UNIVERSITY OF
LIVERPOOL

Urban community formation through local civic petitions that occurred in Chinese Commodity Housing Estates

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy

By

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June 2019

Abstract

The on-going production of new Chinese urbanism and the increasing construction of commodity housing estates has resulted in changes to the urban social order. The academic community has identified the deterioration and disappearance of placed-based ties within urban neighbourhoods. The rise in property-led civic actions that originated in Chinese commodity housing estates provides a potential linkage between urban community formation and local civic action. The homeowners use local social networks and local civic capacity to confront property infringements by either public or private forces. Such linkages have rarely been investigated from either theoretical or empirical perspectives; at least within the Chinese context.

This thesis begins to fill this gap by developing a conceptual model for understanding and exploring the urban community formation through local property-led civic petitions that has been occurring in Chinese commodity housing estates. A network analysis approach was deployed in four embedded cases situated within two cities, Nanjing and Huai'an. The formation of urban communities in Chinese commodity housing estates was evaluated by exploring the importance of local social capital and how it evolved through the multiple steps of four civic petitions. The data for this research was drawn from an analysis of the four civic petitions' documents, semi-structured interviews with key actors and questionnaires delivered to local residents within the four case study commodity housing estates.

The research highlights how community development can be enhanced through local civic petitions. Although the level of community formation and development amongst the four case studies is different, they all demonstrate that there is an important role for civic petitions to play in promoting predominantly local neighbourhood based social capital through the development and enhancement of local social networks. The conceptual model used herein illustrates the mutual affecting influences that exist between local social capital and local civic action, and highlights the influential mechanisms that exist in developing a stronger sense of neighbourhood. This is argued, is enabled by the interplay that occurs between the involvement of local residents, and the behaviour of petition opponents and arbitrators to the application of local organisational social networks. It is concluded that place based civic petitions with commodity housing estates could play a role in helping to recreate a place-based community life, which has been eroded in recent years.

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List of Acronyms

CCHEs	Chinese Commodity Housing Estates
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CIDs	Community-interest developments
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HOAs	Homeowners' Associations
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
PMCs	Property Management Companies
RDs	Real Estate Developers

Chapter One

Introduction

Since the 'Open Door' reform started in 1978, China has experienced high-speed transition compared with the period of Socialist authoritarianism; there has been 'increased productivity and rapid economic growth' (Harvey, 2007, p.120). Astonishing new modern images and tremendous economic outcomes have emerged in many Chinese cities as a result of this reform, which is full of neo-liberal characteristics (Zhou and Ma, 2000). At the same time, Chinese urban society has experienced dynamic change. The modern urban residential units that have been produced can be characterised as being highly heterogeneous following the restructuring of the centralised planned economy work based units which were more homogeneous, especially when combined with rural-urban migration flows (Bian and Logan, 1996; Hu and Chan, 2012). These social changes in urban China have become a focus of interest for Chinese and Western academics resulting in an explosion of empirical studies. At the urban micro scale, the commercialisation of urban housing, since 1990s, has become regarded as the main factor that has created new Chinese new urbanism and consequential tremendous social change (He and Wu, 2007; He, 2015a; Wu, 2015). As a result of booming commodity housing development, Chinese Commodity Housing Estates (CCHEs) are frequently studied in order to reflect the social changes that have occurred at the urban micro level, with especial focus being on the roles played by market mechanism in restructuring Chinese urban society (Read, 2003; Li and Huang, 2006; He and Wu, 2007; Fu and Lin, 2014; He, 2015b; Wang, 2016). Progressive replacement of traditional courtyard neighbourhoods and the decline of socialist workers' villages have resulted in many empirical studies bemoaning the deterioration of social cohesion and the destructive consequences of CCHEs on social capital. The deteriorating sense of local community life combined with an upsurge in individualistic mind-sets leading to an enhanced wish to remain anonymous has been popularised in contemporary Chinese urbanism (Li and Huang, 2006; He and Wu, 2007; Bray, 2005; Li *et al.,* 2012; Zhu *et al.,* 2012; He, 2015a). Based on these empirical evidences and academic discussions, there emerged a common academic belief that urban neighbourhoods with place-based community life no longer really

exist in contemporary urban China, and this is associated with the continued boom of CCHEs in Chinese cities (Wang, 2005; Li and Huang, 2006; Xu *et al.,* 2005; Zhu *et al.,* 2012;s Tani *et al.*, 2014;).

