

The Making of the Landless Landlord Peasant*

**Government Policy and the Development of Villages-in-the-City in
Shanghai and Guangzhou**

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Abstract

China's rapid urbanization has generated a substantial population of "landless peasants," villagers whose farmland has been fully expropriated. The fate of these "landless peasants" has varied greatly from locale to locale. In many cities, they have become wealthy urban landlords; in others, they have been pushed aside in the urbanization process. When they have become urban landlords, they have often done so through the formation of village collective shareholding corporations and villages-in-the-city (also known as "urban villages" 城中村), which have in turn provided housing for many migrant workers. Comparing Guangzhou, with its many villages-in-the-city and powerful village collectives, to Shanghai, with far fewer villages-in-the-city or village collectives, this paper argues that the radically different distributive policies adopted by these two cities stem from their divergent conceptions of urbanization. Shanghai persisted in implementing Mao-era policies in which urbanized villagers were granted urban jobs and converted to urban citizens even when the government no longer had jobs to grant, while Guangzhou quickly adapted to the more market-oriented economy of the Reform Period. These strategies for urbanizing villagers proved amply elastic over time, reflecting the ability of changing leaders and their changing preferences to make real change on the ground, even in the face of the constraints imposed by local traditions and path dependencies.

China’s rapid urbanization has led to widespread displacement and harrowing tales of “landless peasants” deprived of their ancestral lands and the subsistence they provided. It has also led to exceptionally wealthy villagers, who have leveraged their centrally located land to run impressive rental empires. This stunning divergence is most evident in the prevalence of villages-in-the-city (also known as “urban villages” 城中村) and village collectives in some cities and their near absence in other cities. The implications for distributive politics and for quality of life have been enormous.

For villages which have become villages-in-the-city, villagers have been able to take advantage of substantial rental income. When those villages-in-the-city have been heavily developed—as is common in Guangzhou—a forest of ten-story tall tenements provides spacious and cheap housing to migrant workers, while enriching villagers—and depriving the government of revenue from land leasing. When village collectives have become well-organized economic entities, villagers have earned hefty dividends—and governments have found that they have to deal with wily bargaining partners.

It should be little wonder, then, that villages-in-the-city have become an extremely popular research topic. As the sites of rapid economic development, villages-in-the-city have attracted ethnographic and economic histories.¹ As the residential quarters of many migrant workers, villages-in-the-city appeal to those studying the working classes.² As the site of a booming black market in residential properties, villages-in-the-city lure students of legal development.³ As the territory of unusually effective bottom-up social organizations, villages-in-the-city appeal to those in search of grassroots democracy.⁴ And as the locus

¹ [O’Donnell et al., 2017, Chan et al., 2009, Saich and Hu, 2012]

² [Liu et al., 2015]

³ [Qiao, 2018]

⁴ [Liu, 2018]

of intensive bargaining over redevelopment, villages-in-the-city appeal to those interested in urban development.⁵ The result has been a veritable flood of research, much of it of high quality.

While villages-in-the-city are in fact quite widespread—they are common in places as diverse as Xiamen, Xi'an, Kunming, and Ankang—they are not universal. In particular, Shanghai and Jiangsu have relatively few villages-in-the-city. However, the literature's focus on the Pearl River Delta has largely blinded us to why villages-in-the-city exist in the first place. Indeed, while there has been a great deal of speculation on the origins of villages-in-the-city, I have been unable to uncover any rigorous cross-city comparative research on the subject. Hence, I begin by reviewing unsatisfying existing efforts to explain the origins of villages-in-the-city, then move on to a handful of broader theoretical discourses that can guide a more rigorous answer.

Most scholars of villages-in-the-city restrict their scope to locales with villages-in-the-city, and then seek to explain their presence. They tend to attribute the development of villages-in-the-city to villagers acting rationally in the face of accidentally benign government neglect: “under customary practice,” governments would save money by taking village farmland but not residential land;⁶ rational villagers would then take advantage of “fuzzy property rights” to build tenement housing for rental income in violation of planning restrictions.⁷ In a more incisive (and accurate) version, Li Peilin 李培林 suggests that villagers built up tenements as a way of extracting land takings compensation from the local government, with the local government responding by establishing an incentive system that effectively le-

⁵ [Lin, 2015, Liu and Wong, 2018]

⁶ [Zhang et al., 2003, 918]

⁷ [Liu et al., 2010]

galized tenements up to a certain density.⁸ While this research suggests that we should look carefully at land takings practices and planning enforcement, as well as villagers’ responses thereto, the failure of these studies to examine or explain cases where villages-in-the-city did not develop is methodologically crippling.

These scholars tend to see the government as feebly opposed to the development of villages-in-the-city. In conversation, many attribute this to what might be termed “Cantonese exceptionalism,” where strong village collectives dominated by well-organized clans discourage government intervention.⁹ Such research has an impressive pedigree in anthropology and political science,¹⁰ but cannot explain the prevalence of villages-in-the-city in places such as Xi’an, where clans are weaker or altogether absent. Moreover, government opposition has not always been so feeble. The well-documented demolition of Beijing’s “Zhejiang Village” shows that local governments can swiftly reverse the development of well-organized villages-in-the-city when nervous about migrant populations overrunning sensitive locales.¹¹

Villages-in-the-city are likely the product of multiple causes, and perhaps even developed through a variety of different pathways. Forbearance by local governments¹² and the presence of lineage organizations, as well as the geographic distribution of housing plots, likely all contribute to the development of villages-in-the-city. Indeed, their origins are complicated by interjurisdictional learning on the part of both local officials¹³ and peasants themselves.¹⁴ The complexity behind villages-in-the-city does not, however, negate a clear pattern: some

⁸[Source 231 (李培林, 2019)]

⁹Strangely, few have put this explanation in writing. Karita Kan is an exception [Kan, 2020].

¹⁰[Freedman, 1971, Tsai, 2007]

¹¹[Zhang, 2001]; [Source 230 (项飙, 2020), pp. xvii-xviii, 382-387]

¹²[Holland, 2017]

¹³[Chung and Unger, 2013]

¹⁴[Lu et al., 2017]

cities are awash in villages-in-the-city, while others have very few. Despite this evident variation at the municipal level, however, the literature has tended to focus on explaining outcomes based on village-level variation.¹⁵ This paper instead explores variation at the municipal level, arguing that municipal governments play a major role in explaining the presence or absence of villages-in-the-city.

Indeed, a significant stream of research has argued that the past several decades of Chinese urban development have been a rat race for property rights, with municipal governments seeking to exert control over land at the expense of villagers and state-owned enterprises. In an otherwise deeply insightful book, You-tien Hsing attributes the degree of success municipal governments attain in taking land from villagers to the degree of deterritorialization among villagers, a circular argument.¹⁶ Meg Rithmire's thorough treatment of the north-east's major cities argues that governments were able to exert more control (in her case, over urban residents and state-owned enterprises) when foreign capital arrived earlier;¹⁷ because foreign capital arrived in Guangdong first, and Guangdong's local governments are notorious for their exceptionally weak control over villagers' lands, this argument certainly cannot explain government-villager relations. Hsing and Rithmire are correct, though, in pointing to the centrality of municipal efforts to reapportion property rights.

Another stream of research emphasizes that local variation in economic structure is the product of government intentionality. Susan Whiting attributes this to (boundedly) rational local governments responding to local economic endowments and to incentive structures imposed from above.¹⁸ He Shenjing and company make a similar argument in a rare com-

¹⁵See, e.g., [Smith, 2014, He et al., 2009, Mattingly, 2020, Kan, 2020]

¹⁶ [Hsing, 2010, 223-224]

¹⁷ [Rithmire, 2015]

¹⁸ [Whiting, 2001]

parative effort to explain villages-in-the-city, arguing that a rational local state only takes village housing land when it is profitable to do so, allowing villages-in-the-city to develop otherwise.¹⁹ Likewise, Po Lanchih suggests that local governments construct different types of villager shareholding companies (with village collectives but one among several) to serve different local needs.²⁰ There is surely some truth to these arguments, but they do not fit well with the rapid policy shifts towards villages-in-the-city that result when leaders or their ideas change.

