodities:

[P]laces marketing itself is the embodiment of new right thinking.

Mobile capital and tourists are the highly flexible consumers, places are the product, and local institutions and organizations are the manufacturers, marketers and retailers. (Boyle and Rogerson 2001: 410)

The NUP discourse generates social conflicts around several issues. One is the politics of redistribution. Even though such urban development mode claims to promote local economic growth, studies have found that it turns out to divert resources towards certain capitalist interest groups from local welfare.

However, Boyle and Rogerson point out that the injustice of redistribution cannot challenge the NUP discourse directly. The possible reaction to the critiques of redistribution injustice may be ‘tinkering’ (Boyle and Rogerson, 2001: 414) within the system

2.2 Service gap

The blind pursuit of economic growth is centered on the continuous commodification of space at the expense of other non-market relationships. The original city centers are considered as “old” and “dilapidated” which generates many social problems including poor living standards and high crime rates. Transforming these old regions is viewed as an important step in modernization. However, as many scholars have been discussed, there is a huge service gap after these redevelopment projects.

Logan and Molotch’s (1987) work also sheds light upon how the use value of housing is neglected and sacrificed in the pursuit of economic growth. The urban renewal programs claim to enhance the living conditions of citizens, but it turns out that the original citizens are marginalized and evicted and community disappears. Logan and Molotch identify a variety of ways to figure out the importance of “use value” of housing. The original living environment is identified through local facilities and infrastructures including shops, playing yards, and schools. What’s more important is that the original community provides people with a sense of identity and even civic pride. The commodification threatens and undermines these important features of the community.

The conflicts between use value and exchange value can be shown from the fact that in many cases, those regions labeled as “old” and to be razed are actually “not old enough.” They can be preserved rather than razed. A number of studies show that the priority areas for renewal did not meet the criteria of disrepair to be defined as

“slums.” The major reason for them to be labeled as ‘slums’ is that their locations are profitable (see also Harman 1966).

The United States federal urban renewal program got launched under the Title I of the Housing Act of 1949. It aimed to revitalize the old and declining city centers through large-scales slum clearances. Although it claimed to improve living conditions, the program evicted the original citizens from their living sites. What’s worse, it forcefully evicted the slum dwellers (mostly African Americans and other minorities) to other areas of the city. The marginalization of these groups actually exacerbates the urban problems.

Another important feature of community lies in local participation. In the United States, the 1954 amendments realized the deficiencies of the bulldozer development mode and required local citizens’ participation to develop and execute any urban renewal program. This was a response to numerous cases of community resistance to urban renewal programs and the rising antagonism between local citizens and the development agencies. Mollenkopf (1983) argues that these neighborhood movements helped to bring a new “political space” which forced urban politicians and administrators to interact with these “new contenders of power” (Mollenkopf, 1983: 190). Many grassroots actions had successfully prevented the destruction of their communities.

However, scholars have pointed out that there are many problems under the name of “participation” in the public policies (see Atkinson, 1999; Bereford & Hoban, 2005; Craig, 2007; Pearson & Craig, 2001). Craig (2007) looked into the term of “community capacity-building”, and argues that it is nothing new than the

old term of “community development”. He argues that the widespread of the concept of community capacity-building actually reflects the failure of worldwide governments to “properly engage in bottom-up development” (Craig, 2007: 335). Still, there is a long way to go for the communities to participate in their own skills and knowledge so as to deal with their own issues. Rather, scholars believe the frequent appearance of “participation” in the policy discourse helps to obscure the structural reasons for poverty and inequalities (see also Atkinson 1999).

Urban redevelopment often results from gentrification. Gentrification encompasses the regeneration of city centers through demolishing or privatizing traditional city centers which lower-income class used to live. Gentrification remakes the city ‘along higher-class lines’ (DeVerteuil, 2011: 1563, see also Smith, 2002). Scholars have done a lot of research into the consequences of gentrifications. Gentrification comes along with the increased cost of living, rising rates of homelessness and the destruction of traditional communities (Atkinson, 2000; Lees, 2000). It should be pointed out that there are different ways to compensate the original citizens including cash compensation, on-site rehousing and relocation. On-site rehousing may be the best way. However, after redevelopment, the rising rents of this area may force the original residents or people doing small business to move out to lower rents areas. It is a common consequence of gentrification that tenants are displaced due to demolition (see Crump, 2002). It turns out to be marginalization of people doing small business. Fewer and fewer people may get an on-site rehousing. The other two compensation plans are much more common: cash compensation, and the relocation. Cash compensation may not be enough to

purchase for another housing in the nearby areas. Relocation is at the price of marginalized citizens to urban peripheries (see Agger & Larsen, 2009 for an example). Citizens have to suffer from the up-rising transportation fees to get to their work places (Zukin, 1987: 144).

In the case of Hong Kong New Town Project, it reveals the existence of huge service gap after relocating to the new town (Susnik & Ganesan, 1997; Ng, 2002; Ng; Kam & Pong, 2005). A large portion of citizens affected by New Town Project work for the service industries. The locations of new towns are far away from their workplaces. There lacks enough infrastructures in the new towns. And it is hard to attract industries or other business to set up institutions in these new towns. Therefore, relocating to the new towns may come at the price of lack of job opportunities. It also involves gender problems. Rather than suffering from rising transportation fees, females prefer staying at home. And people have to pay more time on the transportations so that the time for family life is restricted, which creates many youth problems. And there has not been enough service for the aged, the females and the youth until the problems reveal themselves.

In *Green Bulldozer: The Squatters, Parks, Nature Estate and Institutionalized Landscape in 90's Taipei*, Huang Sunquan (2012) looked into the wave of building parks and nature estate in Taipei. In 1990s, Taipei pushed forward many plans to develop public parks and nature estate. The “green” discourse was legitimized since most Taipei citizens believed that building parks was for the public interests. However, such projects were at the expense of evicting squatters in these areas. Huang further argued that these squatters got abandoned in two ways. On the one

hand, these squatters were “illegally” occupying these areas in the eyes of the government. On the other however, squatters lacked the public support since the green discourse convinced citizens that building up parks was justified. Another enclosure movement happened as the Figure 3 below shows. The green bulldozer “eats” the squatter settlements, and produces institutionalized landscapes like parks. Huang changed the “Three People’s Principles” which stands for nationalism, democracy, and the people’s livelihood into “Swallow People’s Principles” (噬民主義)

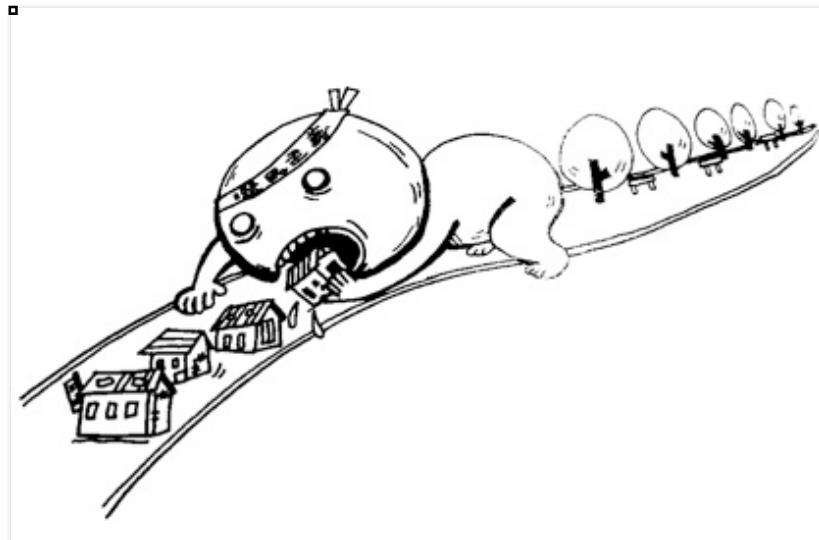


Figure 3: "Swallow" People's Principles (source: Huang 2012: 90)

2.3 Inequalities of the market and the state

In Hong Kong, a reclamation-led urban development strategy for land supply sustains for decades (Ng & Cook, 1997). Under the reclamation-led urban development strategy for land supply, massive lands are reclaimed for commercial uses. However, heritage preservation is considered as an undesirable interference in

the operation of the land market. It is reinforced by a bureaucratic system, which privileges efficiency over participation technocratic standard over cultural visions.

Manchin and Szelenyi (1987) look into urban inequalities caused under two mechanisms: the primary and secondary mechanisms. In the state socialist countries, the primary mechanism according to them is the redistributive system—the state. And the market is the secondary. Manchin and Szelenyi believe that at the very beginning of the market reform, market “for a while” compensates for the basic inequalities in the society. But after a certain point, market shows as a second mechanism to reinforce the urban inequalities and creates its own inequalities. The first mechanism—the state distribution has a real social policy function. The state should provide the access to housings for the lower-income classes. However, to a certain point it privileges people having higher social status. The state distribution in the socialist societies hence generates inequalities. Manchin and Szelenyi concluded in their research that there is no need to search for a ‘third mechanism’ which would compensate for the inequalities caused by these two mechanisms. “Rather, we think that the solution must be founded in the intervention of the society into the state and into the market” (Manchin & Szelenyi, 1987: 139).

Szelenyi (1983) looked into the urban inequalities under socialism in Eastern Europe. Housing inequalities are being created ‘now’, not inherited from the capitalist ‘past’, as those with higher incomes get the better housing; and these inequalities are being created by administrative allocation, i.e., by the distinctively socialist mechanism that was supposed to replace the capitalist market method of allocation. (Szelenyi, 1983: 6)

In a general way the replacement of market allocation by administrative allocation might merely replace one unequalizing force by another. Administrative allocation can sometimes reproduce the unequalizing market mechanism which it is supposed to replace and reverse. (Szelenyi, 1983: 9)

3. Framework of Analysis

This section categorized previous discussions into three themes for data analysis of this research: the hegemony of economic growth, the discourse of urban space improvement, and the role of the state and the market.

After the late 1980s and early 1990s, Mainland China entered the Post-Reform era, within which a rapid and continuous economic growth becomes the decisive factor of political legitimacy. Local states have joined the competition for rapid GDP progress since then. Scholars criticize such fever and the ideology of economic growth. However, it is contradictory that Nail-Houses are believed to gain a large sum of benefits from current urban development mode. Nail-Houses are blamed for being the free-riders of the up-rising property price, and becoming lazy local landlords who do nothing but get rents for monthly income. It is worthwhile to look into how they interpret urban development and the economic growth, whether they gain a lot or suffer from economic losses. It is also worthwhile to figure out their discursive actions, how they set their major objectives and how they choose from different resisting strategies.

Comparatively, the living patterns and losses due to the changes of living

environment are seldom taken seriously. These are considered as secondary compared to the economic gains and losses. In the western context, numerous studies are focused on the service gap after the redevelopment. Problems come along with the relocation including the rising transportation fees, the declining job opportunities, the lack of infrastructure, the ignored interests of the tenants. There are also problems for the aged, females and the youth to adapt to the new life after relocation. There is also disjuncture between policies. However, current literatures on urban redevelopment in Mainland China seldom discuss such losses and changes. It is worthwhile employing a typical case in Mainland China to figure out the changes for their life patterns, whether Nail-Houses are aware of such losses before they accept the final deal and how they react to it.

In the western context, there have been many critiques of neoliberalism. However, since China is claimed to experience the transition from state allocation to the market system, things are totally different from the western context. There are currently two attitudes towards the role of the state and the market in China. One follows the neoliberalism argues that the state is over-powered without control, and establishing a free real estate market can help to set some rules for the state. In such discourse, market is labeled as the empowerment of citizens. While the other criticizes the market arguing that there should be further control from the state for the market. It necessitates it to look into how Nail-Houses interpret such an either-or choice.

Chapter IV Research Methodology

1. Qualitative Approach

Since this research project is designed to inquire into how Nail-Houses interpret urban development, a qualitative approach will be adopted.

The major differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches have been discussed by many scholars (Guba & Lincon, 1994; Merriam, 1998). Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, rather than viewing it as absolute, tangible, or physical. The relationship between qualitative researcher and what is studied is intimate. Under this value-laden nature of inquiry, they try to answer how social experience is created and given meaning. In contrast, quantitative studies stress the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables rather than processes within a value-free framework.

This research looks into urban conflicts arising from demolition and eviction in the name of urban development. More specifically, it focuses on understanding how the Nail-House protestors perceive urban development and their reactions. These objectives cannot be achieved through a quantitative approach.

2. Case Description

In order to gain an in-depth insight into how these urban protestors interpret urban development and their reactions, a typical case in my hometown W City will be studied.

W City is one of the largest city in Anhui Province. The real estate development has become a pillar industry of W City since 2007 (see Deng, 2010; Li, 2012). In 2011, the investment on real estate development equals to 23.28% of the local GDP (Lee, 2012). Many large projects of demolition and eviction have been put forward these years in the name of “urban development” or “old district revitalization.”

J Street is located in the central area of W City. In 1990s, the buildings in this area were belonged to a state-owned enterprise (SOE). After the nation-wide transformation of SOEs in the late 1990s, the buildings on J Street survived but were sold to individuals for commercial uses. The new shop owners were once workers of SOEs in W City, and popularly known as “household businessmen” (城市個體戶) since then. Till 2009 when the redevelopment program of J Street was announced, most household businessmen have lived in this area for more than 10 years.

The redevelopment project planed to develop this area into a large shopping mall together with several office buildings. In 2009, it only offered monetary compensation without replacement. The monetary compensation was 8,000 ¥ per square meter. However, the price of nearby shops or commercial buildings was 38,000 ¥ per square meter in the same year. None of these businessmen could enjoy on-site replacement. In other words, they can hardly own a shop in the new

developed shopping mall or nearby areas.

Most of the residents and some household businessmen in this area accepted the compensation in very early stage, leaving eight shop owners. Together with their family members, they participated in the collective lawsuit and protest against the demolition.

During the nearly three years' protesting process which was similar to other cases of Nail-House protests in mainland, they kept trying to mobilize various resources. They got their stories and experiences reported, and tried further to get public attention through the new media. In March 2012, this collective protest came to an end. Six household businessmen accepted a new compensation proposal which provided them with another shop in a faraway but newly developing district. While the remaining two shop owners refused to accept it and continued their resistance.

This case is unique since all the protest participants are small household businessmen. Currently, studies on urban resistance against demolition are mainly focused on three groups: the landless farmers in rural areas, urban residents in suburban areas or residents in inner city. Oddly though, the resistance of urban "household businessmen" is seldom studied specifically.

In the 1990s, SOE's transformation generated a large number of "laid-off" workers. Some of them re-entered labor market, and some became urban household businessmen. However, this wave of land-based urban development confronts them with the danger of deprivation of production means and destruction of their business environment. Different from urban residents who try to protect their houses, shops and the pre-existing business environment are the livelihood of their whole family.

It's worthwhile to inquire into how these household businessmen perceive urban development and their reactions.

As has been discussed earlier, this case is a typical one among numerous urban protesting activities against demolition and eviction. Their protest happens in the background of land-centered urban development in the post-reform era. Citizens or shop owners are confronted with development projects in the name of "urban renewal" and the unsatisfactory compensation. Besides, the strategies and resources they use are similar. They resort to lawsuit and try to find media resources to get their stories reported, and gain sympathetic public attention. Finally, and most significantly, these protesting activities are similarly ended. Even though protestors may try to question the legitimacy of urban development, a seemingly more adequate compensation usually easily puts an end to their collective actions.

Another reason I chose J Street is that my family is among the eight families who participated in the collective protest. Being an insider not only guarantees the richness of informants and information, but it also enables me to contextualize their understandings and actions.

3. Generalizability of a Single Case

Case study is often challenged about representativeness and generalizability. However, as Gobo (2004) puts, the logical mistake of this query is in 'confusing the representativeness of the case with the representativeness of its characteristics observed by the researchers'.

Robert Yin (1994) distinguishes “analytical generalization” with “statistical generalization”. Based on the former logic, a case does not represent a ‘sample’ to enumerate frequencies of populations. Rather, case studies are generalizable to theoretical propositions.

For instance, as reviewed above, studies focusing on how certain protests are mobilized and organized define these resistances as ‘rights-protecting actions’. These researchers are optimistic of a civic society formation without clarifying what terms of ‘rights’ are protected through these conflicts. I doubt this optimism and will pay special attention to figure out protestors’ objectives and how they determine them.