However, in contrast to this lost community argument in contemporary urban China, there appears to be a growing realisation that, within CCHEs, urban communities can be reformed or restructured through local civic engagements (Read, 2003; Fu and Lin, 2014; Wang and Goodman, 2014), as citizen's resistances and desires for common goods or local autonomy is enhanced in this reform era (Davis *et al.*, 1995; Teets, 2014, 2015). Although few, if any, empirical studies have examined homeowners' civic engagements, such civic engagement may be creating a new socio-spatial order in individual CCHEs, and motivating individuals to collectively enhance local social networks in their neighbourhoods, as well as highlighting local residents collective willingness to spontaneously and collaboratively solve their common problems (Webster, 2003). If civic engagement is defined as "the collective pursuit of community goods" then it follows that, place-based community life can be reformed with residents enlarging the number of their local acquaintances and enhancing cooperation through civic engagement. This can be highly relevant for improvements in social cohesion and social capital (Adler and Goggin, 2005; Wu, 2012). Studying grassroots' civic engagements in CCHEs may be helpful in developing a better understanding of the latest urban neighbourhood developments in urban China, as well as the logic in developing urban social sustainability and civic development within China's new urbanism. Ideally, even with the individualism and anonymity in CCHEs, grassroots' civic engagement could be positive in forming, or restructuring, urban communities with the emergence of Homeowners' Associations (HOAs) as local voluntary organisations. Such local issues in CCHEs suggest that many individuals are proactively seeking a new spatial pattern and order at the urban micro scale. As Park (1925, p.25) stated:

> 'The urban community is a spatial pattern and a moral order, in which every individual finds himself in a struggle for status, a struggle to preserve his personal prestige, his point of view, and his self-respect'.

1.1 The formation of urban community within civic engagements

Concerns relating to urban communities, urban neighbourhoods, and

neighbourliness have a long history in social policy, sociology, (and specifically urban sociology) which dates from the first half of the 20th century (Park, 1925, 1936; Hillery, 1959; Hallman, 1984; Putnam, 1995; Mayer, 2003; Letki, 2008; Dempsey *et al.,* 2011; Fincher *et al.,* 2014; Wu and Logan, 2016; Clark *et al.,* 2017). Concerns were raised as to how and whether there could be consistent transitions in social order at the urban neighbourhood spatial level, as the traditional ties of community have been replaced by anonymity, individualism, and competition as a consequence of the rampant urbanisation and globalisation of the past 100 years (Wellman and Leighton, 1979; Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Cheong *et al.,* 2007; Zwiers *et al.,* 2016). Consequently, academic arguments proffered have included that communities ties were being lost. This, it was suggested was indicated by the weakening of primary ties and the dependence of individuals on the formal organisations which, it was further argued, used to flourish in traditional urban life (Park, 1925; Wirth, 1938; Wellman and Leighton, 1979). Moreover, even within the original context of a more fragmented urban society after World War Ⅱ, this academic argument has been widely applied by academics studying urbanism in contemporary developed and developing countries, with similar images of destructive social networks, deteriorating social cohesion, and weakening social capital all being associated with rampant urbanisation globally (Putnam, 1995; Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Mayer, 2003; Bray, 2006; Cheong *et al.,* 2007; Letki, 2008; Dempsey *et al.,* 2011; Fincher *et al.,* 2014; Wu and Logan, 2016; Zwiers *et al.,* 2016; Clark *et al.,* 2017). In urban China, these images of poor neighbourhoods can be also found in newer urban residential compounds following the application of the neo-liberal framework (Lin and Wang, 1988; Bian and Logan, 1996; Deng and Huang, 2004; Huang, 2006; Wang, 2008; Hu and Chan, 2012; Wu, 2015; Zhou *et al.,* 2019).

By contrast, even sharing similar identification of place-based community with the argument of community lost (Keller, 1968; Wellman and Leighton, 1979), there also exists the argument of 'community saved' with demonstrations that the 'urbanites still neighbour, still have sense of community, and still use neighbourhood ties for sociability and support' (Jacobs, 1961, p.113). According to this argument, the urban community tends to be formed, or exists in a single urban residential compound, with multiple strands of strong relationships facilitating

community ties (Wellman and Leighton, 1979). Specifically, as suggested by Jacobs (1961), those tightly bounded relationships among individual residents can be utilised to protect a neighbourhood's common interests, maintain internal social organisations, and the maintenance of social controls on residents, especially 'in the face of powerful impinging external forces' (Wellman and Leighton, 1979). Consequently, an urban community could be explored on the basis of the local acquaintances and social networks that exist among local residents, with neighbourliness involving good social cohesion and strong social capital (Forrest and Kearns, 2001). Existent social capital and social cohesion can be enhanced through collective participation in local neighbouring lives (Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Fukuyama, 2001). For example, as Forrest and Kearns (2001) suggested, the traditional urban community with primary ties has been 'replaced, or simply complemented, by new forms of association in urban neighbourhoods' (p.2), with operationalised social cohesion and social capital in collective civic actions or associational activities.