This paper concurs that villages-in-the-city are substantially—but not necessarily entirely—the product of government intentionality. In doing so, I draw heavily on the writings of now-Minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Development Wang Menghui 王蒙徽, who argues that villages-in-the-city are one of several policy solutions to the problem posed by the “landless peasant.”²¹ Rather than attributing this government intentionality purely to government rationality, I follow John Donaldson and Chen Hao to adopt a model of punctuated equilibrium in which senior local government officials play a key role: policy follows local culture and/or path dependencies, interrupted by the policy preferences of senior local government officials as refracted through the practical problems of governance which they encounter during their work.²²

I identify this pattern in a comparison of Guangzhou, with its multitude of vibrant villages-in-the-city, and Shanghai, which has only a handful of tightly regulated villages-in-the-city. Because government officials grope for solutions to the persistent problems of land takings as they implement urban development *projects* in changing national and local *policy*

¹⁹ [He et al., 2009, 1931]

²⁰ [Po, 2008]

²¹ [Source 221 (王蒙徽, 2010)]

²² [Donaldson, 2011, Chen, 2018]

contexts, this paper compares the strategies undertaken by different governments and their leaders with respect to individual projects in the context of shifting policies. To evaluate the relative importance of government intentionality as compared to local culture or path dependency (the two are too difficult to tease apart in a paper like this), I weave two case studies in each of Guangzhou and Shanghai into the narrative. One case in each city exhibits the government at its most generous with respect to villagers (Minhang in Shanghai and the Zhujiang New City in Guangzhou); another exhibits the government at its most stingy (Lujiazui in Shanghai and University Town in Guangzhou). Reference to Figure 1 may help guide the reader.

This nested comparison of cases within and between Shanghai and Guangzhou shows that the spectrum of land takings policies implemented in the two cities is broad, and to some extent overlaps. This establishes that, while local culture and path dependency may play an important role, they cannot alone explain the divergence in the *typical* policies of these two cities. Instead, drawing on leaders' writings, policy documents, academic works, and press reports, I argue that municipal leaders in the two cities attempted to fashion different types of urbanized "landless villagers;" while leaders did not always get what they sought, what they got was indeed a function of the policies they adopted.

To begin, it is necessary to take a few steps backward and precisely define what a "village collective" and a "village-in-the-city" are. Both terms are prone to misuse and proper definitions will make this paper's argument easier to follow. I divide the remainder of the paper into two sections. The first explains the emergence of physical villages-in-the-city in Guangzhou, as well as Shanghai's relative success avoiding them. The second explains how Guangzhou developed strong village collective organizations, while Shanghai's collectives

Figure 1: Case Studies

(a) Physical Villages-in-the-City



(b) Village Collectives & Retained Land



proved abortive. Combined, these two sections explain how Guangzhou villagers became landlords of their own private tenements as well as shareholders in landholding collectives, while Shanghai villagers were much less likely to become landlords in either sense. At both the physical and organizational level, I argue that government policies reflective of leaders' preferences were intended to and did indeed shape the outcomes each city experienced.

1 Definitions

The term 城中村 and its English translations, “village-in-the-city” and “urban village,”²³ are used frequently both in Chinese policy circles and in the academic literature. Unfortunately, the term is used to describe a wide and divergent variety of phenomena. The result is a term that tends to have a clear meaning in a local setting but can be remarkably difficult to use in cross-city comparisons. It is important, therefore, to begin by clearly defining the concept as it is used in this paper.

To do so, we need to first introduce the “village collective,” which allows us to generalize on the concept of a village to include cases where the village itself has been disbanded:

Definition 1. *A village (small group, town, township) collective 村 (队、镇、乡) 集体经济组织 is a legal entity managing the assets of a current or former administrative village (small group, town, township).*

Village collectives are the economic wing of the village organization. Sometimes, the village committee manages its own assets, but sometimes the political and economic tasks of village governance are divided between the village committee and some form of corporation or cooperative. Furthermore, village collectives must be understood as distinct from the broader concept of collective “township and village enterprises” (TVEs). Whereas “township and village enterprises” (乡镇企业) need not be owned by a township or a village (that is, they can be privately owned), collective “township and village enterprises” (乡村企业) are

²³I have opted for the translation “village-in-the-city,” because it shows more literal deference to the Chinese original and because it avoids the confusion “urban village” often causes among non-experts, who understand “village” in its social rather than legalistic sense. “Urban village,” moreover, means something entirely different to experts in Western urban planning than it does to scholars of Chinese cities [Wang, 2020].

at least partially owned by a township or a village.²⁴ Whatever part of the TVE is owned by a village is owned by its village collective. Wealthy village collectives therefore closely resemble holding companies, owning a complex combination of land and shares in a variety of TVEs.

Importantly, village collectives can exist even for villages that no longer exist. This is important to our definition for “villages-in-the-city,” which—rather exasperatingly—need not actually be villages anymore:

Definition 2. A **village-in-the-city** 城中村 *is a parcel of land (or set thereof) that is:*

1. *administered by a village collective;*
2. *surrounded by state-owned urban land; and*
3. *not developed under the de facto control of the urban and land planning regime applied to construction on state-owned urban land.*

For the village-in-the-city concept to serve any useful purpose, it must refer to land that is *administered* by something that is currently or was previously a village (Criterion #1) and it must be surrounded by a city (Criterion #2). While it is tempting to restrict ourselves only to land that is *currently owned* by a village, the most widely studied villages-in-the-city do not meet this criterion: all of Shenzhen’s remaining villages were converted to urban neighborhoods in 2004, and their land ownership rights were seized by the local government, undergoing conversion from collective-owned land (集体土地) to state-owned land (国有土地).²⁵ Had this endeavor been successful, there would indeed be no villages-in-the-city

²⁴See [Huang, 2008, pp. 74, 106]

²⁵See 《深圳市宝安龙岗两区城市化土地管理办法》.

left in Shenzhen, but the Shenzhen government did not seize actual possession of the land, taking only the land ownership rights; it continues to refer to the erstwhile villages as 城中村. Since a reasonable definition of villages-in-the-city cannot exclude the Shenzhen cases, I require that the land be *administered by a village collective*—that is, it need not be *owned* by a village collective nor need it be under the administration of an *extant* village.

While state ownership of land administered by a village collective and surrounded by urban land does not preclude its being a village-in-the-city, village collective ownership of land surrounded by urban land does not necessarily make the land a village-in-the-city according to the term’s colloquial usage. This problem—necessitating Criterion #3—arises due to a number of land-swap arrangements that have granted village collectives ownership of or use rights to land that is effectively under the control of the municipal urban and land planning apparatus. This tends to occur when municipal authorities allocate “retained land” (留用地) to village collectives. Because development on such land is sometimes subject to the same urban and land planning regime as is state-owned urban land, the development that occurs there can be indistinguishable from that in the rest of the city. Such areas are not termed villages-in-the-city in popular discourse, and citizens are indeed often oblivious to the difference in ownership. Hence Criterion #3 excludes collective-owned land that is under the control of the urban and land planning regime applied to state-owned land.

2 Building the Village-in-the-City—or Not

Villages-in-the-city are of such academic interest not because of the inscrutable legalisms necessary to characterize them but because of the lively informal economy to which that

inscrutability gives rise. A key part of that liveliness is the provision of rental housing through high-density tenement construction. In Guangzhou, 5 million people—35% of the city’s population and 50% of its migrant population—live in villages-in-the-city.²⁶ Shanghai has far fewer villages-in-the-city, but those it does have are tightly packed with migrants. Statistics for the whole city are unavailable, so it is necessary to consider the sparse district-level statistics that are available. While Zhabei District does not have a single village-in-the-city left,²⁷ Minhang District has many, and 69% of village residents are migrants (but only 28% of the district’s total migrant population lives in villages).²⁸ Even more striking is the contrast between the quality of village-in-the-city housing in Guangzhou and Shanghai. Guangzhou’s villages-in-the-city are heavily developed: when Liede Village was redeveloped in 2004, it had about 20 m² of floorspace per resident.²⁹ By contrast, Shanghai’s Villages are crowded slums:³⁰ in 2012, the Chenjia neighborhood of Hong’er Village 虹桥镇虹二村陈家宅 in Minhang had 2.4 m² per resident!³¹ Why, then, does Guangzhou have such an abundant supply of rental housing in its villages-in-the-city, while Shanghai does not?