Consequently, further questions and hypotheses emerge to form. The findings generating from this case study will be generalized to see how these urban protesting actors interpret urban development.

After justifying that it is a typical case in urban protests nowadays, a following question comes into being—to what extent can this case study be generalized to refer to the whole picture of urban protests in mainland China? As Gobo (2004) reminds that the variation among different cases determines the extent to which a single case study can be generalized. ‘The precision of a sample, its being an accurate miniature of the universe, is better when the population from which it is drawn is homogeneous, and it is lower when it is more heterogeneous.’

It is argued earlier that the urban protests against housing demolition resemble each other not only in the strategies they use to mobilize and get public attention, but also in how they come to an end. Thus, by focusing on one such typical case, I can not only challenge present studies, but figure out how urban protests happen in an

‘involution’ way—grasping the whole picture of how urban resistances are flawed and weakened.

4. In-depth Interview

The case of J Street protest involves eight families of household businessmen who participated in the collective protest. It is possible to get close to each one of them. Besides, it is worthwhile to inquire those who accepted the compensation at very early stage and hence did not participate in the collective resisting actions. For these non-participants, since they have moved out and lived in different places for almost three years, their experience helps to illustrate how urban redevelopment and demolition changed citizens life pattern. Besides, this case is unique because all the participants are shop owners. Another group of people are neglected as well in the current literatures on Nail-House resistance: tenants. It is necessary to figure out how tenants understand urban development, how their life and business are changed due to demolition, and the reason why they seldom choose to participate into the resistance.

Therefore, this research chose 15 affected citizens as interviewees (Appendix B: Table of Interviewees), including participants and non-participants, shop owners and tenants, decision-makers and their family members. According to the research ethics, all the interviewees in this research are anonymous.

The in-depth interviews are processed separately in one or two times: the first time is the story telling of the whole process of resistance including why they

decided to protest against demolition, the strategies they took, why they accepted the final compensation plan, etc. The second round of in-depth interview followed up with some key issues including how they experienced the changed life pattern after demolition (see Appendix A: Interview guideline).

5. Researcher as an Insider

As discussed above, being an insider enables me to contextualize the case of protest and informants' narrations in a longer time range, and guarantees a rich amount of information. However, being an insider also has some limitations mainly due to the direct interventions of local politics in the J Street.

Being united as a protest 'camp' though, these household business people were not an entity. They had conflicts and personal concerns and interests. Since my family was involved in this collective protest, my role might be viewed not only as a researcher, but also as a stakeholder with the collective protest camp. When some interviewees offered some false factual data, it is easy to tell by contextualizing this information and comparing with other factual data I got. Multiple sources of evidence were used to testify the truth of factual data when different interviewees were contradictory about factual evidence. I will go into details about the researcher as an insider the reflection of this research.

Chapter V The Hegemony of Economic Growth

My fieldwork started from August 2012 and ended in the beginning of 2013. Through in-depth interviews, I looked into how different stakeholders including decision-makers and their family members, participants and non-participants, shop owners and tenants understood urban development. Based on the data I got, three themes as clarified in the literature orientation chapter proved to be effective in explaining how citizens translate, adapt and employ prevailing urban discourses. These three themes are: the hegemony of economic growth, the discourse of urban space improvement, and the role of the state and the market. This chapter begins with the first theme: the hegemony of economic growth.

There seems to be a blind spot about how a Nail-House protest comes to an end, considering large numbers of news reports focusing on these citizens' suffering. We can find hardly any definitive information about whether a final compensation deal is reached, or what that deal is. It is a common practice that citizens have to sign some sort of confidentiality agreement with local governments about the final deal. However, generally people have the impression that whenever a single case is effectively publicized and "problematized", local or upper-level authorities will finally compromise. This is accompanied by rumors like "planting houses" (種房子). According to these reports, when informed of an upcoming development project and consequently demolition, people—especially those living in urban-rural fringe—will engage in illegal enlargement of their house. Through this "planting," they can obtain

a larger amount of monetary compensation or more housing.

Nail-Houses are hence considered the “winners” of demolition. Even though news reports cover their struggles and sufferings, Nail-Houses are often under attack as “free-riders” of skyrocketing housing prices or as “lazy local landlords.” In both views, they are believed to make unreasonable profits from urban development and demolition. However, it is argued here that these critiques are based on the tricky definition of “incremental benefits” of land development (土地增值收益), which ignores the losses and huge risks these citizens take. Therefore, this chapter focuses on whether Nail-Houses are the “winners” of demolition. It begins with unveiling the trick of incremental benefits and, then it goes into details of Nail-Houses’ gains and losses due to demolition.

1. The Trick of “Incremental Benefits” (土地增值收益)

He Xuefeng (2012) identifies so-called “incremental benefits” of land development. He argues that demolition is the key factor, which generates a constantly rising housing price. It is this kind of land-centered urban development and demolition process that elevates the price of land. He uses the term “incremental benefits” of land development to refer to this elevated amount. Both local and central states can use the benefits for the public through various means, including improving local infrastructure. He further criticizes Nail-House protestors of taking too much of the “incremental benefits.”

As viewed in the earlier chapter, this definition is flawed due to its assumption

that state agencies would share the benefits with all citizens without bureaucrats' own interests. However, democratic and institutional supervision and regulation of the power are absent, and corruption often happens through which public officials use the power and public resources to make personal benefits.

It is also tricky to separate land clearance and the development process after demolition into two independent parts. This separation is misleading and results in an illusion that "incremental benefits" are generated from the demolition and compensation section only. It masks the fact that more benefits generate from the development process after the land clearance section. The developers and the new land users enjoy this part of the benefits, while citizens living there for decades have no access to it. The trick of the "incremental benefits" is influential. In one way, it misdirects the attention towards the Nail-Houses and raises a seemingly fair "competition." Each actor tries to avoid being the "greater fool." In so many cases of urban resistance, Nail-Houses try hard to gain the public attention aiming at gaining more compensation.

2. Free-riders of a Skyrocketing Housing Price

There are two ways to compensate the affected citizens in the present demolition process: monetary compensation and re-housing including on-site re-housing and replacement. Nail-Houses have been criticized in both ways. One is to blame them as the "free-riders" of a skyrocketing housing price, who gain large sums of money overnight. This accusation is based on the tricky "incremental benefits." The other criticism warns the danger that large numbers of Nail-Houses are turning into "lazy

local landlords” living by the rents without doing any labor work.

“Free-rider” is a common moral accusation that Nail-Houses take too much from the so-called “incremental benefits” of development. This accusation claims that housing prices are raised by demolition, and also is the compensation standard. Without demolition, housing prices and the monetary compensation standard would never reach such a high level. Compared to the amount of money they once paid for their housings, the present plan has already enabled Nail-Houses to gain a large sum.

2.1 The politics of calculation

The “incremental benefits” argument raises a misleading comparison between present compensation and the original selling price of these houses. It also confuses the compensation standard with the market price. Mr. Zhao, for example, bought a shop on J Street in 2005 at the price of more than ten thousand per square meter. The monetary compensation in 2009 is ¥8169 per square meter. He said that based on this difference, accepting that compensation plan would mean losing three hundred to four hundred thousand RMB, let alone the associated business losses.

Mr. Zhang was employed by the SOE in J Street. During the nationwide transformation of SOEs, he lost his job but bought a 67 square meter shop from his company and became a household businessman. He says,

It is an unfair comparison between the present market price and the price at which I bought this shop years ago. First of all, the comparatively “low” price at that time is still based on the

market price. It is reasonable that I can have some sort of “discount” because I was an employee of that company and I lost job since the state-owned enterprise was transformed into a private one. Besides, even if the house was sent to me free of charge, years of our work has already made it a means of production for my whole family. Now you told me that I should hand it over. How can I accept it? Who can take charge of the livelihood of my whole family if I accept your low compensation plan?

Two meanings of housing can be identified in Mr. Zhang’s narration. In one way, his shop has the exchange value. He argues that it is an unfair comparison between the current monetary compensation standard and the price at which he bought years ago. But still he believes that “if it was a free market, the compensation based on the current market price would be fairer.” Other Nail-Houses have a similar point of view. Mrs. Zhu said, “I told them (local government officials who deal with the negotiation) that if they raised the monetary compensation to the current market price, I would stop resisting and move out of this place as soon as possible. Even a little bit lower than the market price is also acceptable.” In other words, in the eyes of these small business people, it is fair if monetary compensation is equal to the market price of nearby shops.

In another way, the shop has the meaning of use value in Mr. Zhang’s narrations. He used the term “means of production” to describe the meaning of the shop. The shop sustains the livelihood of his whole family. That’s why he did not accept the

monetary compensation. In the above quotations we cannot tell whether there is conflicts between these two different interpretations of a shop. I will go into details in the later sections.

2.2 Economic Losses

This section tries to unveil whether Nail-Houses make a profit from demolition or undertake losses and potential risks after replacement. Words like “millions or even tens of millions of money” are often used to give the impression of an unreasonable benefit Nail-Houses make from demolition. However, this makes no sense without taking into account the size and the “price” per unit area. In the case of the J Street’s protest, people argue that the monetary compensation standard is far from the real estate price.

In 2009, shop owners of J Street were informed of the redevelopment plan and demolition. At that time they had no other alternative plans but monetary compensation. The standard was ¥8169 per square meter. Protestors used the housing price across the road in 2007 to illustrate their disappointment. The lowest selling price of the newly-built shops across the road had already reached ¥38,000 per square meter. Why is there such a gap across the same street?

Their every year task is routinized so as to systematically rob the people. If you are able to fight against them effectively, they would compromise a little bit. That is what happens to us.

Mr. Zhang interprets the demolition process as a “robbery.” Far from being the

“winners,” they think that they are just not the worst. They also suffer from economic losses and undertake huge risks.

The final compensation for the five shop-owners is replacement with new shops in a newly developed suburb wholesale trade market. The new shops are 1.2 times as large as their original shops. According to the present housing price in W City, J Street is located in the “first class” zones. The price in nearby streets has reached ¥40,000~50,000 per square meter. This newly developed wholesale trade market is in the “third class” zones. The compensation standard can be converted into ¥25,000~26,000 per square meter.

Mr. Zhao was unique among the collective protest participants. Unlike others accepting the relocation plan, he rejected it and got forcefully demolished in May 2012. When I interviewed him in the beginning of 2013, he was suffering from cancer and waiting for the local government to compensate him another shop in the urban center. Five month later, he died of cancer. Up to the date I finished this dissertation, his family still have not got any compensation.

I really need money for my cancer. Relocation may be a not so bad plan. You can get a new shop for your business. Even you cannot continue your own business, you can rent it out or sell it. But presently, the rent there is quite low. And the selling price is also at a very low level. They say it would rise according to the rapid urban development pace. But I could not wait such a long time. I need a large amount of money. And even if I died, my family needs money.

Mr. Zhao expected a special compensation plan different from others. He considered getting a shop in the urban central area was a favorable option because the location is good and the rent is rather high. His wife, son and daughter-in-law could use the shop to do some small business, or rent it out. He was worried because he was the core of his family to earn the monthly income. His wife retired and had stayed at home for many years with no retirement pension or any other related social insurance. His son has a low salary, and his daughter-in-law lost her job because she fought against the local government officials during the forceful demolition.

Mr. Zhang and his wife told me how they struggled during these years. On the one hand, they wanted to put an end to this “irregular” life as soon as possible. On the other, the shop can guarantee a ¥6,000 to 7,000 monthly family income. Mr. Zhang also implied that if J Street is developed into a business zone, he would like to buy a new shop at the same location. After calculating how much he would have to pay if he wants to come back to J Street, he believes it is almost impossible.

If the new shops are built up in three years, for example, still I want to buy one and do the same business—opening a small market. But now it seems to be impossible. If I want to have a new shop, 100 square meter for instance, the price would be above fifty thousands to sixty thousands at least. Then a 100 square meter shop may charge me of five million RMB, an 80 square meter shop means four million. Even if I can access to a loan, I have to pay a half as two millions at first. Where can I get two million? It’s interesting that I lived and worked in this place

for nearly thirty years, now you forced me to move out. When I want to come back, I have to pay two million for it.

In the above quotation, Mr. Zhang knew that moving out of J Street and relocating to the suburban market might make it impossible to move back, unless he paid much more money on it. It needs to be pointed out that for most participants in J Street protest, “the first choice” as Mr. Zhang put it was on-site re-housing. Even some non-participants agree that they would like to move back to J Street if it is possible. However, since the local government refused their demands, they compromised.

3. “Lazy Local Landlords”

Another way is to compensate the affected citizens with another house either at the same place (on-site re-housing) or somewhere else (replacement). The other kind of accusation made against Nail-Houses is to attack them as living on rents without doing any labor work, or further implying the danger of a potential large number of these “lazy local landlords.”

First of all, even though there is no reliable statistic on what proportion of compensating cases have taken re-housing, in the case of urban commercial-use buildings demolition, “re-housing” is not an offered choice. Besides, replacement outwardly to suburban areas means a changing lifestyle and business environment. There must be some people who transform from small producers into landlords living by rents, however, applying the term “lazy local landlords” to all covers up the

diversity of losses and potential risks due to these changes.

3.1 No alternatives?

It is common that in the residential housing compensation, residents may enjoy a re-housing plan. On-site rehousing has become less and less frequent over time, and relocation is increasingly common. Even though residents can still have a similar size of housing, they face the cost of living far away from their original living sites and have higher transportation fees. In other words, marginalization is the consequence of the bulldozer mode of redevelopment. However, in the case of urban commercial-use housing cash compensation appears to be the only choice. Only if Nail-Houses fight fiercely can they bargain for a re-housing plan.

In the case of J Street, from late 2009 to the beginning of 2010, monetary compensation at the price of ¥8169 was the only choice. They tried to ask for another plan with re-housing, but failed. “They said, ‘re-housing? Don’t even dream about it’” Mrs. Zhu said. That’s why these Nail-Houses gave up the demand of an on-site rehousing. They never thought to move back to J Street.

3.2 Changing business environment

Replacement outward to the suburbs is a great change of business environment. This change may be good for some. Mr. Lee is among one of these “lucky ones” according to his words. In the beginning of 2000, Mr. Lee bought two separated shops on J Street. Since he’s selling factory-use sewing machines, which require a

convenient location for transportation, an urban center is not an ideal site. So he rented these two shops to other businessmen and rented another shop for himself in a suburban area. “I used the rents of my shops to pay for my landlord (以租養租).” The replacement this time is quite good for him. He was compensated with seven new shops of thirty square meters each, which is 1.2 times as large as his original two shops on J Street. He is now using four of them to continue his sewing machines business and lends out the other three.

The other four shop owners who had moved to the new suburban new market are not so lucky. They have been doing small business in J Street for more than twenty years. “Our business cannot be made up in a short time. It took years of time to make it well known” Mrs. Zhu said. Moving to the new market means a totally new start.

Before moving to J Street, I had done small business in different places for almost ten years. In those ten years, I rent shops from others. It was quite suffering to start. I had no knowledge about how to do that business until making all kinds of mistakes. Now I can say that I am familiar with how to sell these desks and tables because I have many old customers. But to tell you the truth, I can do nothing in that suburban market. It is not the right place. If you force me to continue my business there, I would surely fail. Otherwise, I have to restart a new business which again I have no knowledge about. It is possible if I was 30 years old. Now I am 60 years old. It is ridiculous.

Another important change is that different zones influence different modes of

business. In J Street, they have been doing retail sales. The central location of Wuhu City guarantees the amount of potential customers. However, the newly developed market in the suburb is for wholesale trades. On the one hand, as Mr. Zhang said, “perhaps it is common for the wholesale business market to have more sellers than customers.” It is a disadvantage for retail. On the other, however, they may be asked why they do not transform their retails into wholesale. They expressed their concern that wholesale cannot be done in a short period of time. As Mr. Zhang said,

We have little knowledge about how to run a wholesale. Years of retails are helpless. If you force us to do it, we will probably lose a big deal.

Mr. Qian was a tenant on J Street selling carpet. J Street was the first and most famous place in Wuhu City for this kind of carpet businessmen. He said that even now there are occasionally consumers who go to J Street trying to find carpet sellers. When the new shops in suburban area were mentioned, he said that as a tenant he had to consider the rents and the best place for his business. “If you rent me a shop there free of charge, I won’t go. Because going there, perhaps I won’t see any customers a day.”