Theoretically, civic engagement can be highly connected to the restructuring or formation of an urban community, and is academically defined as the citizens' civic awareness and participation in activities designed to achieve a common good for the local neighbourhood (Amin, 2006; Adler and Goggin, 2005; Son and Lin, 2008; Hu and Chang, 2012). The essential feature of civic engagement is that it must 'achieve the common good for the local community', and this 'distinguishes civic engagements from other forms of social action' in cities, and clearly presents collective and territorial attributes (Adler and Goggin, 2005, p.3). It also restricts the equation to all associational activities in individual urban residential compounds, as these activities may not express the local civic virtue (Adler and Goggin, 2005; Schneider, 2007; Son and Lin, 2008; Hu and Chang, 2012). Moreover, civic engagement should be political as it involves 'collectively solving community problems through political process' (Adler and Goggin, 2005, p.3). Regarding these definitions and involved attributes, studying civic engagement could be seen, in summary, as effective for understanding the social changes that have occurred at the urban neighbourhood scale (Adler and Goggin, 2005), as civic engagement demonstrates how citizens participate in community life in order to help shape its future (Carpini *et al.,* 2004; Crowley, 2007). More specifically, with regard to civic

engagement, acquaintances and intergroup cooperation amongst citizens not only reflect an individual's conscious of active citizenship in pursuing common goods, but also reflects the existence of social networks and social capital between individuals (Putnam, 1993; Quan-Haase *et al.,* 2002; Arai and Pedlar, 2003; Mayer, 2003; Sampson *et al.,* 2005; Saegert, 2006; Son and Lin, 2008; Andrews, 2009; Hu and Chan, 2012; Shiller, 2013).

The importance of civic engagement in promoting China's urban social development has been widely recognised (Friedmann, 2000, 2005; Chen and Lu, 2007; Heberer, 2009; Hu and Chan, 2012; Yip *et al.,* 2013; Ma and Li, 2014). Some studies have argued the emergence of civic engagement is a grassroots movement of empowerment which deliver outcomes that enhance social solidarity in both neighbourhoods and the cities more widely (Bray, 2006; Tang and Zhan, 2008; Hu and Chan, 2012; Leggett, 2017; Chen *et al.,* 2017). These positive outcomes from civic engagement are recognised as the start of a reaction to the property-led civic development of commodity housing development at the urban micro level. Some Homeowners' Associations (HOAs), as local voluntary organisations in CCHEs, support such neighbourhood activities by providing organisational social networks that are fundamental to local social capital (Zhang, 2004; He, 2015b; Zhang *et al.,* 2016; Liu *et al.,* 2017; Wang *et al.,* 2017). Therefore, the emergence of civic engagement and local civic organisations in CCHEs can certainly re-enforce the grassroots social order in CCHEs with an ambitious image of community life. To a certain extent, such an image is consistent with the argument as community saved. Therefore, the focus of this research is specifically on evaluating the impact of civic engagements on community formation and restructuring in CCHEs. Potentially, the thesis could be significant and valuable in developing a new framework for studying China's urban transitions at the grassroots scale, and raise further questions concerning urban social sustainable development in Chinese ongoing reform.

Evaluating the impact of civic engagement on community formation and restructuring requires an understanding of the various changes in the social cohesion and social capital of local residents that have occurred through the procedures of civic engagement. Here, it is essential to focus on specific civic engagements within the Chinese social and civil context. As suggested by the empirical evidences, the rising civic petitions appealed by Chinese homeowners

who live in CCHEs are reliable and capable to be evaluated, with their strength in enabling the in-depth observation and evaluation.

1.2 Research aims and objectives

The general research aim of this thesis is to evaluate the impacts of collective civic petitions on the local social capital, which produce the formation, and restructuring, of urban communities in CCHEs.

In addition, several research objectives can be outlined:

1) To understand the changing nature of Chinese new urbanism and growing urban civic development in contemporary China:

- What are the urban changes that have emerged within the Chinese progressive reform process both socially and physically?

- What are the social changes that have occurred in urban neighbourhoods within the context of Chinese new urbanism?

- What are the challenges to neighbourliness in contemporary urban China?

- What are the contemporary conditions of civic development and civil society in urban China?

- What is the critical role of the collective civic petition in current Chinese civic development?