In the early Reform Era, Shanghai settled on an urbanization strategy that sought to convert villagers into citizens—that is, industrial workers; Guangzhou, on the other hand,

²⁶[Source 181 (何小敏, 2019)]

²⁷[Source 186 (汪明峰、林小玲、宁越敏, 2012)]

²⁸《闵行统计年鉴2017年》, pg. 276.

²⁹[Sources 193, 197]. More recently, and farther from the city center, Baiyun District’s Dayuan Village 白云区大源村 had an average of almost 60 m² per resident, although this may have included some factory space. [Sources 198, 199]

³⁰Drawing on evidence from other cities [Liu and Zhang, 2020, 1-2] have argued that Chinese villages-in-the-city are not slums because villagers have legal title, houses are built of substantial materials, and utility provision is ample. In Shanghai, houses are decrepit and utility provision is sparse.

³¹Author’s calculations using [Source 135 (卢国庆 (主编), 2019), pp. 854, 855, 859]. [Source 186 (汪明峰、林小玲、宁越敏, 2012), pg. 76], finds a slightly more generous 4.7 m² per tenant (and 26.1 m² per landlord) in a broader survey of Shanghai villages-in-the city. [Source 204 (苟倩莹、李志刚, 2012)] has similar findings, Guangzhou’s villages-in-the-city tenants have an average 23 m² living space per person and Shanghai’s have an average 8 m² living space per person.

quickly jettisoned any pretense of urbanizing its villagers and allowed them substantial leeway in exchange for encroachments on their land. As Shanghai prepared to transition from rural to urban development in the 1990s, it drew upon Guangdong's experience with land takings to conclude that urbanization would be best served by tightly controlling housing construction in villages.

2.1 Building Up

The onset of reforms in the late 1970s and early 1980s brought an immediate and immense increase in rural housing construction. The early reforms tended to favor the countryside, and villagers—egged on by the national government³²—took advantage of their increased wealth and economic autonomy to build themselves new multi-story houses.

Guangzhou and Shanghai were no exception to the rule. According to official statistics, over half of Guangzhou village households built new houses in the 1980s;³³ in Shanghai, official estimates suggest approximately 80% of village households built new houses between 1979 and 1990.³⁴ While much of this housing was used by villagers themselves, plenty was used for rentals as well—well-located villages in Shanghai had migrant tenants as early as the mid-1970s.³⁵

At the very start of the Reform Period, regulation was so lax that by 1981 the central government was panicking that villagers were wasting good agricultural land: “many locales have failed to give villagers building houses wholistic planning and necessary management,

³²The 1979 National Work Conference on Villager Housing Construction called for “putting the enthusiasm of villagers and collectives to full use” for housing construction. [Source 185 (王立权, 1980), pg. 31]

³³[Source 77 (曹云屏 主编, 1984), pg. 248]; 《广州统计年鉴》

³⁴[Source 184 (范德官, 1996), pg. 29]; 《上海统计年鉴》

³⁵[Source 135 (卢国庆 (主编) , 2019), pg. 844]

[leading] to the seriously disordered misuse of arable land.”³⁶ At the national level, this began a refrain that would be heard again and again.

In the 1980s, the center’s solution was two-pronged. First, they ordered that the allocation of land for village housing construction be more tightly controlled. Second, they urged local governments to let villagers build up, not out. As early as 1981, the center remarked that “in the suburbs of big cities and in areas where people are many and land is scarce, the construction of multi-story houses should be encouraged.”³⁷

Neither prescription solved the problem immediately. They did, however, shape the management of village housing construction at the local level. Regulations from the center came in 1982, stipulating that village plans and the allocation of housing land be approved by the commune (township)—except for construction on arable land, for which approval from the county was required.³⁸ Both Guangdong and Shanghai adopted identical stipulations.³⁹ To the extent that floorspace was regulated in either locale, it appears to have been at the township or village level.⁴⁰

By the end of the 1980s, Shanghai and Guangzhou had remarkably similar policies towards village housing. If anything, Shanghai’s policies were more supportive of villager housing construction, as Guangzhou in 1987 had begun to require that the district and sometimes even the municipal government sign off on each villager’s house construction permit.⁴¹ Both strongly discouraged construction on arable land and both nudged villagers

³⁶[Source 82 (国务院, 1981)]

³⁷[Source 82 (国务院, 1981)]

³⁸[Source 76 (国务院, 1982), 第八、十四条]

³⁹《广东省村镇建房用地管理实施办法》，《上海市村镇建房用地管理实施细则(试行)》

⁴⁰[Source 122 (, 2008)] claims that Yanqiao Township restricted its peasants to two-story houses; [Source 217 (蓝宇蕴, 2003), pp. 156-157], remarks that Guangzhou’s Shipai Village 石牌村 had instituted a three-and-a-half-story limit, which was enforced by demolishing the sole 1980s violator.

⁴¹《广州市城市规划管理办法实施细则》第七十四条

to build taller rather than wider houses.

2.2 Tearing Down?

While villagers were building up new houses, the cities around which they lived were expanding outward. In short, villagers and city governments were competing to build houses and factories on the same land. In this competition, local governments—armed with eminent domain—had the upper hand, but some compensation had to be given to maintain the livelihoods of erstwhile farmers.

Before the post-Mao Reform and Opening began, land takings were often compensated by granting employment to villagers.⁴² Even in the early Reform Era, national legislation considered employment in state-organized collective enterprises a fall-back compensation scheme during land takings.⁴³ There was even an explicit prohibition on disbursing what little monetary land compensation the village collective received to individual villagers. Both Guangzhou and Shanghai sought to continue this policy, trying to arrange new work units for villagers whose land had been taken.⁴⁴

Granting employment in exchange for land required that the local government control employment. This was fundamentally at odds with the logic of the reform efforts, which sought to reduce government management of the economy. Guangzhou encountered this problem before Shanghai, as it began to organize its new Guangzhou Economic & Technological Development Zone in 1984: “In the past, for every one *mu* [667 m²] of land we’d take, we’d grant at least two villagers jobs. But the vast majority of enterprises in the

⁴²See 《国家建设征用土地办法（修正）》第十三条.

⁴³See 《国家建设征用土地条例》第十二条.

⁴⁴See, e.g., 《广州市国家建设征用土地和拆迁房屋实施办法》（1984年）第八条

Development Zone were joint ventures with autonomy in hiring decisions; at the time, the [Development Zone] Management Committee didn't have any quota for hiring, either, so we couldn't allocate them jobs." The price of land ultimately settled on was 19,500 RMB/*mu* in 1984, rising to 40,000 RMB/*mu* in 1986. More than half of the 19,500 RMB/*mu* compensation was monetary compensation *in lieu* of a work assignment, and that money was kept in the bank—villagers were to live off the interest.⁴⁵ As early as 1984, Guangzhou was beginning to give up on converting villagers to urban workers; instead, villagers were granted hefty monetary compensation and allowed to retain their housing land in exchange for yielding up their farming land to the government's development schemes.

In Shanghai, meanwhile, the municipal government persisted—with difficulty—in allocating work assignments to displaced villagers at collective enterprises under the work units that had taken their land. In the late 1970s, villagers had to compete with returning sent-down youths for work assignments. By the mid-1980s, there were simply too many villagers to assign and too few jobs to give them, and efforts to solve the problem by centralizing work assignments fell flat. Ultimately, the city created a training program to make the villagers more employable and, crucially, to keep them busy while they waited for a work assignment.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Shanghai persisted in attempting to convert villagers into urban workers.