Among the eight families on J Street who resisted against shop demolition, two got a monetary compensation, five finally accepted the replacement, and the last one was Mr. Zhao, whose shop was forcefully torn down in May, 2012 after 3 years of resistance. Of the five families who had moved to the new suburban market, only one Mr. Lee as mentioned above, will continue his wholesale business of sewing machines. The other four families have already authorized the real estate developer

of the new market to rent out their shops.

It is worth noticing how the new market is developing. The real estate developer is from Zhejiang Province. There seems to be a deal between the local government of Wuhu City and this real estate developer. The developer is allowed to sell at most 60 percent of their shops. The remaining 40 percent can only be used for leasing. “It is a way of forcing the developer to take up the responsibility of running the market.” Mr. Lee said. However, as a “supportive” policy, if any shop owner from the 60 percent decides to lease out his/her own shop, he/she can only sign a three-year contract authorizing the real estate developer to do so. In addition, as a policy to attract investment, the first year renting is free of charge. The shop owners cannot get their money until the second year ends. The interviewees interpreted this as a “despotic clause” (霸王條款), but they accepted it quickly in the end.

Using the analogy of “bowl,” Mr. Zhang further elaborates his comparison of the real market price, the lowest monetary compensation standard they can accept, and the actual standard. “If my bowl is a gold one, you should give me one in return. If you cannot afford to give me a gold bowl, a silver one may be acceptable if we negotiate. But how can you just force me to accept a broken mud-made one?”

As discussed above, the definition of “incremental benefits” is tricky due to its separation of land clearance and the development that follows it, which influenced most of the Nail-Houses and made them ignore the potential losses. Mr. Lee considers that local governments lose a lot in the compensation section in the J Street case. “If they gave us a higher monetary compensation standard, ¥12,000~13,000 per square meter for instance, I’m afraid that most of us would have already

conceded and moved at early stage. But now, the new shops are worth ¥25,000 to 26,000 per.” It is unique for Mr. Lee, because the suburban wholesale market is for him a more ideal site that he doesn't consider what he has to pay if he were to come back to J Street. Mr. Zhang, based on his calculation above, has to pay two million to return.

However, only a few interviewees are aware of the losses. Mrs. Zhu made another count. Local government sold the land of J Street at thirty millions RMB. However, this price cannot cover the compensation. The Sun brothers, who rejected my interview, are believed to get above ten million RMB as a monetary compensation. The government has to pay above ten million to buy the new shops for the other five families for replacement, never mind the other residents and shop owners who moved earlier. “Local government must win a lot in other cases, but in ours, they lose a lot!”

4. Concluding Remarks

In sum, the first discourse prioritizes economic growth as the ultimate goal of urban development. Since the 1990s, economic growth has become the main source of political legitimacy. It is interesting that even though the local state's blind pursuit of GDP progress has been criticized, the major agenda of Nail-House resistance seldom goes beyond compensation negotiation. It is the complexity and fluidity of discourses.

One major myth is that Nail-Houses are the “winners” of demolition. Although suffering, Nail-Houses are under attack as being free riders of the skyrocketing

property value, or of becoming lazy local landlords. In both cases they are believed to unreasonably make a lot of profits from demolition. In the case of J Street, they suffer from huge losses and potential risks and are not the “winners” of demolition. The final deal is to relocate to a suburban market with new shops, but it is not the ideal location for their original small business. It is impossible for them to initiate a new business. Nor can they sell their shops because they cannot get the certificate of their property ownership in a few years. It is the potential risk they did not take into account before they accepted the final relocation plan.

It needs to be pointed out that these citizens are not aware of some of the losses until years after relocation. That is why they did not raise such demands in their protest. Some participants did know that they would suffer from some of the losses, but their demands were filtered and subdued.

Chapter VI The Discourse of Urban Space Improvement

The last chapter reveals that far from being the “winners” of demolition, Nail-Houses are actually suffering from economic losses. This chapter goes further to look into the changes to their lives in the longer term. The second urban development discourse argues that urban space improvement can be achieved through the current development trajectory. As reviewed earlier, the discourse of urban space improvement begins with “problematization.” It argues that the original central urban areas are “under-used” which generates a lot of social problems. In the Western context, for instance, the discourse emphasizes the threat of rising crime rates. In the modern Chinese context, these areas are attacked for their low plot ratio as a waste of urban space, and redevelopment programs are raised as the solution. Numerous renewal programs based on modern urban planning theories are presented as the solution to the “declining” urban centers. Transforming these areas into large modern business zones is widely believed to bring about economic progress. The discourse claims to offer citizens a chance to freely choose their ideal living sites or business locations.

The urban space improvement discourse turns a blind eye to citizens’ changed lives after these so-called renewal programs. It is a common practice that citizens are forcefully evicted from their original living environment. The projects undertaken in the name of improving urban space turn out to be at the cost of marginalization of the disadvantaged groups and deteriorating social inequality. Insufficient attention has

been paid to these changes in the context of Chinese Nail-House resistance. As a result, current urban space change is justified as a natural and inevitable process.

This chapter concentrates on how redevelopment and relocation influence these citizens' lives. Two major inter-related changes are shown in the case of J Street resistance: the disappearing community and the marginalization of small business. The first section goes into these citizens' understanding of their old community life, neighborhood relations, and what changed after they moved to different places. The second section shows how household small business (城市個體戶) as a particular form is marginalized. The supporters of such renewal projects argue that demolition sets these citizens free so that they can choose their ideal living sites or business location, but it is actually a forced outward eviction process.

1. The Disappearing Community

As discussed earlier, the discourse of urban space improvement argues that the original city centers are “under-used” old districts that bring a lot of social problems. Numerous redevelopment programs are referred to as the solution. However, the discourse turns a blind eye to the improved feature of these old regions: community relations. It results in the ignorance of losses when communities collapse after demolition.

This section presents different understandings of the term “dilapidated.” In the second part, special attention is paid to how citizens interpret their old neighborhood relations. Finally, the section examines their lives after moving out of J Street.

1.1 The “dilapidated” region?

It took almost thirty years for the community of J Street to come into being. It is a mixed community with both residents and small household businessmen (個體戶). The block of 24 apartments was built for the local government employees. Most of the residents are government employees or their family members, except for the residents of 5 apartments that were sold to others. These five families are working on J Street or in nearby areas.

As early as the 1980s, there was an SOE on J Street named the Industrial Products Trade Centre (工業品貿易中心). The shops in this area belonged to that SOE. In the late 1990s, the nationwide transformation of SOEs also influenced this center. It could not maintain the situation as usual, and many employees could not get salaries and lost their jobs. At first, the center leased out all the shops at a very cheap price so as to attract businessmen in the hope of developing this area into a mature business zone. Some of the employees who lost their jobs in the transformation became the tenants doing some household business (個體戶). Other tenants came from different places within W City. Several years later, these tenants bought their shops. “Thanks to all our efforts in these thirty years, this district has been developed into a very booming market,” Mr. Song said.

Then how did this booming market become a “dilapidated” old region? Interestingly, most interviewees agree with Mr. Song that the “dilapidated” image of J Street was in their words—“created.” There was a block of buildings called ZJ

Market in this district, which seemed to have been empty since 2005. However, the interviewees pointed out that it was only the first step of the redevelopment plan of J Street. Since ZJ Market was very large—nearly ten thousand square meters—it took several years to deal with its compensation work. Mr. Zhang said,

After that, we shop owners were facing with the renewal plan and began the resistance. If you are not clear about it, you may consider it as a dilapidated market. But as a matter of fact, it was just one step of this district's redevelopment and demolition. We are not clear of why it took so many years to tear down that building. But owing to that, it became 'dilapidated.'

All participants shared this view that it was the redevelopment project that deteriorated the living conditions and business environment of J Street. As Mr. Lee put it, "to improve our living conditions? By no means I would believe it. You can see how J Street is destroyed." Some of the interviewees also argued that there were no regulations on how and who to judge whether or not a region is "old." Mr. Song was one of them. He dissatisfied that any local government officials could randomly choose a piece of land and mark it as an old one.

ZJ Market started to be constructed in 1984 and was built up in 1985. It is only less than 30 years old. According to some laws like environment protecting, buildings have their lifecycle (生命週期). An above twenty years old building is far from being called as an old one.

Similar evidence can be found. The interviewees believed that on several

occasions during these years of resistance, the local government used illegal methods to force them to compromise and move out. In the beginning of 2011, this district caught on fire three times within two months. Mr. Zhang said,

Till now, the policemen have not yet found the suspect. But one thing no one can deny is that the fire was aiming to push us to give up. It must be linked to the demolition.

It is not necessary to expand the discussion of who the suspect might be. The point is that they believed that the redevelopment project brought damage to their original living environment.

1.2 Community relations before demolition

As discussed above, before demolition J Street was a mixed community with both residents and small household businessmen. Most of the household businessmen lived in this area or nearby regions. It's interesting that gender division reveals itself in the understanding of "community relations." Females treasure more the neighborhood support in the "good old days." Males treasure more the business environment of J Street and how the neighborhood relations contribute to their resisting actions.

Mrs. Zhang treasures the old neighborhood trust. She used to run a small sales store on J Street at the entrance of the residential buildings.

I had done the business there since my husband lost his job from that SOE. We ran the small business there for more than 15 years.

And my family lived there as well. I know all the residents there.

Whenever a stranger came by, I would ask him who you are looking for. Seldom stealing cases happened at that time. And I can also trust some of my neighbors.

In the Western context, redevelopment programs usually justify themselves by arguing that modern buildings and the estate management system are the effective response to the rising crime rates in old city centers. However, in the case of J Street, an “old” traditional community is much safer according to these citizens’ interpretations. Friendship and trust can be found in such traditional communities. Mrs. Yao was Mrs. Zhang’s neighbor and they have been friends since doing business side by side. Mrs. Zhang said at that time if she had to leave the shop, she would ask Mrs. Yao to look after the shop for a while.

If I have to leave the shop for a while, I would ask her for help.

Believe it or not, it is not an easy issue. One reason is that you can only leave it to the trustworthy one. She is trust-worthy.

Many years ago I asked another neighbor to look after my shop but found out some goods were missing. But it never happened on Mrs. Yao. I never doubt it. Besides, Mrs. Yao can help to sell things during my absence if she knew the price.

Mrs. Zhang treasured those “warm old days.” Even though Mrs. Yao made mistakes sometimes, confusing different goods’ price for instance, they treasured such friendship and trust ever since. All the females living or working in J Street treasured such traditional community relations. They believed that such trust could

only be built up in traditional communities.

Males, however, may have a different concern regarding community relations. They highlight the importance of community relations to find resources, and to mobilize and strengthen the collective protest. “Without the effort of so many people, we can never dream of such achievements,” Mr. Zhang expressed. It should be pointed out that males also treasured the friendship and trust. Mr. Zhang and Mr. Song were once working for the same SOE on J Street and lived in this area for nearly twenty years.

Before demolition, actually we knew little about each other. Yes, we were workmates and we are neighbors. But we have different business to do. It’s interesting that the redevelopment and demolition provide us a chance to better know our neighbors. We built up a more close kind of trust. I’m sometimes impetuous and irritable. I learned lessons from it. He is more patient and calm. For many times, he persuaded me to calm down. Thanks to him, I can take a more rational attitude of our protest including the objective settings and when to compromise and stop.

Compared to females who treasured the “good old days,” the central issue for the males was their protest. In the case of J Street, since most of the decision makers of the resisting families were male, it is worthwhile to examine these males attitude about the “good old days” and the traditional community relations this stands for. A frequent term they used to describe the demand of preserving a traditional life and the original community was “weak moral accusations.” Before the final agreement,

they were aware that they might suffer from certain losses due to the change of living environment and life pattern. But preserving seems to be “unrealistic.”

Twenty years ago, Mr. Zhang’s father was faced with a redevelopment project in W City. It changed his life so greatly. Before that, Mr. Zhang’s father had done a small business for over six years. Demolition put him out of job. In the following year, Mr. Zhang’s father could not adapt to the changes and finally got hemiplegia. He slept on his bed for more than ten years. Mr. Zhang said,

Other people may not agree with me. But I think the main reason my father suffered from that disease is demolition. Of course demolition changes our daily life and even my “biological clock”. But you cannot stop the government’s urge of development due to your personal biological clock.

Similar to Mr. Zhang, most interviewees agreed that personal sacrifice is justified when facing the development plan. Development is the unchallengeable hegemony even when it actually brings a lot of losses and suffering to citizens. Paradoxically, Chinese citizens may paradoxically show their anger at such losses but feel embarrassed to admit them at the same time.

However, for these citizens, claims including the preservation of the original community, maintaining a traditional living pattern, and criticizing resource wasting are understood as “weak moral accusations.” Mr. Lee said,

Whenever a new government official came, he would engage in tearing down buildings even just built up yesterday. It is a waste of resources, isn’t it? But frankly speaking, it is weak to raise

any moral accusations like resource-wasting. If there is no substantial institutional reform, these features are just minor details (旁枝末葉)

The resource-wasting accusation cannot challenge the hegemony of economic growth of the urban space improvement discourse. In other words, development is the only “justified” criteria. Their embarrassment is due to the reason that they believed that preserving an original life pattern was not a justified objective against such development mode.

The second reason for the absence of such demands is a strategic silence. It is interesting that during the whole resistance process, they never asked the local government to publicize the development plan of J Street. All these protesting actors argued that “it can only be a business—compensation negotiation” confronting the local government. Hence everything was business and they had to give up other requests. Mr. Zhang said,

When it comes to the demolition and compensation, for the government, it can only be a business. It can be no more than a negotiation process. Other things are out of our concern. For instance, the plan of J Street should not be our concern.

Mr. Lee had the similar view. He used the term “catch the main focus and forget the others” (抓大放小) to describe how they set their main objectives and subdued other demands.

For us, the house (the new shops) is our main concern, of course.

Compared to it, other things including disease pension, plan of J

Street development or preserving the community should be neglected. You have to lose something if you want to get the main objectives. If you want to get everything, perhaps you will get nothing. After all, it had been clear that we would never enjoy an on-site re-housing. J Street no longer has anything to do with us.

It needs to be pointed out that both participants and non-participants had expressed some different understandings of urban development. Some tenants like Mr. Qian thought the local government should compensate for the tenants as well. Some shop owners like Mr. Lee believe that if J Street would be developed into a business zone, they had the right to on-site rehousing. But these concerns were subdued for the main focus while many economic and social losses got neglected.

And a third kind of discursive practice is due to the sensitive Chinese context. Present researches about demolition under the mobilization theories emphasize how community relations help to mobilize citizens for a common goal. However, in the case of urban Nail-House protest, we can seldom find any “common” goal. Even though protesting actors may emphasize that it is not an old region, few cases ever request to preserve the community.

These Nail-House protestors claim that most of their efforts have been aiming at pushing the local government to be involved in a face-to-face negotiation. However, “collective” may be political sensitive.

There should not be any “common interest”. Everyone come together of their own willingness. We accept that different people have different goals. There should never be any

compelling rules. Otherwise, it would be political sensitive.

In the case of J Street resistance, the relation between participants and non-participants is interesting. All non-participants accepted the cash compensation and moved away. In the beginning of 2011 when the protest entered the third year, the local government started a new round of negotiation with the resisting Nail-Houses. Three of the non-participants got the news and came back trying to bargain with the local government. They wanted to have the equally valued compensation as the participants. In other words, they once again became “participants.” Interestingly, though, non-participants never tried to join in the collective actions. And the eight Nail-House families never thought of bringing them in. Mrs. Wang is one of the three shop owners. She accepted the cash compensation at the standard of ¥3,800 per square meter and moved out of J Street in 2009. She said that she preferred direct bargaining with the government for “the same compensation plan.” And during my fieldwork, participants were afraid that I would leak some useful information to the three “non-participants” since they regarded them as “free-riders.” Mrs. Wang was the only one of the three “non-participants” who accepted my interview. But she focused on describing how her life got changed due to relocation. Whenever I tried to ask about the details of how she bargained with the local government, she refused to answer me. I will discuss about the limitation of the researcher as an insider in the conclusion chapter.

It is interesting to look into how participants and non-participants interpret the meaning of “collective” action. Mr. Lee used the word “*baotuan*” (抱團) to describe his understanding of their concerted actions. For these participants, collective actions

mean they would be stronger to bargain with the local government for their personal interests. They never raised any demands for the community, or for the participants as an entity. They regarded the three “non-participating” shop owners as competitors.