- What is the evidence for rising property-led civic actions in CCHEs?

2) To understand the theoretical linkages between civic engagement and urban community development, and develop a conceptual framework by which to evaluate the impacts of civic engagement on local community formation:

- What are the key themes of place-based community in contemporary world?

- What are the key themes of civic engagement and civic action?

- What are the critical roles of civic engagement in forming or restructuring an urban community?

- How can civic petitions affect the local neighbourliness in CCHEs?

3) To explain the characteristics of residents' civic petitions that have occurred in CCHEs among Chinese cities, and understand whether there are common characteristics have been developed from these collective civic petitions:

- Is there a typology of collective civic petitions occurring in CCHEs among Chinese cities?
- What are the critical roles of collective civic petitions in civic engagement at both the urban scale and the CCHE scale?
- What are the internal civic capacity needs of CCHEs in structuring collective civic petitions?
- What are the spatial connections between collective civic petitions and urban commodity housing development?

4) To evaluate the impacts from collective civic petitions on local social networks and community formation in CCHEs:
- What are the social outcomes that arise from collective civic petitions with regard to promoting local social networks, mainly on the local social networks, from multiple stakeholders' perspectives?
- What are local citizens' reflections on the impact of collective civic petitions on local neighbourhoods?

5) To make policy recommendation for enhancing community based sustainable development in the re-forming and/or re-structuring of urban communities:
- What are the impacts of civic petitions upon local neighbourhoods in CCHEs, including changes that have happened, are happening, and may happen in the future?
- What are the opportunities and constraints that local neighbourhood face in promoting civic engagement?
- How can the formation, or restructuring of an urban community be further enhanced in CCHEs?

1.3 Research strategy

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│                      Part 6: Conclusion                      (Chapter 10) │
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Figure 1.1. Research strategy of the thesis
Source: Author

The research strategy follows an embedded case study paradigm with comparative elements. The rational in applying an embedded case study paradigm is 'the strength of studying processes with bounded social phenomenon' (Bryman, 2012, p.67). The comparative element involves exploring civic petitions in different Chinese cities with the same administrative structures, and exploring how they deal with grassroots resistance with different socio-economic contexts (Sampson *et al.,* 2005; Chen, 2009; Zou, 2009). Figure 1.1 presents an overview of this thesis within the embedded case study paradigm.

After demonstrating the research contexts, the general research aim and research objectives, and the research strategy of this thesis (as Part One), Chapter Two and Three present a further contextual understanding of contemporary Chinese new urbanism and civil society in the reformed era. On the basis of such contextual discussions, Chapter Four further presents a designed conceptual model used to evaluate the impact of civic petitions on local neighbourliness in CCHEs. The model is based on the theoretical linkages that exist between civic engagements and social capital. Based on this contextual understandings and conceptual model, Chapter Five explains the research design of the embedded case study paradigm, with explanations given as to how different steps used contributed to the overall research strategy. Two case cities are selected Nanjing and Huai'an. In Chapter Six, one multi-scalar analysis is applied on the civic petitions that occurred in CCHEs in two case cities. Based on the typology applied, all civic petitions in CCHEs are numerical, statistical, and spatial reviewed in selecting the representative embedded cases that are suitable for the detailed evaluation. Four embedded cases were selected, including two protest petitions against state authorities and two hybrid petitions against Property Management Companies (PMCs). In Chapter Seven and Eight, these four embedded cases were empirically studied by reviewing the changes in local social networks, with consideration being given to the designed conceptual model. Research findings were synthesised from the embedded case studies, and policy recommendations were made for further development in Chapter Nine. Finally, the conclusion of this research is summarized in Chapter Ten.

1.4 Thesis structure

The structure of the thesis reflects the above research strategy, and responds to the general research aims, objectives, and sub-questions. The thesis consists of ten chapters. Chapter One, briefly introduces the rationale of the research context, and identifies key challenges as well as the research focus within a context of Chinese new urbanism in the reform era. The research strategy is presented and the general research paradigm outlined. Finally, the structure of this thesis is outlined.

As literature reviews, Chapters Two and Three respond to the first research objective of understanding the nature of contemporary Chinese urbanism and civic development. With a common neoliberal discourse applied in Chinese studies, the review of changing urban society and the deteriorating nature of an urban neighbourhood present the disappearing place-based community life in current urban China. Such discussions certainty ignore the place-based community life that is deeply rooted in Chinese urban culture, as shown by the fact that CCHEs are planned and constructed in the walled residential pattern. As reflected by the Chinese property-led civic actions that occurred in CCHEs, the grassroots rising civic knowledge related to private and collective properties indicates certain degrees of grassroots social transitions at the neighbourhood scale. Typically, the increasing civic petitions applied by local homeowners in defending their collective interest and right reflect the local civic capacity as a community in confronting infringements from the state and market forces. These interpretations and discussions about the contexts provide evidence, and support the rationale for the research.