Because the ultimate fate of Shanghai's dispossessed villagers was to be true urbanization, development of the village economy in areas slated for land takings was merely an impediment. With the central government's endorsement of Shanghai's urban development

⁴⁵[Source 60 (梁根祥, 2015)]

⁴⁶[Source 115 (, 1998)]

schemes for erstwhile rural Pudong, Shanghai sought to transition from rural to urban development. Deng Xiaoping 邓小平 instructed Shanghai to first learn from the example set by south China, so, in May and June 1990, the vice mayor responsible for Pudong's development, Huang Ju 黄菊, traveled south to learn from Guangdong (where Guangzhou is located) and Fujian. He was accompanied by Wang Ande 王安德, instrumental in the marketization of Shanghai's land management, who remarked years later that "we discovered that land was harder to take the longer you waited, so we set up the preemptive land taking system 预征土地. Preemptive land takings allowed the control of land planned for development, the locking-in of costs, and the preemptive resettlement of villagers so that they could take part in Pudong's development as early as possible."⁴⁷

Pudong's policy architects wasted no time. In May 1990, at the village level in Jinqiao 金桥, permissive land policies were replaced—by municipal orders—with a thorough survey of every village house, the issuance of village housing use permits, and the limitation of newly built houses to 20 m² per person.⁴⁸ A year later, in April 1991, Pudong delineated how preemptive land takings would work,⁴⁹ and they were implemented within months across a large swathe of land Pudong slated to be developed as the Lujiazui Financial Center.⁵⁰ The villages—if not the villagers—were, one and all, to be cleared out of the new Lujiazui urban area, with villagers resettled at urban work units.⁵¹ Across the rest of Shanghai, the

⁴⁷[Source 129 (王安德, 2013)]

⁴⁸[Source 169 (上海市浦东新区地方志办公室、中共上海市浦东新区金桥镇三桥村支部委员会、上海市浦东新区金桥镇三桥村村民委员会, 2011)]

⁴⁹The arrangement did not take villagers' land up front, nor did it compensate them for it up front. Instead, it simply "froze" their land and stripped them of ownership rights to it, forbidding them from building new houses except under the most extenuating of circumstances. [Source 127 (上海市人民政府, 上海市人民政府浦东开发办公室, 上海市土地管理局, 1991)]

⁵⁰[Sources 118, 123]

⁵¹[Source 132 (赵启正, 1993), pg. 6]

city built on a tradition of relocating villagers from their traditional housing plots to new relocation neighborhoods in which villagers could build their own standardized houses in accordance with planning guidelines.⁵²

As always, these policies did not live up to the government's hopes,⁵³ but they did substantially curtail any real estate dreams villagers might have harbored. Indeed, a 2010 survey of Shanghai's few remaining villages-in-the city found that 77% of floor space was built before 1990, while only 19% had been built in the 1990s.⁵⁴ On the one hand, this has made land takings easier, meaning that fewer villages-in-the-city survive today. On the other hand, it has meant that Shanghai's villages-in-the-city have not been able to build more housing to respond to burgeoning demand, leading to severe overcrowding—that is, Shanghai's villages-in-the-city have become slums.

While Shanghai was trying to avoid the bad example it saw in Guangdong by clamping down on village housing construction, Guangdong's capital—Guangzhou—was moving in quite the opposite direction. In his 1989 book, Ezra Vogel quotes a leading economic official in Guangzhou remarking that “Compared to the counties of the Pearl River Delta, Guangzhou is like a tired old man.”⁵⁵ In 1990, Li Ziliu 黎子流, a former party secretary of Shunde County (a Pearl River Delta powerhouse), was designated Mayor of Guangzhou. Guangzhou elites were not pleased to work for a “country bumpkin mayor” (卜佬市长), and their new mayor was no more happy to discover that the city's enterprises were deep in the red and its cadres paid 30-40% less than their counterparts in neighboring counties. Mayor Li demanded that

⁵²[Source 175 (陈映芳, 2003)]

⁵³Villagers, of course, continued to build, even where they were told they could not. The government demolished what it could. [Source 133 (苏端鲁, 1994), pg. 19]; [Source 137 (马宏柱, 1994)]; [Source 139 (周国安, 1999)]

⁵⁴[Source 186 (汪明峰、林小玲、宁越敏, 2012)]

⁵⁵[Vogel, 1995, 196]

“Guangzhou must once again liberate its thinking,” and took his subordinates on field trips to study the Pearl River Delta counties, Pudong, and several other fast growing locales.⁵⁶

From the Pearl River Delta counties, Mayor Li brought back a land policy that was the very antithesis of Shanghai’s: the city encouraged villagers individually and villages as collectives to develop their own land. The municipal party committee ordered that construction approvals for villagers’ housing be devolved from the municipal to the district governments,⁵⁷ a power which districts in turn devolved to townships;⁵⁸ townships, in turn, abdicated enforcement to villages, which resorted to fining (i.e., taxing) villagers who exceeded height restrictions.⁵⁹ Borrowing a concept that appears to have originated in neighboring counties, a policy of granting village collectives “retained land” for collective development took shape through the demands of villagers facing land takings. Sanyuanli 三元里 Village refused to part with its land unless granted formal development rights to approximately 10% as much land as was taken—formally, this retained land would be a substitute for allocating employment for its villagers.⁶⁰ After visiting the village, Mayor Li and the Planning Bureau approved the concept, which was quickly formalized into the city’s policies. A year later, in 1992, these policies were used to grant retained land worth at least 20 billion RMB to the villages whose agricultural (but not residential!) land was taken for the Zhujiang New City,⁶¹

⁵⁶[Source 6 (任天阳, 魏海波, 王景春, 2011)], [Source 50 (田炳信, 1991)]

⁵⁷[Source 214 (中共广州市委广州市人民政府, 1992)]

⁵⁸In 1995, the Guangzhou Municipal Government formalized this devolution to the township level. [Source 213 (广州市政府, 1995), Section 9].

⁵⁹[Source 217 (蓝宇蕴, 2003), pp. 156-157]. [Source 233 (刘梦琴, 2010), pp. 81-82], suggests that in another part of Guangzhou it was the township which resorted to collecting fines.

⁶⁰While the retained land was supposed to be restricted for industrial and commercial use [Source 187 (王蒙徽, 2008)], it was in fact used by the villagers to build housing 集资房 [Source 189 (广州市白云区三元里街三元里村经济联合社 (编), 2016), pg. 89]. Sources disagree as to whether Sanyuanli was the first instance of retained land in Guangzhou. In [Source 187 (王蒙徽, 2008)], the former municipal planning director claims it was; [Source 190 (陈兴, 2018), pg. 16] and [Source 191 (黄雯欣, 2017), pg. 11] both masters’ students, claim that other—unnamed—villages benefitted from the practice in the 1980s.

⁶¹[Source 187 (王蒙徽, 2008)]

a sharp contrast with the total expropriation faced by villagers in Lujiazui. Not only would “landless” villagers—those without any farmland left—be the landlords of their own tenements, they would also be the landlords of expansive tracts of retained land.⁶² Ensconced in legislation⁶³ and deep in the hearts of satisfied villagers, Guangzhou’s retained land policy proved hard to change.

Mayor Li’s successor, Lin Shusen 林树森, represented a broad policy shift: at the national level, new legislation promoted the expropriation of villagers; at the provincial level, Guangdong Party Secretary Li Changchun 李长春 campaigned against villages-in-the-city. And in Guangzhou, the newly appointed Mayor Lin supported neither his predecessor’s encouragement to villagers for housing construction nor that to village collectives. In 1998, the municipal party committee forbade the devolution of construction approvals to the townships;⁶⁴ two years later, the municipality found it necessary to reiterate the ban, threatening recalcitrant districts with investigation by the disciplinary apparatus.⁶⁵ By the time Mayor Li’s pro-housing policies were fully rolled back, villagers in places like Zhujiang New City had already made full use of them: in Shipai Village 石牌村, for example, almost every house was rebuilt as a mid-rise tenement.⁶⁶ When Mayor Lin tried to repeal his predecessor’s policy of granting village collectives “retained land” in exchange for land takings, he found this concession hard to rescind. In 2000, Lin met initial success when, citing the statist land practices in the recently enacted national Land Management Law 《土地管理法》 and runaway illegal housing construction at the urban periphery, the municipal people’s congress

⁶²This land was eagerly developed into all manner of housing developments. See [Source 233 (刘梦琴, 2010), pp. 79-90], for a particularly thoroughgoing example.