It is worth pointing out the specific case of Mr. Song. Before the final agreement to relocate to the suburban market, there was another plan to relocate to a newly developed housing estate. A shop in the housing estate would be an ideal choice for Mr. Song since he could continue his original business there. In the suburban market, he could do nothing but rent out his new shop, and he would have to rent another shop for himself to run his business. However, he finally accepted the same relocation as the others. He explained that when the majority of them choose one plan, it is “risky” to make a different choice.

Administratively, when dealing with demolition compensation, it would take a long time for the local state to bring out a plan. It would take a probably longer period of time for the local state to execute it, contacting certain real estate developers to buy the shops and compensate the Nail-Houses. No one would like to make efforts for only one person who chooses differently.

Participating in the collective action though, not all participants’ demand could enter the final resisting agenda. The meaning of *baotuan* is to strengthen their bargaining power. If participants like Mr. Song tried to ask for a different compensation plan, they might fear weak since they were alone directly confronting the local state. Thus they chose to subdue these different but important demands and suffer from losses.

1.3 Life after relocation

The discourse of urban space improvement also exacerbates the social inequalities. Lower income groups are more vulnerable to such losses. It took years for the community of J Street to finally collapse. This section examines this process and the citizens' lives after moving out of J Street.

J Street was a mixed community of residents and household business people. Most of the residents were government employees and their family members and the rest work in J Street or nearby places. They were attracted to J Street by either the comparatively cheap rents or the low transportation fees to work. Soon after the redevelopment plan was announced, the community began to break apart. Most of residents with family members working for the local government accepted the low monetary compensation and moved out from J Street. Most of these residents had already purchased another house. Even though they also suffered from economic losses, they were much more adaptable to the change of living sites.

As for other residents who are attracted by the employment opportunities provided in J Street or nearby places, they have limited choices. They could not afford to purchase a new house in nearby areas. Some of them had to resort to flat sharing to cut down on rent expenses if they wanted to live close to their worksites. But those choosing to live in far away areas were suffering from the high transportation expenses. In short, the lower income groups are most vulnerable to such changes and losses.

2. Marginalized Small Business

When most of these residents moved out of J Street, this community contained only businessmen. The interviewees compared the difference between residents and shop owners. Under the current policies, urban residents are commonly faced with two options: either monetary compensation which is much lower than the market price, or to accept a new house (on-site re-housing or relocation). On-site re-housing is fewer and it is much more common for the residents to relocate to far away areas—urban periphery.

After demolition, the J Street community collapsed. For most of these household businessmen, their life after demolition is facing with limited choices like early retiring or re-entering the labor market. In these circumstances, they seldom take part in the new communities.

In the case of J Street, the only possible community relationship left was among those who move to the suburban market. However, these shop owners were distributed to different zones rather than locating together. Besides, only one continued to run his original business in the new market. Others rent their shops out. The community was disappearing. However, the urban space improvement discourse looked down upon the values of these characteristics of traditional communities.

2.1 The difficult return to the labor market

Since their new shops in the urban peripheries are not suitable for their original business, the household business people cannot continue. One common choice they made is to look for employment opportunities in the labor market. But this return is quite difficult. Mrs. Zhang made that choice. Mr. and Mrs. Zhang owned a 67 square meter shop in J Street. The monthly income was often above ¥ 7,000. “At the same time, I don’t have to consider the food expenses. But now I have to make the calculation.”

Her family finally accepted the re-housing plan. They got three new shops as large as 80 square meters in sum—1.2 times as large as their original shop—in the new suburban market. Since the suburban market is not good for retails sales, they decided to rent out the new shops. However, they cannot get the housing rents until two years later. Mrs. Zhang’s monthly retirement pension was then the only fixed income in the household. Her retirement pension is ¥1,600 per month. ¥500 is used for Mr. Zhang’s old mother. Another ¥700 is used for Mr. Zhang’s medical and social insurances. And the remaining ¥400 is for daily expenses.

Considering the family’s monthly expense, Mr. Zhang felt that she had to find a job. “Is it ridiculous? I have to go out to work.” Now Mrs. Zhang has a job in a restaurant working 10 hours a day and getting paid ¥2,000 a month. The reason that females are easier to find a job in the labor market is that they have to suffer from long hours and low pay.

It is comparatively easier for females to look for a new job in the labor market,

but this does not mean that the jobs are easy. They have to sacrifice to long hours of tired and dirty work with little protection. However, it is much more difficult for the male to get a new job. They cannot compete with the young to obtain manual labor work. They spent so many years working for themselves and lack certain skills. It is difficult as well for them to adapt to the change of working pattern. Mr. and Mrs. Zhang couple quarreled for several times. Mr. Zhang felt empty and did not want his wife to be so tired. But Mrs. Zhang said, “I have no other choices.”

2.2 Early retirement

Early retirement is another common choice among both non-participants and participants. The last section challenges the myth that Nail-Houses are the “winners” of demolition. Rather than benefiting either as the free riders of a skyrocketing housing price or as the new “lazy local landlords,” they actually undertake economic losses and potential risks. Here it will be revealed why people have to choose early retirement and the problems that come along with it.

J Street was the first place that started to do the carpet-selling business. Before demolition, Mrs. Fang had been selling carpets there for nearly twenty years. When demolition was announced in 2009, Mrs. Fang was an active participant in the collective resistance. “I felt so angry about such an uneven monetary compensatory standard. However, later I felt tired and hopeless. It’s impossible to fight against the government.” She gave up in 2010, accepting the monetary compensation standard at about ¥8,000 per square meter. The shop’s market price had always been above

¥40,000. Regardless of the economic loss, relocating the business seemed to be an option. However, she decided to stay at home rather than purchasing a new shop and continuing her business. She said that in the nearly three years since, she has not become used to the retirement life. When she heard that the Nail-House protestors finally got the new shops in the suburban market, she could not accept it and tried to argue with the local government.

Mr. Zhang offered another explanation. Most people on J Street have been the household business people (城市個體戶) for more than ten years or even above twenty years. Mr. Zhang interprets it as a “life pattern” which is not easy to change.

I am both the employee and the boss. I worked for myself so that all the incomes belong to my family. Now I am above 50 years old already. Stop being a shop owner means either early retirement or re-entering labor market. I am not equipped for the brainwork. Nor can I do any physical labor. Nobody would hire me for that. The most possible job I can do is being a security. Being a household businessman I can get above ¥7,000 per month even though it is time-consuming and tiring. While being a security can only get about ¥2,000 per month. I would rather stay at home.

In two circumstances, these household businessmen no longer own an effective means of production. One is to accept the monetary compensation, which cannot cover the expenses of purchasing a new shop and relocating the business. The other is to accept the re-housing, as most participants did in the J Street case. However, the

suburban market is not good for their original business, which will be fully explained in the following section. In both circumstances, the shop is no longer an effective means of production.

Consequently, they have to change their original life pattern. Here I found the gender division. It is much more difficult for the male household businessmen to adjust to the changed life pattern. As explained by Mr. Zhang, in doing small business for so many years they do not have special skills. Nor can they do any intellectual work. Being old is another disadvantage in re-entering the labor market. Male shop owners who lost their shops confront more difficulties in re-entering the labor market. More choose the early retirement to stay at home. It is a little bit easier for females to find a job, which changes their original family life. Mr. Zhang admitted that he felt boring and even guilty at home:

Retiring at such an early age makes me feel like a woman. I can only do household duties like cleaning and cooking, or just watching insignificant TV shows or playing computer games all day long. My wife went to work. She felt tired and I felt empty.

Mr. Zhang tried to go out and be a taxi driver. However, his family opposed that. Being a household businessman is labor consuming and time consuming but safe. Mr. Zhang had diabetes mellitus. Mrs. Zhang said that, "I won't sleep well if he goes to be a taxi driver."

In sum, the redevelopment plans do not provide citizens with the freedom to choose their ideal living sites or business locations freely. It should be pointed out that there are some rare exceptions. As has been discussed previously, Mr. Lee

gained benefits from relocation, since his original shops were not good for his own business. Suburban market is an ideal location. However, demolition and relocation is harmful to most of the affected citizens. The redevelopment plans can hardly enable every citizen to choose their ideal living sites or business locations freely. Rather, they face limited and “forced” choices including early retirement or re-entering the labor market. Early retirement is burdened with sorrows. People choose to retire at such an early age because they have to pay much more if they choose differently. Relocating the business often comes along with high risks and more economic input, and they cannot continue their original business after relocating to the suburban market. The shops they owned are no longer effective means of production. They have to take up these economic and emotional losses all by themselves. Their family life and gender division are greatly influenced as well.

The change of traditional family roles of different genders, family problems are increasing. After demolition and relocation, more females go out to work and more males choose early retirement to stay at home. Both of males and females have problems adjusting to each other’s new role. Mr. Zhang’s couple, Mr. Song’s couple and Mr. Jiang’s couple expressed that it becomes more often for them to quarrel with each other. And when talking about “early retirement”, they tend to resort to two kinds of explanations: “lack of ability” to find a job, and “lazy”. For instance, Mr. Jiang is 40 years old. He could not find a suitable job in the labor market so that he stayed at home. His wife said,

Men are so sensitive to maintain their elegant gesture—“*mianzi*”

(面子). But for me, he is quite lazy. He stayed at home all day.

But he is not able to do the household duties well. I cannot tell the difference between the dirty floor and what he claims to have finished cleaning. He has destroyed several piece of my clothes. Now I have to go out to work for long hours, and do household duties after coming home.

As discussed above, early retirement as a social phenomenon is socially constructed. However, both “lack of ability” and “lazy” are using personal reasons for an explanation. Males like Mr. Jiang have problems to adjust to such gender role changing. Females are under pressure of both working and caring for the household duties.

3. Concluding Remarks

The above two sections look into the major influences a redevelopment plan brought to J Street. The community relations and traditional life patterns changed greatly, and the small businesses were marginalized. Some people did not figure out such losses until months or even years later after relocation. However, it should be pointed out that before they finally agreed to the compensation plan, these citizens were aware of some of these losses and risks. Then why did they never require the local government to make up for such losses? The discursive practice helps to answer this question.

The second urban development discourse helps to justify urban space change as a natural and inevitable process. Those who want to preserve their original living pattern and environment are considered unjustified. Sometimes they are regarded as

raising unrealistic “weak moral accusations.” It is also implied that emphasizing these features aims at no more than a better compensation plan—more money.

Three kinds of discursive practices are significant in the case of J Street. First, people agree that personal sacrifice is justified for urban development. Second it goes together with the hegemony of economic growth implying that every request and negotiation is a business. In order to get a better compensation, they have to give up those weak moral accusations. And the third involves the complex Chinese context because of political sensitivity.

It should be clear that there are always different kinds of interpretations of the value of community, neighborhood relations, and the traditional life pattern. The discourse of urban space improvement and its discursive practices greatly influence citizens’ understandings and consequently their actions. Some people do not notice their losses until months or even years after relocating. Some people may be aware of the existence of such risks, but they choose to give something up so as to guarantee their major objectives. These important features and values of communities are looked down upon in the discourse of urban space improvement. As a result, current urban space changing is naturalized as the inevitable process.

Chapter VII The Role of the State and the Market

The previous two chapters challenge two streams of the dominant urban development discourse. Analysis reveals that under the land-centered urban development mode in recent years, citizens are suffering from both economic losses and huge risks due to the great change in their original life pattern. Since land-centered urban development is basically an interaction between citizens, the local state and the market, how citizens understand the role of the state and the market should be highlighted.

In the dominant Chinese discourse, there are two major kinds of attitudes towards the role of the state and the market. One tries to emphasize that the state is important both as the re-distributor and as the controller of the market behavior. The losses and risks which citizens undertake are explained as “temporary” pains. This model argues that all citizens will eventually benefit from the redistribution. The other contends that all the conflicts and losses are the result of an uncontrolled state. It argues that establishing a free market can help to reduce the over-control of the state.

Therefore, this chapter will focus on these two lines of argument. In the first section, it reveals that after continuous bulldozer development, the local state is confronting a legitimacy crisis. The local state is criticized for being both the rule-maker and the player of urban development. Citizens no longer believe that their legal rights can be protected by the law or related policies. What’s worse, the

sensitive political environment makes citizens fear taking part in any “collective” issues. Rather, they turn to different strategies to bargain for their individual interests.

The second section focuses on citizens’ understandings of the market. In the case of J Street protest, as business people, they tend to believe that establishing a free real estate market can at least protect their right to say “no.” They take it for granted that a free market is fairer compared to the current system. However, they have seldom thought about the relationship between the state and the market. Establishing a market itself cannot “control” the state. On the contrary, the state and some capitalists may form a coalition within which citizens undertake most losses and risks.

1. Legitimacy Crisis of the Local State

In Mainland China, local governments can sell the use right of certain pieces of land to the real estate developer. There are two methods for the land clearance process (Figure 1: Two ways of land clearance, p12). In one method, the local government will hand the use right of the land together with the buildings on it over to the developer (毛地交付). The developer has to demolish the buildings and compensate the citizens. In the other method, the local government directly takes part in the land clearance process. The developer can get the “cleared” land (淨地交付). In recent decades, the latter approach is more frequently used. That’s why in recent years conflicts arise between the local governments and the citizens. Nevertheless the role

of the real estate developer is vague. This section is focusing on the legitimacy crisis the local states confront.

In this section, I will go into details about the role the local government plays in urban development. I then talk about the legitimacy crisis the local state confronts. In the case of J Street, Nail-Houses describe their interactions with the local state and believe that it has taken part in many illegal activities in order to evict them. Two major methods are to worsen the economic situation of each family and to threaten their safety. Lastly, its discursive practice is that Nail-Houses no longer believe in laws or the related policies that claim to protect their rights. Rather, they turn to different strategies to bargain for their personal interests. They may form some informal “deal” with an official from the local government. However, it is risky since the official can easily break the promises. The citizens also fear taking part in any collective or public issue. Consequently, participation is in their words “unrealistic.”

1.1 The role of local government in urban development

J Street is located in JH District of W City. The JH District government is involved in the redevelopment program of J Street. Figure 3 shows the role of local government in the redevelopment of J Street.

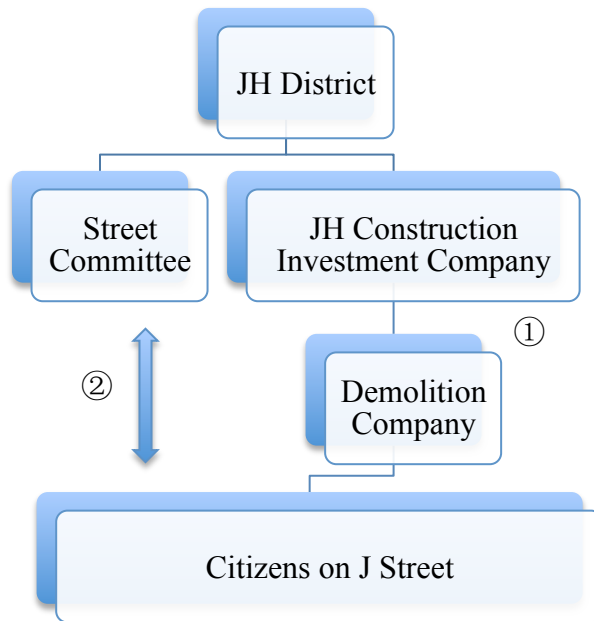


Figure 4: The local state in the redevelopment of J Street

In 1998, the JH Construction Investment Limited Company (JHIC) was set up by the district government to deal with the urban development issues. In recent years, in the wave of the land-centered urban development, this company is responsible for the incomes and outcomes of land sales. When the JH District government sells the use right of a certain piece of land to the developer, JHIC will get the land leasing fees. The fees, as mentioned previously, is used to compensate these affected citizens. It may also be used for JHIC to hire other demolition companies to destroy the buildings.

In the end of 2008, the land of J Street was sold to HJ Real Estate at the price of ¥ 40 million with the land cleared. In other words, the JHIC got ¥ 40 million and had to use it to deal with the demolition and compensation issues. The expenses generating from either the monetary compensation or relocation should be purchased by JHIC. Through auction, JHIC hired a demolition company to undertake some of

its work. The demolition company works to inform the involved citizens about the compensation plan and to deconstruct the emptied buildings.