Chapter Four develops the conceptual framework applied in this thesis, and corresponds to research objective two. The conceptual framework explains why and how the civic engagement can affect neighbourliness among local residents through the forming or restructuring of an urban community, and how impacts from single civic engagements can be measured within the designed conceptual model.

Chapter Five explains the research design and the methodology used in this thesis. The chapter first illustrates the philosophical considerations of the research, and the rationale in applying an embedded case study paradigm with comparative attributes. Then, the two steps of the research are presented with detailed explanations of

relevant data collection, research approaches, and methods of analysis. Ethical considerations associated with this applied research approaches are noted at the end of the chapter.

Chapter Six responds to research objective three through a broad survey of collective civic petitions that have occurred in the CCHEs in the two case cities. Based on the typology applied to the relevant petitions, the critical roles of collective civic petitions were observed and compared to other types of petitions at both city and CCHE scales. The local civic capacity involved in civic petitions was statistically studied on the basis of the correlations of the various contextual facts in individual petitions. The spatial distribution of individual collective civic petitions that occurred in CCHEs were mapped in the two case cities to explore the grassroots property-led civic development in conjunction with the urban commodity housing development. Finally, with regard to the overlapping of the results from the multi-scalar analysis, four embedded cases were selected for more detailed evaluation, two in each city.

Chapters Seven and Eight respond to research objective four, and evaluate the changes of local social networks within four embedded cases among two types of petitions. These include two protest petitions against state authorities and two hybrid petitions against PMCs. The evaluations were conducted in three steps, including the petitions' origins, the petitions' arbitration processes, and the petition ends. This was followed by an empirical evaluation of the multiple stakeholders' perceptions of the impacts of the petitioning process on the local neighbourhoods' social cohesion and social capital.

Chapter Nine responds to research objective five, and brings together the research findings from the embedded case studies. The community formation in case studies are summarized to inform difference among them. The multiple stakeholders' involvements with various internal and external factors are set out with their influential mechanisms on the urban community formation/re-formation based on the local civic petitions. The changes in the application and development of local organisational social networks which have happened, are happening, and may happen, were related to social cohesion and social capital as they arise through collective civic petitions. Such changes can be seen through the community formation and/or restructuring noted in the reframed conceptual model. On the basis

of these research findings, a range of policy recommendations are proffered in order to enhance the potential community/social aspects of community development in CCHEs' on-going constructions.

Chapter Ten draws out the final conclusions from the thesis, and highlights its general contribution to the furtherance of existent academic knowledge. It also highlights some research limitations and future research agenda.

Chapter Two

The deterioration of urban communities as a consequence Chinese new urbanism

2.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the urban changes that have occurred during the Chinese reform era. Following the tremendous changes in Chinese cities, a discussion of new urbanism in China after 1978, is undertaken to provide a contextual background and starting point for this thesis. In contrast to the traditional walled neighbouring of traditional urban China, Chinese new urbanism has brought to the fore academic debates relating to existence of urban communities in walled Chinese Commodity Housing Estates (CCHEs). However, the academic challenges that have been characterised by typical neo-liberal discourses neglect the uniqueness and complexities involved in Chinese new urbanism. The emergence and formation of local voluntary organisations and homeowners' collective action that have occurred in CCHEs may enable Chinese urban neighbourhood in CCHEs to be viewed through a new lens.

This chapter is organised as follows. First, traditional Chinese urban neighbourhoods are discussed based upon existent literature rooted in place-based neighbourhood development and maintenance in walled residential patterns. The collectivist lifestyle with place-based ties is highlighted as the core factor which maintains local community life. Then, moving onto the new Chinese reformed context, section 2.3 focuses on the new urbanism that has been driven by the state, market, and society. Urban spatial and social structures have been greatly reformed through new forms and patterns of urban space consumption. Thirdly, in section 2.4, CCHEs are reviewed as being characteristic of the socio-spatial changes that have occurred as the result of this new urbanism. Within the typical neoliberal discourse, some academic arguments related the booming constructions of CCHEs in cities to such common socio-spatial changes. Finally, challenges relating to the argument as 'communities lost' in current urban China are presented. By contrast, with evidence drawn from research, the new emergent social activities that occurred in these new walled residential compounds are highlighted as an appropriate lens in observing

and exploring the possible community development in urban China.