⁶³《广州市土地管理规定》第十六条

⁶⁴[Source 218 (中共广州市委、广州市人民政府, 1998)]

⁶⁵[Source 219 (广州市城市规划局, 2000)]

⁶⁶[Source 217 (蓝宇蕴, 2003), pp. 156-157]

rescinded the municipal legislation granting villagers retained land.⁶⁷ But even after formal repeal, villager enthusiasm for the land takings policies implemented in Zhujiang New City proved hard to curb.

Indeed, when Mayor Lin set to work developing Guangzhou's University Town 广州大学城 on an island in the Pearl River, the island's villagers (and their local government) asked to be allowed to stay put, yielding up their agricultural land in exchange for retained land on the same island.⁶⁸ The Guangzhou authorities, on the other hand, proposed to move all six villages to a single relocation settlement designed and built by the government, with Executive Vice Provincial Governor Li Hongzhong 李鸿忠 announcing at the outset that the government should persist in ensuring that universities and village settlements not mix in the University Town.⁶⁹ While the villagers were to be granted retained land, it would be in a less valuable location than their original land;⁷⁰ in policies reminiscent of Shanghai's, villagers would be given vocational training and social security, then encouraged to find jobs.⁷¹ In short, the provincial and municipal authorities⁷² sought to ensure that the Guangzhou University Town would *not* have any villages-in-the-city.

The villagers rioted. They stole the official stamps of the land takings team. They traveled to Beijing to complain, successfully pressuring the provincial government to (tem-

⁶⁷[Source 227 (袁秀贤, 2000)]

⁶⁸[Source 221 (王蒙徽, 2010), pp. 146-147]

⁶⁹[Source 188 (林树森, 2013), pp. 548]. This plan appears to have been formally pronounced to the villagers in 2002 [Source 262 (李公明, 2002)].

⁷⁰See [Source 229 (罗雄、杨静, 2003)] for timing; see [Source 221 (王蒙徽, 2010), pp. 146-147] for location

⁷¹[Source 221 (王蒙徽, 2010), pp. 161-164]

⁷²The key role of now-Minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Development Wang Menghui 王蒙徽 should not be overlooked: he served as Guangzhou's Planning Director during the planning of University Town and was then transferred to serve as District Magistrate of Panyu District, where the University Town is located, during the land takings process. His extensive discussion of the University Town land takings and resettlement policies in his book on landless peasants suggests that this was a formative part of his career. See [Source 221 (王蒙徽, 2010)].

porarily) rescind the project's land approvals and the *People's Daily* to publicize their legal complaints.⁷³ The Guangzhou authorities stepped back to listen, then forcibly imposed a new plan:⁷⁴ four village settlements would be allowed to remain, while a majority of villagers—and all of their retained land—would be relocated off the island.⁷⁵ The result seems to have been satisfactory to neither the villagers nor the municipality. The city granted the villagers retained land—at the generous 15% ratio traditional in Panyu District, rather than the 10% that would have been the upper bound under the municipal statute that was by then repealed!—but put it in such a distant location as to be essentially worthless for years to come. (Furthermore, it took many years for Guangzhou to extract the appropriate paperwork for the retained land from higher level governments, and then another decade for Guangzhou to actually grant much of that land to the villages themselves.⁷⁶) The city also allowed some villagers to remain on their original housing plots, and indeed those villagers seem to have gradually claimed more and more housing land—in flagrant disregard of the original plans for carefully regulated village housing.⁷⁷ Under these circumstances, the University Town case should serve as something of a barometer of just how stingy Guangzhou's government can be, while still successfully extracting villagers' farmlands in a hurry. While the Guangzhou authorities' concessions clearly tarnished their plans for a University Town unsullied by villagers, they still were able to move the bulk of villagers off the island, to

⁷³[Source 188 (林树森, 2013), pp. 549-550]; [Source 228 (, 2004)]

⁷⁴ [Li et al., 2014, 427-428]. It has proven extremely difficult to nail down the precise sequence of events. Because villager objections were drawn out, it is not clear at precisely which stage of resistance the government granted concessions.

⁷⁵[Source 221 (王蒙徽, 2010), pp. 146-147]

⁷⁶[Source 225 (广州市土地利用发展中心, 2018)]; [Source 226 (陈剑, 2016)]; [Source 221 (王蒙徽, 2010), pg. 167]

⁷⁷[Source 221 (王蒙徽, 2010), pg. 148-151]; [Source 224 (刘毅华, 陈浩龙, 林彰平, 吴大放, 2015), pg. 131-132]

contain village settlements within prescribed boundaries, to deny villagers retained land in economically valuable locations, and to limit villager housing construction to a modest three-to-four stories. In short, they appear to have pushed many of the villagers to near penury.⁷⁸ The result is certainly messier than what the Shanghai government might have achieved—there *are* four villages-in-the-city in University Town, they are *not* manicured, and they *do* rent housing to students—but the distributive outcome resembles (and in fact may be more stingy than) Shanghai’s Minhang model.

Even the hard-won restraints on villages-in-the-city accomplished in the University Town project proved evanescent. Retained land, which was still offered to villagers in that project even after its legislative foundations were repealed, was formalized again in the mid-2000s when Guangdong province issued regulations encouraging the practice. Villagers had, often enough, simply refused to give up their land without being granted some form of retained land in return.⁷⁹ In retirement, Mayor Lin reflected on his failure to repeal retained land: “In the past, Guangzhou studied Dongguan, letting villages and towns undertake real estate development, leaving behind many collectively financed houses 集资房 and plenty of conflicts. There’s nothing wrong with giving villagers benefits, but the conversion of villagers to citizens couldn’t keep up, and in the end it simply became a matter of letting the villagers retain land. Moreover, the policy had been legislated by the [municipal] people’s congress, so to change it now would be very difficult. Land is so valuable, so getting it back from the villagers would be very difficult. At the time, it was all about building more houses and using real estate development to modernize the city; [...] in the end, it couldn’t be undone.”⁸⁰

⁷⁸[Source 232 (, 2019)]

⁷⁹[Source 192 (杨秀琴、阮伟致、江华, 2005), pg. 15]

⁸⁰[Source 188 (林树森, 2013), pg. 52]

2.3 Corralling the Village Housing Boom

With the start of reforms, villages in both Guangzhou and Shanghai experienced massive housing booms under similar regulatory guidance, and both showed signs of becoming tenement districts for migrants. In the early 1990s, the two cities diverged: Guangzhou leveraged this real estate frenzy to turn landless villagers into landlords and thereby solve its land takings problem, while Shanghai effectively clamped down on village housing construction to ease the transition of village farmers to urban workers.

The Guangzhou policy made land takings easy for the government—but left it unable to monopolize the supply or planning of downtown land. Under new leadership, the Guangzhou government reversed course in the late 1990s, seeking to squelch the village housing boom and promote municipal control over land. The partial success of this effort suggests that leadership preferences played a key role in the development (or not) of villages-in-the-city; conversely, the partial failure of this effort suggests that local culture or path dependency did constrain the realization of leadership preferences.

The Shanghai policy allowed the government to monopolize the supply and planning of downtown land—but proved a major impediment to land takings. To understand how Shanghai wrestled with the ensuing problems, we have to take a step back in time to explore the development of the (village) collective.

3 Building the Collective—or Not

China’s “rural” collectives have their roots in China’s socialist past, when they distributed meager collective profits to villagers. In the locales where they have survived or

been revived, they today manage the land and enterprises held by villager small groups, villages, townships, and towns. Because they hold ownership rights to village land and because they constitute an organized economic actor with which the government can bargain, they play a major role in representing villagers during land takings. But their existence should not be taken for granted: they do not exist in all “rural” areas; their organization varies greatly across space; and they have been reorganized at different stages during the urbanization process in different locales.