As Figure 3 shows, there are two ways for a compensation negotiation. In one commonly used way (as ① shown in Figure 3), citizens confront the demolition company. It should be pointed out that such a demolition company is only an agency of JHIC. In other words, JHIC will set the rules and make a possible compensation plan at first. Even though the demolition company is dealing directly with the citizens and can bargain over the detailed arrangements, the company itself is not able to offer a “much better” compensation plan. In this way, neither JHIC nor the local government has to take the trouble to deal directly with the citizens. It is more difficult for these citizens to bargain for a substantially better plan.

Whenever the negotiation comes to such an impasse, especially facing strong resistance, the local government may come to talk directly with the protesting citizens as ② shown in Figure 3. In recent years, the Street Committee (街道辦事處) has gradually taken charge of such negotiation with the Nail-House citizens. If the Street Committee and the citizens agree on a new compensation plan, the generated expenses would be purchased by JHIC as well.

The first way is much more common. Only those who resort to strong and effective protest may be able to confront the local government directly—even as the lowest level of local government as the Street Committee.

1.2 The weakened legitimacy of the state

According to citizens' narrations about how they interacted with the local government, mainly two inter-related methods are employed by the local state to evict the Nail-Houses. One is to worsen their economic situation and the other is to threaten their safety.

Before demolition, Mr. Lee had two shops as large as 200 square meter. It was not a good location for his business. So he rented another shop for his own business and leased out the two shops on J Street.

It is balanced that I could use the rent of these shops to pay for the rent. However, from the beginning of demolition, I can lease the shops to no one. Someone broke the waterproof layer of all the shops on J Street. The shops looked very terrible, and it was hard to repair. I don't think any wise businessmen would choose such a shop. My shop stayed empty for almost three years.

Believe it or not, I lost at least ¥300,000.

Mr. Lee tried to rent one of the two shops to Mr. Qian, a tenant who had done the business in a nearby area. The rent was quite low. Before demolition, the monthly rent of one of his shops was about ¥5000. However, during the years as Nail-House, he could only rent it at the price of about ¥1500 per month. However Mr. Qian could not stay long because the shop was set on fire in November 2011. The tenant described what happened:

That was nearly the holiday of the Chinese New Year. My wife

and I checked the situation in the shop and made sure all the electric switches were turned off. After that we went back home to prepare for the holidays. At about 1:30 am, one shop owner who lived on J Street called telling me that my shop was on fire. When I got back to the shop, the fire was very dangerous. I managed to rush in to get some very important documents including account books. But I could do nothing about all my goods there. The policemen confirmed that I lost nearly ¥20,000 in that fire. But till now, they have not caught the criminal. I chose the shop for its good location for my business and its low rent. But I lost so much. It was not only economic losses, what's worse is the emotional insecurity. Till now my wife and I cannot sleep well.

Mrs. Zhu also rented her shop to someone to live, but they were forced to leave. One night at the end of November 2011 the parents and their 7-year-old child went to bed. Suddenly their window got broken and a flaming ball was thrown into their house. The policemen did not catch the criminal till now.

Together with another case of fire, J Street was set on fire three times within two months from the end of November 2011 to the beginning of 2012. Mrs. Ai said,

We can be sure that the criminal must be hired and sent by the local state. They hated us and had to resort to illegal ways forcing us to leave. The policemen will protect us? It is a joke! Facing with the forced demolition in 2009, we called the police

and they told me that we could not help you if it was a demolition case. The street was set on fire for three times within only two months. They cannot catch the criminal? No, they just don't want to. Policemen are standing shoulder by shoulder with the local state.

All the interviewees agreed with Mrs. Ai. No matter who set the fire, as a consequence, no one would dare to rent their shops after the fire. In the Chinese context, whenever a place gets announced of an upcoming demolition, it is no longer a safe place for both living and doing business. In the case of J Street, the fire is the evidence. Shop owners like Mr. Lee suffered from economic losses since he could find no one to rent his shop on J Street.

To protect their shops from being demolished forcefully, some of them chose to live in their shops during the years of resistance. Mr. Zhang together with his family members lived in their shop for almost three years.

Even though I have a house for living, I could not leave the shop for a single second. I'm quite familiar with their (the local government's) strategies. Whenever there is no one in the shop, they would tear it down in hours. We lived in the shop for almost three years. The roof and the waterproof layer of the shop were broken soon after we decided to fight against demolition. It was quite suffering in rainy days. I used 5 different sized pots to collect water drops leaked from the ceiling and the wall.

Mr. Sun also chose the similar way to protect his shop. Different from Mr.

Zhang, he asked his nearly 70 years old parents to live there. This couple lived in the shop for three years. Mr. Sun and his parents did not accept the in-depth interview since they were still afraid of the sensitivity, but agreed to provide some basic information. Mr. Sun's father expressed his feeling

It was nothing more than being in prison. For many times, I just sat beside the window for all day long checking whether there were any policemen coming to demolish the shop forcefully. I never slept well for a single day in the past three years.

Through these informal or even illegal ways, the J Street was no longer a safe living sites or a business location. Tenants soon moved out. Most shop owners are suffering from losses. Mr. Zhang used the word the "Robber Party" ("搶產黨") to describe his feelings about the local government.

Surely it is not a 'communist' party. We never share benefits equally. The every year's task for the local government is to systematically rob the people. They are the 'Robber Party'.

As a consequence, they no longer believe that their legal rights can be protected under the law or related policies. It needs to be pointed out that they fear of being involved of any "public" or "collective" issues. Mr. Song explained the absence of "a public demand for the J Street community",

At the early stage of the protest, we tried to bargain for an on-site rehousing in J Street. But it was totally rejected by them (people from the local state). After that, there was no such thing as "a public demand for the J Street community". In one way, different

people have different interests. Someone wants to get the cash and soon finish all these things. Someone wants to wait for a better compensation. It was hard for them to “bind” together for long. Besides, it was sensitive and dangerous to “bind” together.

Even though it was a collective protest, participants never raised any demands relating to “for the J Street community”. All the interviewees believe that joining together was because they had the similar demands as protecting their personal interests, and it could be more effective to bargain with the local government.

1.3 Bargain for the individual benefits

Faced with the legitimacy crisis of the local state, Nail-Houses no longer believe in any laws or polices which claim to protect their rights and benefits and instead rely on different strategies to bargain for their individual interests. They viewed petitions and collective lawsuits as “weapons” to put certain government officials under pressure. In 2009, the Nail-Houses in J Street raised a collective lawsuit against local government. In February 2010, the Development and Reform Commission of Anhui Province withdrew the approval for J Street’s redevelopment plan. In May, the land storage center of W City accused the Development and Reform Commission of Anhui Province. After that, the demolition process paused for about one year, but it restarted in the second half of 2011. These Nail-Houses lost their lawsuits.

Surprisingly though, all these interviewees expressed that winning or losing the

lawsuit is meaningless. As Mr. Zhang said:

Lawsuit is just the “face” of local government. Our ultimate goal is a deal of compensation plan. Winning or losing the lawsuit is of no meaning for us. For instance, if we win the lawsuit, the local government would feel that they are shamed and would put our case aside and leave it for several years. It is common. But if we lose the lawsuit, it is probably a sign that they would compromise a little bit and try to communicate with us.

It should be clarified why they are afraid that the local government would “put their case aside” for several years. It does not mean that they may live peacefully without disturbance. Mr. Zhang explains,

It is no longer a good place for the business since it faces with the demolition. It is not even a safe place for living. In the three years of resistance, I never slept well for one night, because the place you live in may be set on fire by someone who will never be caught by the policemen. I cannot imagine if I would get mad if the government would not solve it until one year later.

It is reasonable that within the Chinese context, they no longer believe that the law can protect them from injustice. They explained that they have two reasons to resort to a lawsuit. One is to postpone (“拖”) the upcoming forced demolition. “Without it (the lawsuit), we can never dream of extending our resistance as long as three years,” Mrs. Zhu said. The other reason is the aim of publicizing. Lawyers also bring some resources to them, which is important to make their sufferings, and

resistance a problem—problematization.

Mr. Zhang further clarified different attitudes of local governments and the real estate developer towards the delayed demolition process. He thought that the developers, since they have invested large sums of money in this project, would like to get the land cleared as soon as possible so that they can start construction. They cannot stand a long-time delay. Making use of this strategy, the Nail-Houses may receive a better compensation plan due to the developer's pressure for earlier land clearance. However, things are different for the local governments. Mr. Zhang said,

As a government official within the current political system, no matter what losses you bring to the people or the whole country, you won't get a cut-off of your salary. In other words, you won't lose your job. But if you feel that we have been beyond your tolerance, you can put it aside for several years. Then it is our turn to face the losses of the delay.

These Nail-Houses interpret the strategy of “delay” (“拖”) as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, since the developer urges to get the land as soon as possible, the pressure may bring about a better compensation for the Nail-Houses. On the other, they risk that it may “infuriate” the local government. Local government may suppress the resistance, or it will not solve it until years later. At the same time, local government will not stop using some ways or even illegal ways to deteriorate the area and worsen its safety.

One of the ideal results they hope is that when their protest is effective it will get attention and some government official can offer the chance of negotiation.

They may make some informal agreement with each other. It was what happened later in the case of J Street. But it was also very risky that the official could easily break his promises. In the case of J Street, Nail-Houses have not yet got all the compensation as the official promised. That is why they have so little interest in figuring out either the redevelopment plan of J Street or the real estate developer—the “new owner” of it. Firstly it is because these citizens can find hardly much information about the developer. This land was sold to the developer in the end of 2008. The citizens on J Street were told of the demolition in 2009. They have no idea about the future of this area. An original redevelopment plan can be found on the local government website, after the real estate developer changed, they can no longer find any plans for J Street.

Since they have years of experience doing small business, they tend to view the real estate developer of J Street from the point of a business, focusing on the gains and losses. The citizens seem to assume that the developers are innocent and also lost a lot due to the delayed process to get the land. Mrs. Zhu said,

For the developer, it is a business, an investment. They have to count their costs and benefits. If I was one of the developers, I could not pay for a piece of land at the price of millions or billions of money and wait for three years doing nothing but waiting.

Besides, it is worthwhile to figure out that they never take it seriously to request for unfolding the developer or the detailed plan of J Street. In such a power gradient, personal safety and individual economic interests are prioritized. However,

in the sensitive political context of China, people are afraid of taking part in any kinds of collective or public issue. Gradually, they are afraid of or even losing interest in participation.

2. Market Equals to Empowerment?

When someone walks alone in the darkness, he opens his eyes and be alert of the surroundings. His desire to find the way out may make him overoptimistic about any hope without noticing the potential danger.

(Chang, P. 2013: 1)

Confronting the legitimacy crisis of the state, people may turn to many Chinese scholars who support neoliberalism, arguing to establish a free real estate market. They believe that a free market can help set some rules for state intervention. Neoliberalism scholars also claim that a free market will empower the citizens. This section is focused on how these Nail-Houses understand the role of the market.

Firstly, Nail-Houses believe that they can have the right to say “no” in a free market. It should be pointed out that they might have a different understanding from the urban residents because they are small businessmen. They are aware of the risks of the market, and believe that market is fair. But owing to their small-scale business, they may underestimate the risk of the market. For them, in a free real estate market, demolition should be a fair market transaction within which they can be equal to other agencies, either governments or the developers.

Secondly, they may underestimate the possibility that the state and some capitalists will form some coalition within which citizens suffer from the most losses and risks.

2.1 The right to say no

The monetary compensation standard is used by these interviewees to illustrate how they are “robbed” by the local government. In March every year, local government would put forward a new demolition standard. From then to the next March, all the compensation plans around the W City would be made based on that standard. The rise and fall of the standard may reflect the fluctuation in the real estate market. But it needs to be clarified that the compensation standard is much lower than the market price.

The interviewees compared the difference between the compensation standard in 2009 with that of 2008. The housing price reached one of its highest levels in the first half year of 2008. Since the standard was made in March 2008, it seemed to be a “good enough deal” as Mrs. Zhu said. The nearby shops were compensated at the price of above ¥10,000 per square meter. However, Mr. Zhang also pointed out that this level is much lower than the market price which was between ¥30,000 and ¥40,000 per square meter.

However, in the second half of 2008, the real estate market price fell owing to the global economic crisis. Influenced by this, the new monetary compensation standard made in March 2009 dropped as well. Citizens on J Street were informed of

the upcoming redevelopment and demolition in August 2009. The original plan for them was based on the new standard as ¥8,000 per square meter. However, in the second half of 2009, when the property price went up, the monetary compensation standard stayed still without any changes.

All interviewees show their sense of injustice of the gap between the monetary compensation standard and the market property price. Some like Mrs. Zhu admitted that if they could get a deal of more than ¥10,000 per square meter, the same as the old compensation standard in 2008, they would have already given up resisting. Mr. Lee explained,

Even though ¥10,000 per square meter is much lower than the housing price on the market at that time, and I have to suffer from economic losses, it is a good enough deal, considering we are powerless in China. They can control us, not the other way around.

In the current system, they have to accept the rules set by the local government. They are not allowed to “refuse such a robbery,” as Mr. Zhang said. Those who want to refuse it have already been labeled as the obstructor of development and someone who would not sacrifice a little for the “public interest.”

The ideal type of demolition for all the interviewees is a buy-and-sell (“買賣”). Mr. Zhang said,

Every single or collective actor in a free real estate market should be equal, no matter who you are, the local government, a large real estate developer, or a citizen. We should be allowed to

negotiate with anyone who wants to get our land. Certainly we should have the right to refuse such a transaction. You cannot force me to sell and I cannot force you to buy. If it is a real inner-city redevelopment project, I'm happy to talk with either the local state or the developer. It is acceptable that you want to have a better-looking city center. So is to have a better GDP progress. But how can I get benefit from this redevelopment? Redevelopment should be beneficial to me, right? If you want to deconstruct all the buildings and rebuild a new block of shopping malls, etc., it is reasonable if I want to have a new shop in it. If it is larger than my original shop, I can purchase for the enlarged area.

Their understanding of the market is influenced by their years of experience as small businessmen. On the one hand, they believe that a market is fair, even with the risks. On the other however, they may underestimate the uncertainty and the potential risks of the market. Mr. Song used the analogy of "stock market" to describe his understandings of the market risk.

If you bought it at a comparatively high price, but the price dropped now, you have to accept it. No one can compensate for your losses. In the other way round, you are lucky. But take it easy. These gains or losses are normal and reasonable.

They assume that establishing a free real estate market can empower them to be equal to the local state or the large real estate developer. However, the market

cannot guarantee equity. Additionally, they thought that a “reasonable” compensation plan should be based on the market price. Still they are shortsighted about the economic gains and losses. They are not aware of the losses due to the change in their living patterns or the business environment.

2.2 Coalition between the market and the state

In the special Chinese context, the understanding of the market may be more like imagination rather than the real experience. The interviewees assume that the state and the market are isolated from one and another. However, in the case of their new suburban market, it is more possible that the state and the market may form a coalition within which citizens and small businessmen undertake the most losses and risks. And this is what Nail-Houses underestimate.

The final compensation plan is to relocate them to a newly developed suburban market. Since that market is good for wholesale business, most of these small businessmen decided to rent out their new shops. Their expectation of this new-market is interesting. One reason that they accepted this new plan is that they are optimistic about the future of the market since it is “supported by the local government.” This new market is invested in by a real-estate developer from Zhejiang Province. The local government set some regulations for the developer. For instance, the developer can only sell out 60% of all their shops. The remaining 40% can only be used for lease. Mr. Lee said it is a way to “lock” the developer into this market so that they can take up the responsibility of constructing it.

Even though the Nail-Houses don't believe in the local government, their optimism is still based on its role in regulating the real estate developer. However, the real estate developer of the suburban market made a new plan for these small shop owners. They can sign an agreement authorizing the developer to rent out their shops. This agreement stays for three years. Within the first year, these shop owners cannot get any rents, in the second year, they can get the half of the all three years' of rent, and in the third year the other half. In other words, these small shop owners undertake all the risks. If the suburban market does not run well, the developer would possibly run away as has happened many times in recent years. The local government does not regulate it. These small shop owners have to accept it, hoping the market would run well. Some interviewees are aware of the relationship between the state and the market. Mr. Zhang said

If the local government cannot "tolerate" certain Nail-Houses, it will either suppress them through forced demolition and eviction, or just put it aside for a long time. In the latter, the related developer is faced with the delayed land delivery and potential losses. But the local government will compensate for the developer in some ways. If I were a government official, I would tell the developer as follows: "As a developer, all you ask is to make money. But unfortunately we are blocked this time. Don't worry. As long as you are still doing this business, next time I will find another site for you, and give you some privileges."