2.2 Chinese urban community before the reform

Neighbourhoods have existed since the emergence of human habitats (Woods, 1914; Franklin, 1986; Smith, 2007, 2010). Since the emergence of ancient cities, urban neighbourhoods have sought to reflect local social ties (Smith, 2010). It was claimed that, in contrast to rural neighbourhoods which had mainly developed organically, urban neighbourhoods always reflected coordination of governmental and societal planning practices (Woods, 1914; Hallman, 1984; Smith, 2007). This planning practice was readily apparent in Chinese cities. Indeed, there is a long history of planning cities and urban neighbourhoods (Lu, 2006; Smith, 2007, 2010). Additionally, there are strong elements of traditional planning principles in China based on urban neighbourhoods and these have been integral to Chinese urban development from feudal times to the Socialist era (Miao, 2003; Huang, 2006; Xu and Yang, 2009).

2.2.1 The walled neighbouring as the order in hostorical China (pre-1949)

Since the Zhou Dynasty, (18 BC to 256 BC), there have been state practices of developing urban neighbourhoods within walled cities (Dong, 2004; Wheatley, 1971). The urban neighbourhoods were planned as small wards which possessed significant physical differences to the king's palaces, aristocratic residences, and other urban lands (Dong, 2004). Since then, normative planning practices in the development of urban neighbourhoods have emerged as a means to organise urban space and society within a hierarchical doctrine (Wheatley, 1971; Yang, 1993; Heng, 1999; Lu, 2006). This normative principle was integrated into the Confucian Culture as a 'rite' (*Lizhi*), and indicated that the feudal social system was hierarchical and endorsed by royal families, nobles, urban labourers, and merchants (Heng, 1999; Dong, 2004; Smith, 2007). In the Tang Dynasty, (618 AD to 907 AD), this normative planning schema became common in Chinese cities with different urban spaces being divided into individual walled blocks. Using Chang'an, the capital of the empire as an example, Figure 2.1, shows the city's five major morphological elements; namely, the walled enclosure, axial landscape, north-south orientation in architecture building, symmetrical layout, and closed courtyards as neighbourhoods. Within this pattern, the urban neighbourhoods were planned

around a courtyard form, as spatial reflections of social hierarchies (Wu, 1993; Gu, 2001; Dong, 2004). Citizens' urban life predominantly occurred in the walled courtyards and were separated from royal and aristocratic living (Gu, 2001). The walled residential patterns helped to create community life in the individual neighbourhoods and helped to establish place-based ties among neighbours. These were mainly related to kinship and the close proximity among neighbours (Wu, 1993).
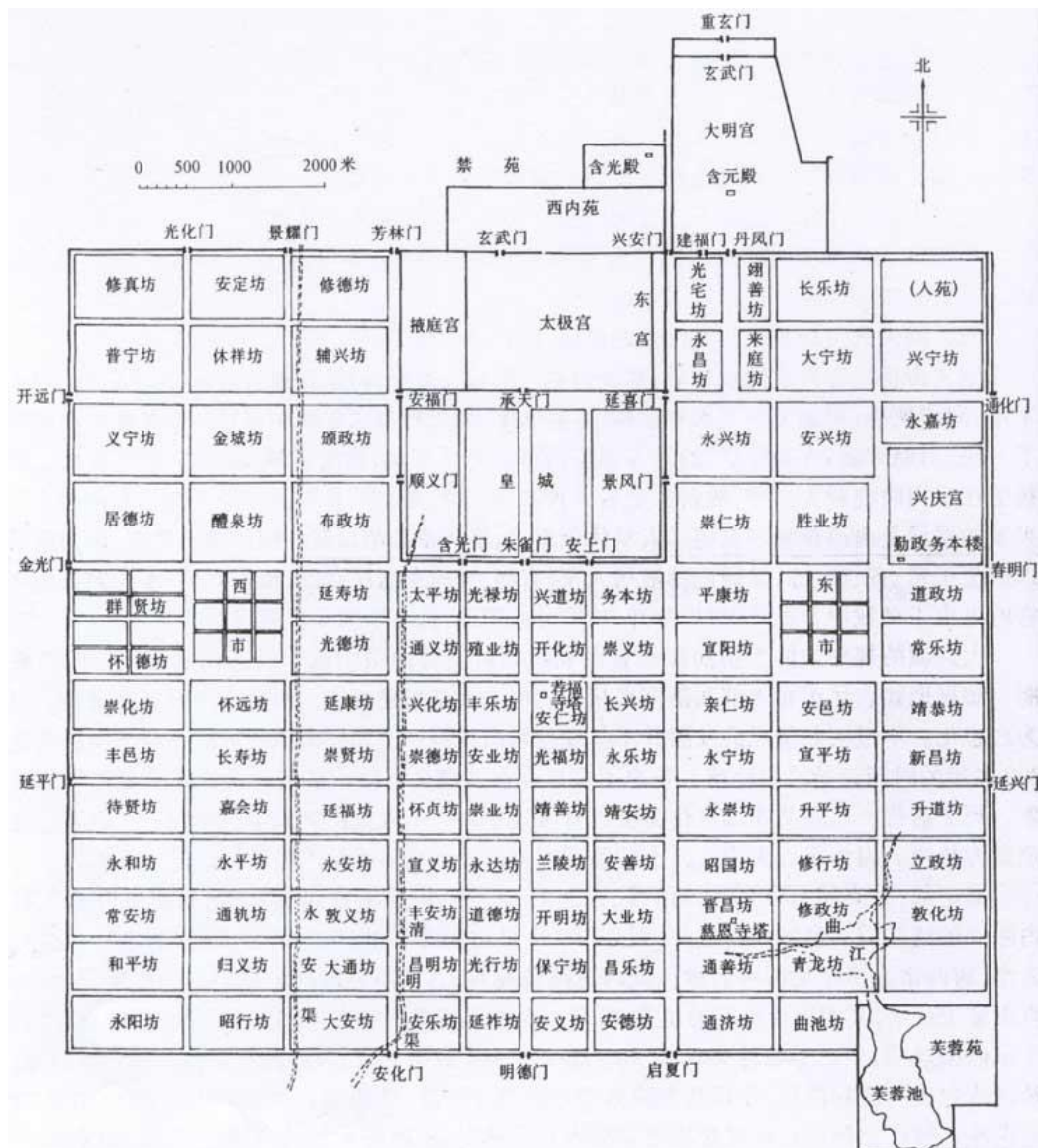
Figure 2.1 Walled city of Chang'an in Tang Dynasty
Source: Dong, 2004