Shortly after the Communist Party came to power, villagers were organized into collectives, first among small groups, then at the village level, and ultimately at the town (township) level. During the Great Leap Forward, village collectives were renamed brigades 大队 and town (township) collectives were renamed communes 公社, with government and economic administration unified in a single organization at each level. Even as individual economic activity grew, these organizations survived the first few years of the Reform Period. In 1983, however, the central government ordered the separation of governmental and economic responsibilities in rural areas, declaring that “the primary responsibility at present is to separate government and economic organizations [and] establish township governments [...]; in accordance with the needs of production and the willingness of the masses, economic organizations should also be gradually established.”⁸¹ In general, brigades were converted back to villages while communes were converted back to towns and townships.

Renaming communes as townships proved more simple than separating their government and economic responsibilities. In 1986, the central government was still complaining that “Township governments should support township economic organizations to work au-

⁸¹[Source 87 (中共中央、国务院, 1983)]

tonomously, but they should not take over responsibility for the economic activities of the economic organization, and they most certainly should not allow the economic organization to become a [government] administrative entity.⁸² This difficulty in reorganizing the rural collective economy should come as no surprise. These township and village collectives held significant assets with complicated practical arrangements: many of the enterprises they “owned” were established and operated by entrepreneurs seeking the political protection afforded by affiliation with the collective economy, but many others were actually long-standing businesses run by the townships and villages themselves—or, in the reform period, contracted out to their managers. As is so often the case in post-socialist transitions, ownership and operation were muddled.

So, too, was the distribution of any profits that somehow made it through the ownership muddle to the villagers. Under socialism, collective profits had been distributed in an evolving series of often quite complicated procedures.⁸³ One way or another, these procedures made reference to the work contributed by individual villagers; now that villagers were working on their own and the collective profit was coming from the management of a select few, how were profits to be distributed? If villagers became urban citizens, should they still receive profits from the collectives with which they were formerly affiliated? Those earning the profits were in no rush to find out the answers.

Matters tended to come to a head when managers wanted more capital, villagers complained of inequitable distribution, or higher levels of government sought to take the village’s land and disband the entity altogether. In the first two cases, and increasingly in the last as

⁸²[Source 89 (中共中央、国务院, 1986)]

⁸³[Unger, 1984]

well, the go-to solution was to form a shareholding company or cooperative, in which each member holds a clearly specified number of shares and hence a clearly specified share of the dividends.

3.1 Guangzhou's Collectives

Guangzhou's earliest village collective to reorganize as a shareholding corporation—and one of the earliest in the country—stemmed from disgruntled villagers. Yangji Village 杨箕村, then just on the edge of Guangzhou's rapidly expanding urban core, had seen its land gradually requisitioned by the local government. In exchange, the village was granted a quota of villagers who could be converted to urban workers; villagers competed for that quota, and military veterans, Party members, and the relatives of village cadres tended to win the right to urban jobs. By 1986, however, Yangji Village's collective-owned enterprises were earning impressive profits, and the average village laborer was raking in over 7600 RMB a year in dividends, many times the salaries of the villagers-cum-urban workers. The villagers-cum-workers returned to the village office to petition and stage sit-ins, demanding that they be converted back to villagers. To justify their distributive claims, they pointed out that they, too, had contributed to building up the collective's assets, so they should be eligible for dividends. The district government and the village leadership agreed to appraise the village's assets and then distribute shares to villagers in proportion to the number of years they had worked in the village.⁸⁴

Soon after, neighboring Dengfeng Village 登峰村's leadership wanted to build a hotel using the village's assets. The village collective did not have enough money, however, so

⁸⁴[Source 61 (苏卓勋, 2015)]

the village cadres invested some of their own money and expected other villagers to follow suit. They did not. Instead, they complained that it was “not clear to whom the village’s tens of millions of RMB in collective assets belong; if we invest in this we’re investing in a leaky basket, and we’re liable to come up empty handed.” Some went so far as to suggest disbanding the collective. Drawing on their experience in Yangji Village, district cadres suggested that Dengfeng Village also form a collective, this time with extra shares for those who invested cash. By the end of 1991, all the villages in Tianhe District (future home to the Zhujiang New City) had formed shareholding cooperatives,⁸⁵ and the shareholding cooperative system soon took almost universal hold across villages in the Pearl River Delta.

3.2 Shanghai’s Collectives

In the 1980s, Shanghai’s collective economy put Guangzhou’s to shame.⁸⁶ In 1986, Shanghai’s township collective enterprises earned 19 RMB of gross income per villager, while its village collective enterprises earned 10 RMB of gross income per villager.⁸⁷ Guangzhou, by contrast, clocked in at 3.4 RMB per villager and 3.7 RMB per villager, respectively.⁸⁸ Still, to the extent that Shanghai tinkered with shareholding collectives in the 1980s, it was only ever to raise capital, and then careful efforts were made to ensure that local officials always maintained a controlling stake.⁸⁹

⁸⁵[Source 61 (苏卓勋, 2015)]

⁸⁶See [Whiting, 2001, White, 1998] for more.

⁸⁷《上海统计年鉴1987年》

⁸⁸《广州统计年鉴1987年》 In the Guangzhou numbers, I have excluded Longmen, Xinfeng, Qingyuan, and Fogang counties, which were later removed from Guangzhou’s territory. Because of the confusion caused by the conversion of communes to district offices and then to towns and townships, I have taken the liberty here of referring to district office-owned collective enterprises as town and township enterprises, while I refer to town and township enterprises (which would later become village enterprises) as village enterprises.

⁸⁹ [Whiting, 2001, pp. 155-159]

In the 1990s, a smattering of Shanghai villages began to demand the establishment of shareholding companies to manage village collective assets. An early case was Hongguang Village 华漕镇虹光村 in Minhang, where conflict developed over the assets of a village slated for dissolution; a shareholding company was created to resolve the problem. Much more widely heralded were the village shareholding companies formed by villages in Hongqiao Town 虹桥镇 (near to but distinct from the Hongqiao Airport) after village land was taken by the government. Villagers who had been converted to urban workers were unwilling to leave their land compensation payments in the village, and shareholding companies were created in response.⁹⁰ By 1996, every village in Hongqiao Town had formed a shareholding corporation, with villagers receiving an average of 9,754 RMB per person in dividends that year.⁹¹

At the same time, Hongqiao Town designated 130,000 m² as retained land for each village and began relocating the villagers themselves to new suburban communities. This yielded villagers who had lost all their farmland and—in many cases—their residential land as well, but through their village collective shareholding corporation were landlords over a sizable chunk of land. The village collectives developed commercial buildings on their land, and by 2012 were landlords for 80% of the commercial floorspace in Hongqiao Town.⁹² Subject to urban planning restrictions, these were not villages-in-the-city. But they were substantial assets in the hands of village collectives.

But Hongqiao, and Minhang more broadly, were the exception. Shanghai did not issue a policy on forming village shareholding collectives until 1996, and then only as an option

⁹⁰[Source 200 (刘明 (口述)、袁锡发 何文滨 王静 (采访), 2018), pg. 12]. See [Source 162 (朱龙铭、须建新, 1994)] for the first case, in Jiading in 1992.

⁹¹[Source 103 (陈建萍, 1997), pg. 41]

⁹²[Source 105 (程振兴, 2014), pg. 132]; [Source 104 (周建邦, 1999), pg. 23]

for villages that were being dissolved, generally as a result of land takings.⁹³ Shanghai rarely offered retained land to villagers until the mid 2000s.⁹⁴ Indeed, of Shanghai's 50 wealthiest village collectives in 2006, 33 were in Minhang District (of which 7 were in Hongqiao Town).