They are aware that the developers' interests are easier to get protected by the state. It

is also easier for the developers to get compensated for its losses. In such a coalition, small businessmen are undertaking the most losses and risks. In other words, the market itself cannot control the state.

3. Concluding Remarks

Under the current debate among Chinese scholars between a pro-state and a pro-market stands, it is risky to fall into the either-or choice. Neither the state nor the market can by itself guarantee equity and empowerment of the citizens. Nail-Houses' shortsighted goal of short-term economic losses and gains is socially constructed. Confronted with the legitimacy crisis, they no longer believe in any laws or policies, claiming to protect their rights. Nor do they believe in any formal way of resistance, including lawsuits and petitions. They prefer to bargain for individual gains. And in a politically sensitive environment, it is dangerous to mention any participation of the "collective" or "public" issues. Collective petitions and lawsuits are aimed at problematizing their sufferings and forcing the local government to a negotiation. Since they gradually lose the interest in participation, the opportunities to rethink what is development, or to bring their own development projects are excluded. Without participation, the current land-centered urban development mode stays justified and naturalized.

Furthermore, establishing a free real estate market cannot in itself guarantee that every single actor in the market is equal. Nail-Houses believe that a free market is fair and can help to protect their rights, at least to a fair cash compensation

standard or the right to refuse a transaction. Since their years of experience in small household business have been at comparatively low risks they may underestimate the risk and uncertainty of the market. Rather, they may be overoptimistic about the market. Based on the running of the new suburban market, the more possible situation is that the local government and the developer form a coalition, in which case these small businessmen are actually undertaking huge risks.

It is tricky and dangerous to fall into an either-or choice to support the state intervention or the free market. In the Chinese context, there is lack of control of the state power. Establishing a free market cannot be labeled as an effective means of empowerment. A free market does not exist in a vacuum. The way out is not to choose from either the state or the market. We need a political reform building up a democratic system within which citizens no longer fear or have no interest in participating in their own development. That is the value of the civil society.

Chapter VIII Conclusion

This research began with the question of the absence of alternative city visions. After decades of Nail-House struggles and protests in Mainland China, the objectives of their resistance are still restricted to the agenda of compensation negotiation. Therefore, this research questions: how these citizens understand urban development. Specifically, it focuses on how compensation negotiation has become the major objective of their protest, whether Nail-Houses ever generated alternative visions of urban development, and if so how they are excluded.

A post-structural approach of discourse analysis is employed in this research to shed light upon how urban discourses serve to justify urban spatial restructuring as beneficial. Social costs accompanying the bulldozer mode of development are ignored or legitimized as “unfortunate but necessary.” This research disclosed multiple kinds of social costs in detail in order to challenge the prevailing urban discourses.

Based on a review of current literatures and urban policies in Mainland China, three mainstreams of urban discourse were identified. First is the hegemony of economic growth. The current land-centered development mode claims to promote annual GDP progress, which is beneficial to all citizens. The second stream is the urban space improvement discourse, which highlights urban redevelopment as the solution to the social problems generating from the “old” regions. Current urban restructuring based on modern “scientific” urban planning in the name of

“improving citizens’ living conditions” is hence naturalized. The third stream is an either-or choice between the state and the market. The neoliberal discourse claims that establishing a free market can restrict the over-control of the state. However, pro-state intellectuals argue that the state should have more effective control of the market.

Employing a case study of collective Nail-House protest in W City, this research examined how these protesting citizens are influenced by the above three streams of urban discourse. It is a typical case since it resembles others in the cause of protest, the strategies the protestors used, and how the protest came to an end. The community of J Street began to take shape in the 1980s. Before the redevelopment program got initiated in 2009, it took almost thirty years for this area to evolve. It was a mixed community with both residents and small household business people. Residents in this area soon accepted cash compensation lower than the market price and moved out. Most of the small household business people stayed to resist against demolition, mainly because cash compensation for their shops was the only option before their resistance and was much lower than the market price. At the end of 2009, eight household business people together with their family members took part in collective protest. Similar to other cases of Nail-House resistance in Mainland China, in order to publicize their sufferings, they tried to mobilize different strategies and resources including a collective lawsuit and the mass media. In 2012, the collective protest ended because most of them accepted a new compensation plan—relocating to a suburban market with new shops. But, as pointed out in previous chapters, they could not get the property ownership certificates for these new shops in the suburban

market in the subsequent years.

This case is unique because all the Nail-Houses in it are urban small household business people (城市個體戶). Compared to large numbers of studies and news reports covering urban residents or peasants resisting against demolition, this group of small business people have not been paid enough attention. They were once workers in the state-owned enterprises (SOEs). In the nationwide transformation of SOEs in the late 1990s, they lost their jobs. A large portion of laid-off workers re-entered the labor market, and some became small household business people. In the wave of nationwide bulldozer development, this group again confronts the danger of losing their means of livelihood. However, this time it is rather difficult for these people, who are aged 40 to 60 to re-enter the labor market.

My fieldwork started in August 2012 and ended at the beginning of 2013. During this period I employed in-depth interviews with participants and non-participants, shop owners and tenants, and decision-makers together with their family members (see Appendix B: Table of Interviewees). This research examines how different stakeholders translate, adapt, and employ prevailing urban discourses. In order to challenge these dominant discourses, this research has two main foci. One is to figure out the social costs of urban restructuring which are ignored, underestimated or justified by the prevailing discourses. The other looks into how alternative visions of the city are socially excluded.

The concluding chapter of this research has five parts. First, it returns to the research question and offers the answers. Second, it highlights the fluidity of discourse. Third, it discusses how a post-structural approach is applicable in a

Chinese context. Fourth, this research generates some suggestions for both urban activists and policy makers. And the final part provides some self-reflections on this research, including its limitations and inspirations for further research.

1. Research Question Revisit

Numerous cases of urban protests against forced demolition and eviction have generated many studies. The majority of the current literatures try to answer what factors help to make a successful protest. Two main perspectives are employed: political opportunity structure and the resource mobilization process. However, both approaches take it for granted that a “successful” Nail-House protest means either a higher monetary compensation standard or discharging certain local malfeasants. Although these are regarded as “successful,” they fail to bring substantial institutional progress. Even the newly approved Regulation of Housing Acquisition and Compensation on the State-Owned Land (「國有土地上房屋徵收與補償條例」) in 2011 failed to slow the pace of forced demolition and eviction. Therefore, this research questions how citizens understand urban development. More specifically, it inquires into why the major agenda of Nail-House resistance is restricted to the framework of compensation negotiation, whether Nail-Houses ever generate alternative visions of urban development, and if so how they are excluded.

Currently the dominant urban development mode in Mainland China claims to be based on the modern urban planning theories evolving from the works of the Chicago School. According to the theory of human ecology, urban space change is a competition for the best location. Cities grow as functioning systems in the process

of such biotic evolution. However, the human ecology model of the Chicago School has been criticized for its Social Darwinism orientation. It takes urban planning and space change as a natural and neutral process covering the social inequalities it inherits and generates.

Different from scholars from the Chicago School who overlook the power and social inequalities, Marxists include spatial relations in their critiques of capitalism. Orthodox Marxists use ideology analysis to explain how the ruling class develops and makes use of ideologies to sustain their power. Orthodox Marxists are criticized for over-simplifying urban conflicts and its economic determinism. Orthodox Marxism overlooks the various forms of social inequalities and segregations including gender and race.

Antonio Gramsci and his successors offer the comparatively more flexible concept of hegemony. Hegemony is rooted in Gramsci's distinction between coercion and consent. Power according to Gramsci is achieved and maintained not only by coercion but also by consent. Consent is achieved not only through shared material interests but also more through persuasion. Hegemony emphasizes the negotiated and compromised "common sense" between the capitalists and the proletariat.

Foucault offers a different conception of power. Power is relational, not decided by the social structure. Power is not stable, but rather a constitutive process involving multiple power relations. And it is through the production of knowledge that power is exercised. Discourse is a process through which "truth" and identities are constructed. Inspired by poststructuralists like Foucault, urban sociology has taken a

cultural turn. Discourse is highlighted as an active component of urban process and change. In recent decades cultural geographers have looked into how urban discourses serve to define urban spatial restructuring as natural and beneficial.

This research primarily employed the post-structural perspective of discourse analysis and Gramsci's theory of hegemony to look into how citizens' understandings of urban development are shaped and influenced by the dominant urban discourses. Three mainstreams of urban discourses are identified: 1) the hegemony of economic growth; 2) the discourse of urban space improvement; and 3) an either-or choice between the state and the market. Based on the case of J Street, this research found that citizens are influenced by these dominant urban discourses.

1.1 The hegemony of economic growth

The first discourse prioritizes economic growth as the ultimate goal of urban development. As discussed earlier, economic growth has become the main source of political legitimacy since the 1990s. Local states have been devoted to local economic development ever since, and current land-centered development has become the main urban trajectory.

Despite the fact that the local states' blind pursuit of GDP progress has been problematized, Nail-House resistance seldom seeks more than compensation negotiation. It is argued that the hegemony of economic growth constructs some myths, one of which is that Nail-Houses are the "winners" of demolition. Nail-Houses are often accused of taking advantage of skyrocketing property value, or

of becoming lazy local landlords. They are believed to make unreasonable profits from demolition.

In the case of J Street, the Nail-Houses are suffering from huge economic losses and potential risks. The final deal is to relocate to a suburban market with new shops. The price of their original shops on J Street had reached ¥40,000~50,000 per square meter, whereas the compensation standard can be converted into ¥25,000~26,000 per square meter. Take Mr. Zhang's shop as an example his original shop on J Street is 60 square meters. If he wants to buy a nearby shop, he has to purchase it for another ¥840,000 to 1.5 million by himself. His original shop can generate a monthly income of ¥7,000. If his new shop can guarantee a not lower monthly income, he has to work at least another ten years without eating or drinking.

Besides, the suburban market is not the ideal location for their original small business. Relocation means not only the forced eviction of urban residents, but also the marginalization of small businesses. These "old" city centers will soon be replaced by large shopping malls benefiting large capitalists. Even though some of these small businessmen can get new shops, they cannot do their original business, and at more than fifty years of age they are too old to initiate a new business. They have few choices other than to become "lazy local landlords." One of the few options is to rent shops out and live on the rather low rent since the bad relocation.

The Nail-Houses face potential risks. As has been discussed in the earlier chapters, to compensate some Nail-Houses, local states would buy some houses from the real estate developer. It is a common practice for the local states not to pay off the debt quickly. As long as the debt stays unpaid, the Nail-Houses cannot get the

property ownership certificate, which means they cannot sell their shops. And considering the property bubble, the real estate developer might run away since they get nothing from the government and they cannot pay for the usury. Several cases of this have happened recently, and these Nail-Houses suffer huge losses.

In short, economically, Nail-Houses are suffering from losses and risks due to demolition and are hardly the “winners” of demolition. Furthermore, relocation means the marginalization of small business. The hegemony of economic growth convinces them that they can make profits from demolition, but lets them ignore the losses and risks. It is worth noting that these citizens are not aware of some of the losses until years after relocating to different places, which is why they did not ask the local government to compensate for such losses during the three years of protest.

Some participants did know that they would suffer from some losses, but their demands were filtered and subdued. For instance, one of the participants once said that they could ask the local state for some new shops in the future shopping center developed on J Street, but others considered it as “unrealistic.” As has been discussed, it is because they took it for granted that land clearance and the development process afterwards are separate and independent. They tend to believe that benefits generating from developing their land have nothing to do with themselves. They think it is “inappropriate” and “ridiculous” to ask for a share of these benefits. The isolation misleads them and results in an illusion that benefits arise from the demolition and compensation sections only. It masks the fact that more benefits generate from the development process after the land clearance. The local state, developers and new land users enjoy these benefits while the affected

citizens who have lived there for decades have no access. Although there have been some different imaginations of the compensation plan, e.g., asking for an on-site re-housing, they have been excluded by citizens themselves.

1.2 The discourse of urban space improvement

Social costs of urban restructuring mean something more than just economic gains or losses. Current studies in Mainland China have not paid enough attention to the process of the neighborhood changing. Nor do they take seriously how citizens experience such changes. Such ignorance is constructed under the second urban discourse, which claims that urban renewal is needed to optimize urban space. The original city centers or “old” regions are considered as “under-used” areas generating many social problems. The redevelopment program based on modern urban planning theories comes as the solution to the problem. Transforming these “old” regions can give citizens a chance to freely choose ideal living sites or business locations. Such discourses justify gentrification. Urban renewal often means replacement: replacing the city centers which used to be residential areas with the new business zones or elite housing; replacing the original working-class residents with the rich and the middle class; and replacing historical buildings with new fake “archaistic” ones. Gentrification occurs at the cost of marginalizing disadvantaged groups and the deconstruction of buildings with cultural or historical values.

The J Street redevelopment program is a common case of gentrification in Mainland China. People living or doing business in J Street, both participants and

nonparticipants suffered numerous social costs. Those who rent shops on J Street got nothing for compensation. Most of them have done business on J Street for almost ten years. It is not easy to look for another ideal business location with such a low rent. They were the first to be evicted, they were threatened and some of their shops were set on fire. As been discussed, Mr. Song, a tenant on J Street was threatened and his shop was set on fire. He lost almost ¥200, 000 which is a whole year of his family income. Since the local police have not yet been able to locate a suspect, he can only suffer from the losses by himself. When he tried to seek help from the local government for a loan to restart his business, he found that it was impossible.

As for the collective protest participants, they also suffered from losses due to changed life patterns. As been illustrated, even though they got new shops, the suburban location is not good for their original business. They are faced with limited and forced options like early retirement or re-entering the labor market. Early retirement is burdened with sorrows. People choose to retire so early because they have to pay much more if they choose differently. Relocating the business often comes along with high risks and more economic input. As a result, small businesses, which used to be in every corner of the city, are now marginalized.

In addition to the fact that citizens' personal life and family life patterns are greatly changed, another major influence is that the original community is disappearing. The profit-driven urban development is centered on the relentless commodification of urban space, which looks down upon other values of the old community. Therefore, the bulldozer development and forced demolition are justified without considering the old community's value for preservation. Present

changes to urban space are justified as a natural and inevitable process. Those that want to preserve their original living pattern and environment are considered unjustified and unrealistic.

The Nail-Houses pointed out that the “dilapidated” image of J Street is actually socially constructed and leads to ignorance of the important features of traditional community, including social safety, trust, and neighborhood support. Gender difference can be found here as well. Females tend to treasure these features more than males. However, even though they realize the importance of their old community after relocating, they do not ask for the preservation of either the community or their original life pattern. The value of community is considered secondary to bargaining for more compensation. These resisting actors seldom consider the preservation of their community an effective bargaining strategy. They believe that when faced with local government, the one and only agenda is compensation negotiation. There should not be any other demands. As has been discussed, Mr. Zhang once said: “when you negotiate with the local government, it can only be about money. It is only a business.” Therefore, those who want to preserve their community are considered a bargaining strategy for “a better price.”

1.3 The state or the market?

It is easy but risky to fall into the either-or choice offered in the current pro-state versus pro-market debate among Chinese scholars. In the case of J Street, citizens had no other visions except for this either-or choice. In one way, they believe in the

market logic. Like Mr. Lee said: “if it [the monetary compensation] was based on the market price, there is no reason for me to reject it. As soon as you paid me the money, I would move out.” As small business people, they tend to believe that the market is fair. In another way, however, embedded in a politically sensitive environment, they are afraid of getting involved in any “public issues.” That’s why they devoted to many kinds of bargaining strategies, while seldom thinking of different ways of participation.

First, the shortsightedness of Nail-Houses in looking for short-term gains is socially constructed. They no longer believe in any laws or policies claiming to protect their rights, nor in lawsuits or the petitions. Instead, they bargain for individual gains. Besides, in the Chinese context, power is achieved not only by consent, but also and more frequently by coercion. Numerous cases of forceful demolition happen in Mainland China. As for the case of J Street, citizens were confronted by danger and insecurity. In such a politically sensitive environment, it is dangerous to mention any participation of “collective” or “public” issues. Collective petitions and lawsuits are aimed at problematizing their sufferings and forcing the local government to a negotiation. Because they have gradually lost interest in participation, they do not think about what is development, or bring forward their own development projects. Consequently, the current land-centered urban development mode stays justified and naturalized.

