

RESEARCH SEMINAR

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Life After Resettlement in Urban China: State-led Community Building as a Reterritorialization Strategy

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Resettlement so far has been conceptualized as large-scale form of displacement taking place within a short time frame. This study attempts to reinterpret resettlement as a two-stage process involving both the deterritorialization and reterritorialization of residents by shedding light on the processes and challenges involved in rebuilding the sense of community of residents after being resettled. Drawing on the case of a relocation settlement in Shanghai, I find that the Chinese state is heavily involved in reterritorializing residents because of its desire to consolidate its influence at the grassroots level and the practical necessity to assist tens of millions of resettled residents who lack access to essential amenities and services. The state uses a mechanism which I describe as state-led community building to attempt to rebuild the sense of community of resettled residents in a way that also renders residents more governable. In practice, this involves increasing the number and power of residential committees and fostering resident volunteering and participation through community organisations and events. State-led community building works relatively well on retired urban residents but fails to attract other resident groups including rural and working migrant residents.

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Zheng Wang is a lecturer at the Department of Urban Studies and Planning, The University of Sheffield. His research interests include neighbourly relations and neighbourhood governance as well as the urban governance and long-term social impacts of large-scale urban development projects in urban China. He was the recipient of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Early Career Award 2017 and has published in journals including *Antipode*, *Environment and Planning A*, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* and *Urban Studies*.



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