What about the rest of Shanghai? Pudong provides an instructive—if also exceptional—example. Like Hongqiao Town, it is on prime real estate: Hongqiao Town is in the rapidly developing Hongqiao area of western Shanghai; Pudong is the rapidly developing eastern area of Shanghai. Pudong's downtown at Lujiazui, moreover, corresponds in importance to Guangzhou's Zhujiang New City and Shenzhen's Futian Central Business District—but only the latter two remain checkered with villages-in-the-city and both of which are home to strong village collectives, while Lujiazui has neither.

As outlined above, Pudong's leadership sought to demolish villages and convert villagers into urban workers, and implemented policies to that end. By the mid-1990s, the Pudong leadership admitted that their policies were not working. Pudong Party Secretary Zhao Qizheng 赵启正 asked Fei Xiaotong 费孝通, the famous sociologist and then vice chairman of the national people's congress, to help Pudong understand how to modernize its villagers at the same rapid pace it was modernizing its land.⁹⁵ Fei was impressed by Zhao's invitation to study modernization and urbanization, but he was not impressed by what he found on the ground: in the Jinqiao Export Processing Zone 金桥出口加工区, 6,000 of the 9,600 villagers whose land had been taken were still being paid to wait for job assignments,⁹⁶ while villagers'

⁹³[Source 102 (上海市人民政府, 1996)]. The policy further required that villages hand 30-50% of their land takings compensation over to the township. In the 2010s, Shanghai has finally begun to encourage villages and even townships to form shareholding corporations. [Source 145 (方志权, 2014)]; [Source 203 (, 2017)]

⁹⁴[Source 202 (李荣, 2005)]. See also [Source 150 (孙雷, 2017)]; [Source 151 (唐周绍, 2017)].

⁹⁵[Source 177 (赵启正, 2018), pg. 34]

⁹⁶[Source 167 (熊月之 (主纂), 2005), pg. 11]

hopes of getting rich had been dashed.⁹⁷ Reflecting on his time in Pudong many years later, Zhao dejectedly placed blame squarely on the villagers: “Some Pudong villagers were picky about what work they would do [...]. Why were they willing to take subsidies but not to accept our offers of work? They wanted to do some relaxed work that didn’t require showing up on time. The land was originally theirs, and taking their land fundamentally changed their fate; they had already made all the contribution they could make to Pudong. In the process of development, Pudong obviously ought to thoroughly attend to their interests.”⁹⁸

The students Fei sent to conduct fieldwork in Pudong were less generous to the government. They found that villagers whose land had been taken were left unemployed because the government land companies taking land were designed only to flip land, not to employ laborers; much as in Guangzhou in the early 1980s, the government could not assign workers to private, foreign enterprises.⁹⁹ Whereas in Guangzhou the government had jettisoned the idea of work assignments, introducing cash payments and facilitating the development of villages-in-the-city, Pudong’s leadership in 1995 called for a “train project” (列车工程) in which the government land companies would serve as locomotives pulling along towards wealth and modernization the towns in which they had taken land.¹⁰⁰ A key component of this project was to rescue Pudong’s township and village enterprises.

When the Pudong New District was formally established in 1992, its collective enterprises were strong. Pudong’s township collectives had 130 RMB of gross income per villager and its village collectives had 92 RMB of gross income per villager, compared to Shanghai’s

⁹⁷[Source 163 (费孝通, 1997), pg. 7]

⁹⁸[Source 177 (赵启正, 2018), pp. 33-34]

⁹⁹[Source 206 (刘学勇、李友梅, 2005), pg. 101]

¹⁰⁰[Source 177 (赵启正, 2018), pg. 35]

overall average of 87 RMB and 51 RMB, respectively.¹⁰¹ But these collective enterprises wilted as Pudong was built up. First, the simple act of taking village land and disbanding village organizations resulted in many village collective enterprises disbanding as well.¹⁰² Second, when land was taken, collective enterprises had to be relocated. Township and village collectives had often contributed land—and nothing more than land—to enterprises, which acknowledged the investment by granting the collective an ownership stake—that is, by becoming collective enterprises.¹⁰³ Now, the government land companies had replaced the township and village collectives as the landlord, and they refused to waste land on inefficient or low-end enterprises, effectively excluding township and village enterprises from the very towns and villages which owned them.¹⁰⁴

Most of the “train project” program sought to work around rather than change these impediments to township and village enterprise development. Township and village enterprises would be encouraged—perhaps even receive financing—to move to neighboring areas or allowed to stay put until they were kicked out by actual (rather than planned) development. As Fei’s student Li Youmei 李友梅 narrates, these schemes crashed into the cynicism and fatalism that the first few years of Pudong’s development had fostered in Pudong’s township and village cadres, entrepreneurs, and villagers.¹⁰⁵

The last component of the “train project” called for the government land companies to cooperate with township and village enterprises to develop actual projects—something very similar to retained land. This succeeded at making collective enterprises wealthy. But the

¹⁰¹ 上海统计年鉴1993年（农村乡镇企业主要指标、主要年份农村户数、人口及劳动力）；上海浦东新区统计年鉴（农村合作经济总收入、人口数）

¹⁰² [Source 144 (王钢, 2000), pg. 32]

¹⁰³ [Source 206 (刘学勇、李友梅, 2005), pg. 100]

¹⁰⁴ See [Source 205 (朱晓明, 2018)], especially pg. 174, for a particularly proud example.

¹⁰⁵ [Source 206 (刘学勇、李友梅, 2005)]

wealth did not make it down to the villagers. Leaning heavily on Li Youmei's exceptional fieldwork, I focus here on Yanqiao Town's Youyou Corporation 由由集团; at first blush, its trajectory appears quite similar to that of neighboring Qinyang Town 钦洋镇's less well-documented Guangyang Corporation 广洋集团. The two towns constituted the bulk of the land that was to become Lujiazui.

The Youyou Corporation stemmed from Yanqiao Town's reorganization of its collective assets in 1992, but its famous brand had its roots in a restaurant the town had founded in 1987 and grown into the premier hospitality venue in Pudong.¹⁰⁶ As part of its reorganization, in the early 1990s, the Youyou Corporation was converted to a shareholding corporation in which all villagers in the township were granted shares—just what share they had varies greatly from one report to the next.¹⁰⁷ The Lujiazui government land company selected the Youyou Corporation as a partner, hoping that they could use the land takings compensation funds owed the collective to develop land in accordance with Lujiazui's planning, thereby turning a profit and resolving the long-term financial problems of the expropriated villagers.¹⁰⁸ Youyou's first major real estate project was the Youyou New Village 由由新村, a resettlement area for expropriated villagers.¹⁰⁹ Yet they were not all Yanqiao Villagers—indeed in 1998 a majority were not—raising questions among Yanqiao's natives

¹⁰⁶See [Source 207 (李友梅, 1999), pg. 90]. Indeed, the ceremonial establishment of the government land companies was held at the Youyou Hotel [Source 208 (王安德 (口述)、马婉 (整理), 2020), pg. 17]!

¹⁰⁷[Source 164 (浦东新区区委区政府办公室, 2001)] claims that the villagers held 60% of the shares, investors another 10%, and the collective (the town government) 30%; [Source 207 (李友梅, 1999)] claims that 30% of the shares were held by individuals (of which one-third were held by villagers who had invested cash and two-thirds were the result of an appraisal of the township's collective assets), while the remaining 70% were held by the collective itself; [Source 172 (季明, 2006)] describes the process primarily as one in which villagers bought shares, starting at no less than 1000 RMB per purchase. As late as 2005, [Source 209 (龚绘, 2005), pg. 48], claimed that 63.5% of the company's shares were owned by original residents of Yanqiao. The Guangyang Corporation also distributed shares to villagers. [Source 114 (浦正为, 1995), pg. 45]

¹⁰⁸[Source 208 (王安德 (口述)、马婉 (整理), 2020), pg. 18]

¹⁰⁹[Source 121 (, 2008)]; [Source 122 (, 2008)]

(that is, Youyou’s shareholders) about why the company was providing welfare for villagers from elsewhere.¹¹⁰ Indeed, again and again, Youyou was obligated to finance the projects of the town government even if they were not clearly in the shareholders’ interests.