After 960 AD, in the Song Dynasty, the growing urban population and prosperous urban economy motivated the state to make urban planning more coordinated.by developing typical patterns of common physical segregations (Heng, 1999; Xu and Yang, 2009; Smith, 2007, 2010). In this new planning schema, many of the walls

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inside cities were demolished to help form a progressively more secular and mercantile urban society. Spatially, walled urban courtyards were broken down into small courtyards that were linked by alleyways (Dong, 2004; Xu and Yang, 2009). During this period, Chinese urban spatial structures tended to be more open and mixed than before, and the walled urban residential pattern was transformed into a small scale. Nevertheless, general urban planning still followed the Confucian doctrine. As illustrated by Figure 2.2 of Suzhou city, some of the previously noted morphological elements remained within the urban physical segregated structure. Citizens' lifestyles were mostly constrained to certain spaces which were formed by several courtyards with alleyway linkages (Heng, 1999; Dong, 2004; Huang, 2006). To an extent, neighbourhoods were still maintained in the walled residential pattern because of the place-based ties that existed among certain social groups who actively applied mechanisms of isolation from other social groups (Dong, 2004; Huang, 2006). From the Song Dynasty onwards, the walled residential pattern (within a more opened urban structure) became the dominant pattern for development until the late 19th century. Even when China faced sustained pressures from colonial forces, as there were damages of walls in some coastal cities in the early 1900s, most Chinese cities managed to maintain the same walled urban pattern, and community life continued to be based around the concept of the walled courtyard. This long history of urban walled neighbourhoods in feudal China can also be understood as a spatial reflection of the relatively permanent social structure that existed in the feudal political system. This changed dramatically following the establishment of Socialist China in 1949 (Huang, 2006).