Establishing a free real estate market cannot guarantee that every single actor in the market is equal. Nail-Houses, however, believe that a free market is fair and can help to protect their rights, at least to a fair cash compensation standard or to refuse a

transaction. Since their years of experience in small household business are comparatively low risk, they may underestimate the uncertainty and may be overoptimistic about the market. Based on the running of the new suburban market, it is more likely that the local government and developer will form a coalition and the small business people will be further disadvantaged.

The current debate in Chinese scholarship about the pro-market and the pro-state approaches fails to acknowledge that neither the state nor the market can by itself guarantee equity and empowerment of the citizens. In the Chinese context, there is a lack of control of state and local government power. Establishing a free market is not an effective means of empowerment. A free market does not exist in vacuum. The way out is not to choose from either the state or the market. We need a political reform towards a democratic system within which citizens are no longer afraid to participate in their own development. That is the value of civil society.

2. Diversity and Fluidity of Discourse

This research paid special attention to answering whether these affected citizens had any alternative visions of urban development, and if so how these visions were excluded from their protest agenda. Discourse, unlike ideology, is not a “fake knowledge” transmitted from the ruling class wholesale to the subordinate class. The study of J Street protest also proves that there are always different understandings. Hence, it becomes interesting how different interpretations fail to bring out different actions or protest agendas. Discourse is fluid and is always facing potential threats

and resistance. It is through discursive practice that the prevailing discourses help to maintain certain power relations.

Therefore, this research looked into the discursive practices to grasp how multiple types of power gradient were established, including how they prioritized certain goals and subdued others in setting objectives, how they chose from different strategies, and how they valued the final relocation plan and hence rejected or accepted it, etc. Firstly, different genders have different understandings of urban development. Females tend to treasure more about the traditional community for its safety, sense of belonging, and neighborhood support. Males tend to treasure the traditional community more for its business environment and economic values. Gender division also shows in how they adjust to the changed life pattern after demolition. Secondly, different stakeholders—shop owners and the tenants—have different understandings. Tenants tend to move out and search for another shop to rent, rather than staying to participate in the collective resistance. Thirdly, fluidity of discourse also reveals itself in the changing individuals' changing views under different circumstances.

2.1 Gender division

Gender division reveals itself in the understanding of “community”. Males treasure more about the business environment of J Street and how neighborhood relations contribute to their resisting actions. Females, on the other hand, treasure more about the neighborhood support in those “good old days.” Friendship and trust can be

found in such traditional communities. As discussed previously, Mrs. Yao was Mrs. Zhang's neighbor and they have been friends since doing business side by side. Mrs. Zhang said that if she had to leave the shop, she would ask Mrs. Yao for help to look after the shop for a while. All the females living or working in J Street treasure such traditional community relations. They believe that such trust can only be built up in traditional communities.

Males, however, have a different concern about community relations. They highlight the importance of community relations to find resources, and to mobilize and strengthen the collective protest. Compared to females who treasure the "good old days," the central issue for males is commonly focused on their protest. They prioritize the protection of material interests as their primary goal. Other issues like community preservation are regarded as subordinate demands, which could be sacrificed for the primary goal. As discussed previously, many interviewees thought that emphasizing the importance of community is a "weak moral accusations." In the case of J Street, most of the decision makers of the resisting families are males. It makes sense that they never took community preservation into consideration. Mrs. Zhu is the only female decision-maker among these eight families. Like the other male decision makers, she also treasures J Street as a well-developed business center. Although she thought relocation to the suburban market would mean stopping her original business as pointed out previously, she decided to accept it. She is more than 60 years old and desires a peaceful life after retirement. In such a framework of discursive practice, even though some female citizens acknowledge the value of community, community preservation can hardly enter the major agenda of

Nail-Houses.

Gender division can also be identified in how the resisting families adapt to their changed life patterns after demolition. In the case of J Street, it is much more difficult for the male household businessmen to adjust to the changed life pattern after relocation. Male shop owners who lost their shops confront more difficulties in re-entering the labor market. More of them tend to choose the early-retirement and stay at home. As explained by Mr. Zhang, doing small business for so many years makes them familiar with their own business, but they have no knowledge of any others so that it seems impossible to initiate a totally new business. Small business does not need special skills. They are not able to do any intellectual work. Being old is another disadvantage to re-entering the labor market.

It is comparatively easier for females to find a job on the labor market. That does not mean that the jobs they can find are easy to do, however. These females ranging in age from 30 to 60, have to suffer from long hours of hard work, little work protection and rather low. Demolition comes at the price of destroying their means of production, which is the process of primitive accumulation of capital. Just as they described, unlike in their own business, they can no longer enjoy “every cent” generating from what they have done.

With the change to traditional gendered family roles, family problems are increasing. After demolition and relocation, more females go out to work and more males who used to do small business stay at home, “retiring” at a rather early age. They have problems adjusting to their new roles. Many interviewees complained that they quarrel a lot more than they used to.

In short, the fluidity of discourse is revealed in gender division. Males and females have different understandings of the value of community. But acknowledging the importance of community does not make it a goal of Nail-House resistance. In the dominant discourse, claiming to preserve community or a traditional life pattern comes second after economic gains and losses.

2.2 Tenants and shop owners

This section deals with the differences between tenants and shop owners in understanding urban development, demolition and their actions. As pointed out previously, there are two distinct groups when talking about people who do small business. One group comprises the shop owners, who use their shops to run their own business. The tenants belong to the other group who rent shops to do their business from the other group. There are even fewer studies in Mainland China approaching how tenants are influenced by demolition than there are studies of how shop owners respond to it. In the case of J Street, tenants suffer from more losses since they have almost no compensation for demolition. In addition, these two groups have different concerns confronting demolition and hence they resort to different actions.

To begin with, different from shop owners, it is a common practice in Mainland China that tenants seldom have anything to compensate for their losses. Tenants' losses mainly arise from changing business locations. It is not easy to find a place both suitable and affordable at short notice. As discussed previously, some tenants

would consider moving back if they could afford the rent after J Street is developed. That makes relocation risky. Interviewees pointed out that in some other cases, there have been some policies to compensate tenants, but these policies are “specious.” Sometimes, tenants may get a little cash compensation for decorating the shops they rented, but it is far from enough to make up for their losses. “Interest-free loan” is another evidence of “specious policy,” as discussed previously. The affected tenants can apply for a kind of interest-free loan to re-start their business but they have to provide a ¥200,000 deposit or to find a government employee to be their bondsman. Both are difficult for tenants doing small business. As Mr. Qian said, “it is useful, but I am not qualified for the application”.

There arises the question why tenants and shop owners do not join in a collective protest when demolition and relocation bring problems for both of them. It is because these two groups of people have different concerns, and tenants are unable to afford a long period of resistance. In J Street, there were three types of people: small household business people who conduct business from their own shops, landlords, and tenants. The first two types gradually joined together, while most tenants soon moved out of J Street. For tenants, their only option was to find a suitable and affordable shop to rent. Shop owners have comparatively more options. One is to find a good location to continue their original business. Another is to find a good place, which is believed to guarantee a good or even continuously rising rent for income. This difference can be seen in their understanding of the new shops in the suburban market. Although shop owners found that relocation generated many problems, the reason they accepted it is that they believed in a keep-rising property

value and rents for these shops. Tenants never considered relocating there as a good option because the suburban market is not a good location for them. As Mr. Qian said, “I would not go there even if you provided me with very low rent.”

Another reason why tenants seldom participate with the Nail-House resistance is that they cannot afford a long period of protest. This should be placed in the specific context of Mainland China. Whenever an area is announced for demolition, it is no longer a safe place to do business. The development promoters would resort to all kinds of legal or illegal strategies to drive out the relative citizens. As discussed previously, expelling tenants is often their first goal. Houses on J Street were set on fire three times within two months in the beginning of 2011. All three cases were targeted at the tenants. In the first one, a burning cotton ball was thrown into a shop through a broken window. Luckily, the tenant and his family stayed in the shop and put out the fire. In the second case, Mr. Qian’s shop was set on fire and he lost ¥ 300,000 as a result. And in the third case, a shop was set on fire just four hours after the tenant left for his hometown to celebrate the Chinese New Year. Unlike shop owners, tenants cannot afford the long period involved in a protest. Thus, it makes sense that tenants and shop owners seldom join together in collective protest even though both are suffering from huge losses, and both treasure J Street as a good location for their original business.

2.3 Changing individuals in different circumstances

The fluidity of discourse is also significant in the sense that a single person has

different or even conflicting understandings of the same issue under different circumstances. Power gradients can be discussed in investigating how they deal with such conflicts. This research tries to grasp the discursive practices through digging into these different, contradictory, or inconsistent narrations and interpretations.

As was discussed in the gender division section, females treasure the importance of traditional community for its sense of security, trust, and neighborhood support when comparing their life before and after demolition. However, community preservation never enters the agenda of their resistance. When comparing economic gains and losses, females agree that community preservation is a “weak moral accusation”.

They also have conflicting understandings of the market in different contexts. Take Mr. Zhang as an example. He tends to believe that the market system is a much fairer one than the current system. “At least I can reject to hand over my shops if I am not satisfied with the compensation you offer.” Similarly, these Nail-Houses tend to assume that real estate developers are neutral, and that a “market price” is a “fair” price. As discussed in the previous chapters, their naïve image of the market is due to their years of experience doing small business. Small business is comparatively low risk. That is why they underestimate the risks of the market. Nor did they realize that a cash compensation based on the market price could not guarantee coverage of all the losses they may encounter. Therefore, many of them believe that the real estate developer of J Street lost a lot due to a delayed process of land clearance. However, Mr. Zhang has a different understanding of the relations between the state and the market. He believed that the real estate developer’s interests would be well protected

by the local state. But again he emphasized, “at least the market system is better.”

When talking about the developer’s role in the suburban market, the Nail-Houses have a totally different feeling. In the suburban market, the real estate developer and the local state form a kind of coalition as discussed previously. The real estate developer transfers its risks and costs to these small shop owners. However, they seldom notice such inconsistencies in their interpretations of the market and the developer.

3. Theoretical Implications

This section discusses the strengths and criticisms of a post-structural perspective of discourse analysis in a Chinese context. The research started with the question of the absence of alternative city visions after years of Nail-House resistance. Discourse analysis has been proved to be suitable to respond to this question since it digs into the question: what is development? The first part of this section goes through this research and talks about the strength of discourse analysis. The post-structural turn is the subject of many critiques, such as the autonomy of text and materiality. The second part of the section looks into the materiality of discourse.

3.1 The strength of discourse analysis

This research questions how the citizens affected by demolition understand urban development. Specifically it asks why the major agenda of Nail-House resistance is

restricted to the framework of compensation negotiation, whether there are any alternative visions of urban development, and if so how they are excluded. Using a post-structural turn of discourse analysis to examine Nail-house resistance, this research demonstrates that the long-standing urban development discourses perpetuate the current land-centered development mode.

Discourse analysis helps to challenge the long-held belief that we have been taken for granted. Post-structural scholars believe that power conflicts are actualized through language and its discursive practices within which power is exercised and dominance is maintained. Challenging the main discourse analysis helps to deconstruct widely accepted myths. Economic growth cannot be achieved through current land-centered development mode. The bulldozer rather than preservation approach has the price of economic and social unsustainability. Those Nail-Houses who finally reach an agreement with local governments are also suffering from long-term economic losses, hardly being the “winners” of demolition. Change may start from the deconstruction of these discourses.

Employing a post-structural perspective of discourse analysis helps us to examine the discursive practices. Discourse is not ideology, which is constructed by “fake knowledge” transmitted from the ruling class wholesale to the subordinate classes. Ideology analysis cannot answer why Nail-House resistance only involves bargaining for more compensation, even though local governments’ blind pursuit of GDP growth as an ideology has been attacked for years. Rather, there are always different or even conflicting interpretations. Grasping the discursive practices helps us to figure out the power gradient within varieties of interpretations, and how

dominant discourses transfer, adopt, deny or subdue potential threats or resistance.

We can only imagine changes based on unmasking the discursive practices.

3.2 Materiality of discourse

The cultural turn also has many critics. Among them, the most challenging debate is about the autonomy of text and materiality. It should first be pointed out that this research does not endorse extreme idealist or a reductionist argument suggesting that the study of language and texts is by itself sufficient for understanding urban politics.

Discourse analysis is attacked for sacrificing material interests by placing too much emphasis on discourses. For political economic urban researchers, the adoption of a realist epistemology allows researchers to make universal truth claims. It follows that once the truth is figured out about the working of the social world, people can intervene strategically in human affairs to make a change (see Baker, 2012: 31). For Marxists, culture is a corporeal force generated from the socially organized production of the material. Marxists argue that the material mode of production is the “real foundation” of the cultural superstructure. In other words, materiality—or say the economic—determines the culture.

However, post-structuralism challenges this realist epistemology. Poststructuralists reject the notion of objective, ultimate and universal truth. In place of the “truth,” post-structural scholars like Foucault dig into the relationship between power and knowledge. The idea of the “Regime of truth” is emphasized in post-structural studies. The economic determinism of Marxism is also criticized

because other inequalities including race, gender, and community abandonment are treated as minor or subordinate to economic benefits.

This research stands with post-structural scholars in attacking the dichotomy between economic benefits and “subordinate elements.” Emphasizing urban discourses is by no means at the price of sacrificing citizens’ material interests. For instance, without a rethinking of what constitutes “incremental benefits,” Nail-Houses may consider themselves as gaining a lot from demolition, whereas most of them are in fact suffering from economic losses. In the case of J Street, since most Nail-Houses did not get a full picture of their gains, losses and risks after demolition, their agreement to relocate turns out to be full of sorrows for most of them. In other words, if the economic and social costs under the prevailing discourses are not disclosed, citizens’ material interests are harmed. Emphasizing the importance of urban discourses is aimed at protecting citizens’ interests.

4. Practical Implications

Through challenging the prevailing urban discourses, this research generates some suggestions for urban activists and urban policy makers. For the urban activists, this research is valuable because it looks in depth at how citizens’ life patterns are changed due to demolition in details. The J Street case study is an example disclosing the ignored losses and risks of bulldozer development. This research also presents some suggestions for alternative city visions. For the policy makers, this research is an example challenging their stand that bulldozer development equals to

economic growth.

4.1 For urban activists

This case presents an example of how citizens' life patterns are changed, and what kind of losses and risks they undertake due to demolition. Urban activists need to have a full picture of these gains, losses and risks. Besides, explorations and practices have been made in other parts of the world. This research inspires some possible alternative imaginations of urban development.

First, tenants should ask for compensations to cover for their losses due to demolition. Since their losses generate mainly from the change of business locations, they can negotiate with the local government to provide some policies regarding relocation. For instance, tenants could enjoy a relatively low rent after demolition. Or, if the original community is gentrified or built up as a business center, tenants could be granted some privilege to rent the shops in the newly developed zone. They could also ask for the privilege to get an interest-free or low interest loan to re-start their business.

This research generates some suggestions for the shop owners. To begin with, citizens have the right to be informed of development plans regarding their community. They can ask the local state or the real estate developer to publicize the detailed development plan. Citizens could also participate by bringing their own plans in the pursuit of "development for ourselves." It has been years for the development of the preservation movement. Such movements argue to preserve

historical buildings and traditional communities. In their efforts to challenge the prevailing discourses of developmentalism, they try to raise counter-discourses emphasizing the value of historical buildings and the importance to preserve traditional communities. They can mobilize resources including the urban planners and the mass media to take part in their actions.

What's more, citizens can ask to share the benefits generated from developing their land, rather than being evicted and incurring the losses and risks by themselves. One way is to ask for an on-site rehousing. Just as Mr. Zhang imagined, if this area is being developed into a business center, it would be fair for these original business people to get a new shop in the new business center. Another way might be to set up a fund managing the real estate development of their community. Every citizen living or doing business in this area could have a share of the benefits. Even if they accept the relocation, they can ask for relevant compensation to lower the risks involved. For instance, urban activists should pay attention to the risk of losing the property ownership certificate. They can ask the local state to make a detailed timetable for the transfer of the property ownership certificate. They can also ask for the relative service gap of the zones they are going to relocate into.