Grumbling aside, the Youyou Corporation and Yanqiao Town’s other corporate holdings were a wild success. The value of their output soared from 291 million RMB in 1992 to 1.2 billion RMB in 1999. Meanwhile, village and small group collective output crashed, plummeting from 279 million RMB in 1992 to only 90 million RMB in 1999.¹¹¹ Indeed, Yanqiao’s villages were disbanded and replaced by dispatched offices of the town government.¹¹²

Had Youyou remained a collective enterprise, it might have served a purpose similar to that served by village collectives in Guangzhou and Minhang. By 2000, Youyou was offering 3,000 RMB/year in dividends to its “average shareholder,”¹¹³ a substantial figure, but far less than the dividends paid out in Minhang or Guangzhou’s Tianhe. But Youyou—and its neighbor, Guangyang—were privatized.

Why were the town collectives privatized when village collectives were not? Both town and village collectives are township and village enterprises, but Shanghai had divided policymaking for town collectives and village collectives between the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission and the Agricultural Commission, respectively.¹¹⁴ While the Agricultural Commission continued to half-heartedly promote the formation of shareholder cooperatives for village collectives, the national policy for state-owned assets,

¹¹⁰[Source 207 (李友梅, 1999), pg. 93]

¹¹¹[Source 124 (, 2008)]

¹¹²[Source 207 (李友梅, 1999), pg. 91]

¹¹³[Source 171 (, 2001)]

¹¹⁴Guangzhou did not separate town and village collectives, leaving all township and village enterprises first under a Township and Village Enterprises Bureau and then under the Agricultural Commission [Source 154 (中共广州市委组织部编, 2012)].

and hence Shanghai's policy for town collectives, was to hold onto large firms and let go the small ones 抓大放小. Shanghai's policy called for the owners of collective enterprises to "respect the autonomous restructuring choices of small enterprises," including supporting privatization.¹¹⁵ In short, Yanqiao Town, and its successor Huamu Town 花木镇, were not to stand in the way if Youyou's management wanted to buy out the company.

But Youyou was managed by the Yanqiao Town Party Secretary, Shan Jiaming 山佳明. Shan had always been an enthusiastic promoter of Youyou, implementing new restructuring reforms as each came into fashion,¹¹⁶ and indeed he had been enthusiastic about the need to protect the interests of villagers by making sure they were shareholders.¹¹⁷ Now, he was just as effective at privatizing Youyou. As the company got richer, its share price fell, facilitating its gradual takeover by management and private investors from 1999 to 2003.¹¹⁸ The company's longstanding shortcomings were said to have come to the fore, justifying its buyback of 300 million collective shares at 1.9 RMB per share, so as to be free of the confines of town government interference.¹¹⁹ Shortly after these transactions, the company's valuation shot back up.¹²⁰ In the end, the company that held the villagers' land compensation was owned by its employees (many of whom were indeed former villagers) and by individual investors—including Shan Jiaming—with no evidence of any remaining shares in the hands of villagers who did not work for the company.¹²¹

¹¹⁵[Source 152 (上海市人民政府, 1999)]; see also [Source 153 (上海市国有资产管理办公室、上海市集体企业产权界定办公室, 2002)]

¹¹⁶[Source 164 (浦东新区区委区政府办公室, 2001)]

¹¹⁷[Source 161 (山佳明, 1997), pg. 37]

¹¹⁸The same happened to the Guangyang Corporation. [Source 142 (薛明, 2007)]

¹¹⁹[Source 170 (, 2001)]

¹²⁰[Source 142 (薛明, 2007)]

¹²¹Shan Jiaming, about whom many a glowing panegyric has been written, maintains that he turned down the option to privatize the company. Corporate records and the total absence of references to villager dividends after the early 2000s suggest otherwise. See [Source 210 (何建明, 2019)] for a particularly poetic panegyric; see public corporate registration records for evidence that all shares owned by the town

3.3 The Landless Landlord Peasant—or just the Landless Peasant

While village collectives do not often build villages-in-the-city, they play a key role in their management and preservation and can be decisive in organizing distributive politics. In Guangzhou, local governments urged the creation of village shareholding companies to solve distributive and fundraising problems, then endowed these village collectives with retained land. Even as villagers' agricultural land was taken, they remained landlords not only of their personal rental properties but also of the collective's valuable urban land resources. Shanghai, on the other hand, developed collective shareholding companies much later. In Minhang, where *village* shareholding companies were developed before land was taken and retained land was granted to the village collective, villagers again remained landlords even after their agricultural land was taken. But in Pudong, where shareholding companies were formed at the *town* level, the shareholding company served as only a temporary protection against land expropriation;¹²² within a decade, the company itself and its valuable land holdings, meant as compensation for expropriated villagers, were in private hands. The villagers were truly landless.

4 Conclusion

Shanghai has made modernity its calling card. When its urbanization encountered villagers, it sought to urbanize them—to modernize them. When it succeeded, it made

government were sold to private investors (including Shan Jiaming) in 2003, leaving the company 53% owned by a small handful of individuals and 47% owned by its employees (many of whom were, indeed, former villagers).

¹²²See the work of Sally Sargeson and Zhang Jian on Zhejiang for an interesting case in which the provincial government proved unable to enforce community control over township collectives due to the resistance of township cadres [Sargeson and Zhang, 1999].

them common citizens; quite often, though, it failed. Sometimes, it simply insisted that they not tarnish the modern image, allowing them to muddle through by eking out adequate profits from tiny village-in-the-city slums, all while the city officials proclaimed that villagers had eagerly handed over their land for free in support of modernization¹²³ or that town collectives were providing generously for the expropriated villagers. When Shanghai has admitted to having slums, they have been in historic urban neighborhoods. And scholars have obliged: there are hardly any studies of Shanghai's few villages-in-the-city, where migrants are packed in like sardines, (or studies asking where the migrants live instead), nor have scholars looked closely at why Shanghai has so few villages-in-the-city in the first place. Guangzhou's government has tended to emphasize its migrant communities and wealthy villagers—sometimes framing them as successes and sometimes as failures—and scholars have again followed the government's lead.

This study attempts to explain why Shanghai's modernization has come at such a cost to villagers, while Guangzhou's has been a boon to them.¹²⁴ Shanghai's insistence on modernization appears to be the answer both to why this question has not been studied and to the question itself. Villages were to be modernized, and that meant demolition; villagers were to be modernized, and that meant urban employment. Guangzhou's pragmatic land takings policy, meanwhile, built up powerful village landlords that could bargain with the city over future land takings. These different outlooks on urbanization yielded different access to the city for migrant workers and a radically different balance of power between

¹²³[Source 128 (,)]

¹²⁴Indeed, villagers subject to land takings in Guangzhou in the early 2000s—when land takings policy was at its most conservative!—gained average annual income of 1,430 RMB. [Source 192 (杨秀琴、阮伟致、江华, 2005), pg.14]. In Shanghai, it was a mixed bag, with 37.5% of villagers experiencing a loss of income and 58.8% getting richer. [Source 175 (陈映芳, 2003), pg. 33]

villagers and the government.

These conceptions of modernization are a product of leaders' decisions in the face of local traditions and path dependencies. Shanghai's proactive decision to prevent village housing development in the early 1990s and Guangzhou's decision to promote it—and then discourage it—show how instrumental municipal leadership could be in making land takings policies that in turn had real impacts on the development of villages-in-the-city. Indeed, the University Town and Minhang District cases show that each city was capable of implementing policies that more closely resembled the norm in the other city, reinforcing the impression that their policy divergence was a *decision*, not an inevitability. Still, the vehement objections of villagers to Guangzhou's stingy land takings policy in University Town show clearly the substantial costs that villagers could impose on policies that diverged from local traditions or policy norms.

This tortuous origin story of villages-in-the-city, then, admits a simple summary: villages-in-the-city are products of land takings policy; local leaders choose from a broad range of implementable land takings policies, although they are indeed constrained by local traditions and path dependencies to some degree.

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