There are many more suggestions for the urban activists. In summary, this research points out that urban activists should have a full grasp of the gains and losses due to demolition, and should raise the relative demands. And there are always alternative city visions.

4.2 For policy makers

This research challenges the dominant urban discourses, which justify a bulldozer development model in the name of modern scientific planning. Policy makers problematize the traditional communities existing in the city centers as “declining,” and promote numerous urban redevelopment plans as the solution. They argue that citizens’ life conditions are improved by redevelopment. Urban spatial restructuring is hence disguised as a natural and neutral process. Under the hegemony of economic growth, all the social costs of bulldozer development are ignored or justified as “temporary sacrifices.”

However, this research reveals that bulldozer development by no means guarantees a sustainable economic growth. It is at the expense of destroying historical buildings and traditional communities, which are priceless. It is a ridiculous common practice that development promoters tear down historical buildings and rebuild with fake archaistic buildings. It costs much more expenses to reconstruct the communities with mature services.

To make up for the losses and inequalities demolition generates, the local government need to make up for the huge service gaps in the zones citizens are relocating to. Currently, demolition turns out to be a marginalization process evicting the original citizens from the city centers to urban peripheries. Local states seldom take into consideration the provision of social services including a transportation subsidy or directing job opportunities to these zones. Lower-income citizens are disadvantaged and cannot protect themselves from such losses. Since they seldom

get any support from the local government, they are like what Bauman (2004) described “outcasts of modernity.” However, demolition and relocation prove to bring increasing social problems including gender and family problems like this research shows. Other studies also show the existence of youth problems and less support for the aged groups.

There should be some reform of the local governments. Administratively, as discussed previously, it is a system within which officials are only accountable responsible for what they do to the upper-level authorities. Thus, demolition compensation turns out to be an effort to maintain a harmonious image rather than trying to solve the real problems citizens are confronting.

5. Reflections on this Research

This section offers reflections on this research, discussing limitations of the data collection process and examining the role of the researcher as an insider. The second section tries to inspire some points for the future study.

5.1 Limitations as an insider

As discussed previously, being an insider enables me to contextualize the informants’ stories in a longer time range. Since my family was among the participants, it also guarantees a rich amount of data from participants. However, I encountered some problems as the insider during the research mainly due to the direct intervention of local politics in the J Street. Thus generates limitations of this research.

The first problem came in the data collection process. Although it was easy to get data from participants, approaching non-participants was rather difficult. Due to time limitation, I finally managed to conduct in-depth interviews with four non-participants including three tenants and one shop owner (see Appendix B). One reason is that many shop owners and tenants who did not take part in the protest had moved out of J Street and changed their contact information. Getting in touch with these non-participants was not easy. Many non-participants said that they had “moved on” from demolition. It is a loss that I did not pay enough attention to these groups. It may be a good start for further studies.

As mentioned previously, when a new compensation plan was offered, three non-participating shop owners came back to bargain directly with the local state. I managed to interview one of them, while two others refused me. The only one shared her stories and feelings of her changed life pattern after she moved out of J Street. However, whenever I tried to ask about how she bargained with the local state, or what demands she raised, she refused to go into details. She was afraid that I would leak her information to the participants since I am one of them. Participants were also afraid that she would get some useful information from me. It is a pity that I failed to get enough data about the relations between the participants and non-participants.

Another sensitive issue for the researcher as an insider is whether or not he/she uses his/her understandings, interpretations or judgments to dominate the informants. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, during the data collection process, I showed the interviewees my transcripts to make sure I did not misunderstand their

narrations or views. I tried avoiding to be biased in analyzing different stakeholders' stories. Both participants and non-participants I interviewed in this research confront problems to adjust to the changed life pattern. In the J Street case, there are some informants who argued that their life got better after demolition. I also presented these diversified interpretations. Employing a qualitative approach, I did not stop when they offered a judgment as "better" or "worse," but started digging why they had such interpretations.

5.2 Further studies

This researcher inspires some points for future studies. Firstly, since this research is designed to figure out how citizens doing small business understand urban development confronting demolition, it did not take into consideration how urban residents are affected by this wave of urban bulldozers. For instance, most of the residents in J Street community quickly accepted the cash compensation and moved out because most of them are government employees. It would be interesting to look into different stakeholders' views of urban development within one community including residents, tenants, and small business people and how a protest coalition is formed.

Another point, as discussed previously, is to investigate the special group of "non-participants" who accepted the compensation in the early stage but came back to renegotiate with the local state. This research gave a partial reason by presenting their changed life patterns after relocation. But the reason that they seldom join in the

collective protest of their old neighbors remains to be answered. Further studies may look into how participants and non-participants interact with each other.

J Street is a typical case of Nail-House protests since their agenda of resistance is firmly focused on compensation negotiation. It would be interesting to look into some specific cases, in which public participation has different trials. For instance, the preservation movement of *Enning Road* in Guangdong Province is a good start to examine the obstacles to participation, and how citizens tried to bring a development plan for themselves.

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Appendix A: Interview Guideline

訪談提綱

1. 受訪者個人及家庭基本情況：

- 1.1) 基本信息：性別，年齡，婚姻狀況，受教育程度，在 J 街從業的時間
- 1.2) 家庭成員：家庭成員數量，子女及長者，受訪者在家庭中的角色¹
- 1.3) 家庭主要收入來源：月收入，「個體商戶」的經歷
- 1.4) 家庭居住地與 J 街的距離

2. 拆遷對經濟的影響：

- 2.1) 基本信息：原來在 J 街的店鋪面積大小；當時買下的價格；目前鄰近地區的市場價格
- 2.2) 最終接受的補償方案是什麼？如何看待？
- 2.3) 抗爭的近三年時間，家庭的經濟收入來源是什麼？有沒有受到影響？
- 2.4) 城郊新店鋪：繼續做原來的生意，或出租或賣出店鋪？不同的選擇是否遇到困難？如何看待新店鋪的前景？
- 2.5) 房屋產權證的情況
- 2.6) 遷出 J 街以後的家庭主要收入來源：重新找工作？繼續做生意？退休？
- 2.7) 有沒有嘗試重新找工作？

¹受訪者在家庭中的角色，比如，是主要「決策人」？或是意見提供者？

2.7.1) 沒有，有什麼樣的顧慮？

2.7.2) 有，重新找工作順利嗎？什麼樣的工作？工作與之前做「個體商戶」相比，經濟上是受損，持平還是賺得更多？

2.7.3) 找到的工作與現在的居所之間的距離，交通成本有無上升？

2.8) 曾經嘗試提出哪些補償方案？

2.9) 拆遷究竟是賺了還是賠了？對於拆遷造成的經濟損益，在當初抗爭時，哪些有考慮到？哪些沒有？

3. 拆遷對於個人 / 家庭 / 社區生活的影響：

3.1) 拆遷以前的 J 街是一個破舊的「老區」嗎？

3.2) 拆遷以前的 J 街是什麼樣的？最懷念的是什麼？商業氛圍，居住環境，鄰里關係？

3.3) 拆遷後搬去哪裡住？去哪裡工作？生活區和工作地點的距離

3.4) 是否適應拆遷後的生活？「提前退休者」如何安排自己的生活？

3.5) 拆遷以後之前的老街坊還有沒有聯絡？

3.6) 做「個體商戶」時期的家庭角色分工，在拆遷後有沒有變化？

3.7) 抗爭過程中，是否嘗試要求公布這一塊的開發方案？

3.8) 搬遷後，政府有沒有相應的政策支持，比如提供創業基金，小額貸款，大病救助，交通補貼等？

3.9) 抗爭過程中，「釘子戶」之間的關係如何？決策的製定過程，有無強制性？

3.10) 如何看待當初放棄抗爭搬走的人？

4. 對國家與市場的理解

- 4.1) J 街最初的開發商是誰？抗爭過程中與開發商的互動是怎樣的？
- 4.2) 抗爭的三年中，J 街的開發商數次易主，如何看待開發商的角色與作用？
- 4.3) 抗爭的全過程中，與地方政府各部門之間的打交道，如何理解？
- 4.4) 臨街店鋪，曾在抗爭過程中連續三次遭到縱火，至今未破案，怎麼看？
- 4.5) 如何理解「打官司」？作用是什麼？
- 4.6) 為何當初沒有任何讓步空間的政策，提出了新的方案，如何看待？
- 4.7) 是否同意，如果在一個完全的自由市場中，就能得到與市場價格相符的拆遷補償？

Interview Guidelines

1. Basic information of the interviewee and his/her family
 - 1.1) Background information: gender, age, marriage, education, and how long living or working on J Street
 - 1.2) Family members: numbers, children and the old; the role of the interviewee in his/her family²
 - 1.3) Income: monthly income before demolition; experience as a small household businessmen
 - 1.4) Living site: how far away from their shops
2. How demolition influences the family income?
 - 2.1) Basic information: the size of the shop; how much was it when you bought it? And the market price of nearby shops.
 - 2.2) What is the final compensation plan? How do you value it?
 - 2.3) Within the nearly three years of resistance, what is the livelihood to support the family? Did demolition disturb your original business?
 - 2.4) How to use the new shops in suburban market? Continuing the original business, rent it out or sell it? Do you confront any difficulties? How do you think of the future of these shops in suburban market?
 - 2.5) The certificate of Property Ownership
 - 2.6) How about family income after relocation? Re-enter the labor market?

² The role of the interviewee in his family, for instance, whether he/she is the major decision-maker.

Continue the original business? Stay at home?

2.7) Have you tried to find a new job?

2.7.1) No. What are your concerns?

2.7.2) Yes. Is it easy? What kind of job? How do you see the difference from being a small household businessman before demolition?

2.7.3) Is your new working location near your home? Do you suffer from a rising transportation fees?

2.8) Have you tried to raise other compensation plan?

2.9) Do you gain or lose due to demolition? For these changes, have you anticipated some of them?

3. How does demolition influence your life pattern/ family life/ the community?

3.1) Do you consider J Street an old and dilapidated region before demolition?

3.2) How do you think of the J Street community before demolition? What do you treasure most? The business environment, living environment, or the neighborhood relations?

3.3) Where do you live after demolition?

3.4) Have you got used to the life after demolition? How do you arrange your day to retire at an early age?

3.5) How about your relations with your old neighbors? Do you keep in touch?

3.6) How was the gender division before demolition? Is it changed now?

3.7) Have you tried to ask the local government to publicize the development

plan of this region?

3.8) Did the local government make some policies, like offering petty loan, travel allowance, etc.?

3.9) How was the relationship among Nail-Houses? How a decision is made?

3.10) How do you think of those who compromised and moved out of J Street at very early stage?

4. How do you think of the role of the state and the market?

4.1) Who was the original real estate developer of J Street? How did you interact with them?

4.2) During the nearly three years of resistance, the J Street development plan was changed to different developers? How do you think of the role of developer?

4.3) How do you interact with the local government?

4.4) During the three years of resistance, the shops on J Street was set on fire three times. Local police does not catch the suspect till now. How do you think of it?

4.5) How do you think of the meaning of collective lawsuit?

4.6) When you began to negotiate with local government, there seems to be no space of resistance. What do you think helps to the birth of current plan?

4.7) Do you agree that, in a free market, you can get a fair price according to the market?

Appendix B: Table of Interviewees³

Interviewees ⁴	Age	Shop owner/ Tenant	Participant/ Non-participant	After demolition
Mr. Lee	60+	Shop owner (decision-maker)	Participant	Continue his business in the suburban market
Mrs. Ai	50+	Shop owner (family member)	Participant	Continue the business in the suburban market
Mr. Zhang	50+	Shop owner (decision-maker)	Participant	Early retirement
Mrs. Zhang	50+	Shop owner (family member)	Participant	Re-enter labor market
Mrs. Zhu	60+	Shop owner (decision-maker)	Participant	Retired
Mr. Zhao	60+	Shop owner (decision-maker)	Participant	Rejected relocation; forceful demolished and evicted

³ There are several other anonymous informants. They did not accept the in-depth interviews since they were afraid of the political sensitivity. But they agreed to provide information I got from the daily participant observation.

⁴ All the interviewees in this research are anonymous. I used fictitious names to identify different interviewees.

Mrs. Peng	60+	Shop owner (family member)	Participant	Retired
Mr. Sun	70+	Shop owner (family member)	Participant	Retired
Mr. Song	40+	Shop owner (decision-maker)	Participant	Early retirement
Mrs. Hu	40+	Shop owner (family member)	Participant	Early retirement
Mr. Jiang	40+	Shop owner (decision-maker)	Participant	Early retirement
Mr. Qian	30+	Tenant	Non-participant	Rent another shop
Mrs. Wu	30+	Tenant	Non-participant	Rent another shop
Mrs. Yao	70+	Tenant	Non-participant	Retired
Mrs. Wang	50+	Shop owner (decision maker)	Non-participant	Early-retired; go back to bargain with the local government

Appendix C: Information Sheet

参与研究知情书

中国城市开发的话语：

——关于 W 市一起城市抗争的个案研究

诚邀您参与由香港理工大学应用社会科学系的硕士研究生李麐组织进行的一项调查研究。此研究项目已通过香港理工大学人文研究伦理审查委员会(the Human Subjects Ethics Sub-committee)的审查。(HSEARS201208120020)

近年来，各类“城市开发”与“旧城改造”项目带来了大规模的房屋征收与居民搬迁。越来越多的城市居民与业主选择用法律武器捍卫自己的权利。本研究旨在探究，这些城市抗争者如何理解“城市开发”。本研究将与您进行 1~2 次深度访谈，每次时间持续 1~2 小时。

您的参与系自愿原则，您有任何时间退出本研究的权力。如果您同意参与本项研究，所有得到的信息都将是保密的。可以识别您身份的信息将不会透露给研究组外的任何人。本项目研究成果发表时，将不会透露您的任何个人资料。如果您对本研究有任何疑问，请联系：

李麐（电邮地址：uddiscourse@；电话：1471537 ）

如果您认为在本项研究中您被非公正对待或是受到了伤害，或者您对本研究有任何疑问，您可以直接联系香港理工大学人文研究伦理审查委员会秘书郑博士 (Dr. Virginia Cheng)。

非常感谢您对本项研究的参与！

課題組長：陳錦華博士

研究成員：李麐

Information Sheet

Urban Development Discourses:

A Case Study of Urban Protest in W City

Thank you for participating this research program of Li Ni, the M.Phil candidate of HK Polytechnic University, under the supervision of Dr. Cham Kam-wah. It has been approved by the Human Subjects Ethics Sub-Committee (Application No. HSEARS201208120020).

In recent decades, many urban projects in the name of “urban development” and “urban renewal” generated in massive demolition and eviction. This research tries to look into how these affected citizens understand urban development. Two rounds of in-depth interviews will be employed. Each interview will last about 1~2 hours.

You have the right to quit this program any time. The information provided is confidential. No one will be accepted to get your information except for Li Ni and Dr. Chan. And it will leak no personal information when this research project gets the chance of publication. If you have any question, please contact:

LI NI (e-mail: uddiscourse@ ; phone no: 1471537)

If you feel unfairly treated or hurt, you can also contact Dr. Virginia Cheng, the secretary of the Human Subjects Ethics Sub-Committee.

Thank you very much for your participation!

Best Wishes

Dr. Chan Kam-wah

Li Ni

Appendix D: Consent Form

参与研究同意书

中国城市开发的话语：

——关于 W 市一起城市抗争的个案研究

本人_____同意参与由__李麗__开展的上述研究。

本人知悉本研究所获得的资料可能被用作日后的研究及发表，但本人的隐私权利将得以保留，即本人的个人资料不会被公开。

研究人员已向本人清楚解释列在所附资料卡上的研究程序，本人明了当中涉及的利益及风险；本人自愿参与研究项目。

本人知悉本人有权就程序的任何部分提出疑问，并有权随时退出而不受任何惩处。

参与者姓名_____

参与者签署_____

研究人员姓名_____

研究人员签署_____

日期_____

Consent Form

Urban Development Discourse:

A Case Study of Urban Protest in W City

I _____ agree to participate in the research program of LI Ni.

I know that the information I provided will be used confidentially for this research program and further publication. And I know that it will leak no personal information of mine.

The investigator has explained the details on the information sheet. I am clear of the interests and risks it involves. And I agree to take part in the interviews.

I am also clear that I have the right to raise questions about the research, and the right to quit it.

Name of the Interviewee _____

Signature of the Interviewee _____

Name of Researcher _____

Signature of the Researcher _____