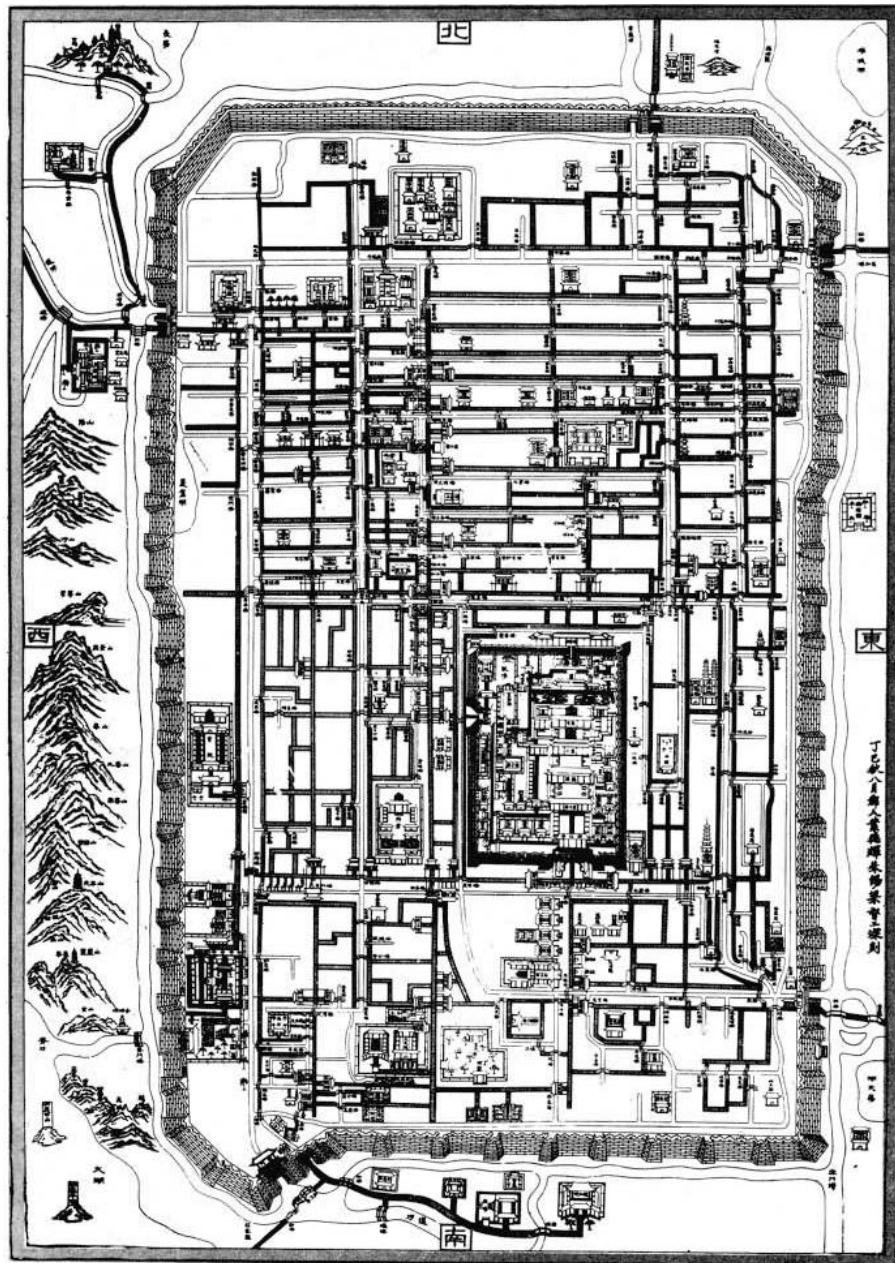
Figure 2.2 Suzhou city in Song Dynasty
Source: Dong, 2004

2.2.2 The neighbourhood within work units in Socialist China (1949-1978)

Since 1949, Chinese cities have been re-planned and restructured in line with the party-state's socialist ideology and have been primarily focused on realizing rapid industrialisation (Parish and Parish, 1986; Wu, 1993; Lu, 2006). During the 1950s and 1960s, Chinese cities commonly experienced urban sprawl resulting from state-driven planning practices that imitated the Soviet Union's experiences (Gu, 2001). Modernist planning theory ideas were directly implemented into Chinese cities, and urban space was divided into individual functional spaces when it came to locate new urban industries (Xu and Yang, 2009). The new urban industries - officially

termed as work units (*Danwei*), were spatially allocated into redefined urban areas and formed functional agglomerations for rapid industrial production (Lin and Xie, 1988; Lu, 2006; Huang, 2006; Xu and Yang, 2009). However, these socialist planning and constructing practices did not totally change either the urban images or spatial structures of Chinese cities. As presented in Figure 2.3 and Figure 2.4, with (two maps of Beijing city in the 1910s and 1970s), the inner urban areas with their traditional morphological elements were retained and integrated into new socialist urban constructions. The traditional walled residential pattern, and especially the old courtyards, were largely retained. However, the neighbourhoods of individual courtyards experienced changes because of the shifting patterns of house ownership that were driven by the socialist state in the early 1950s (Wu, 1992). In addition, some new social ties, such as professional connections, emerged as place-based social networks in the courtyards (Gu, 2001; Huang, 2006).
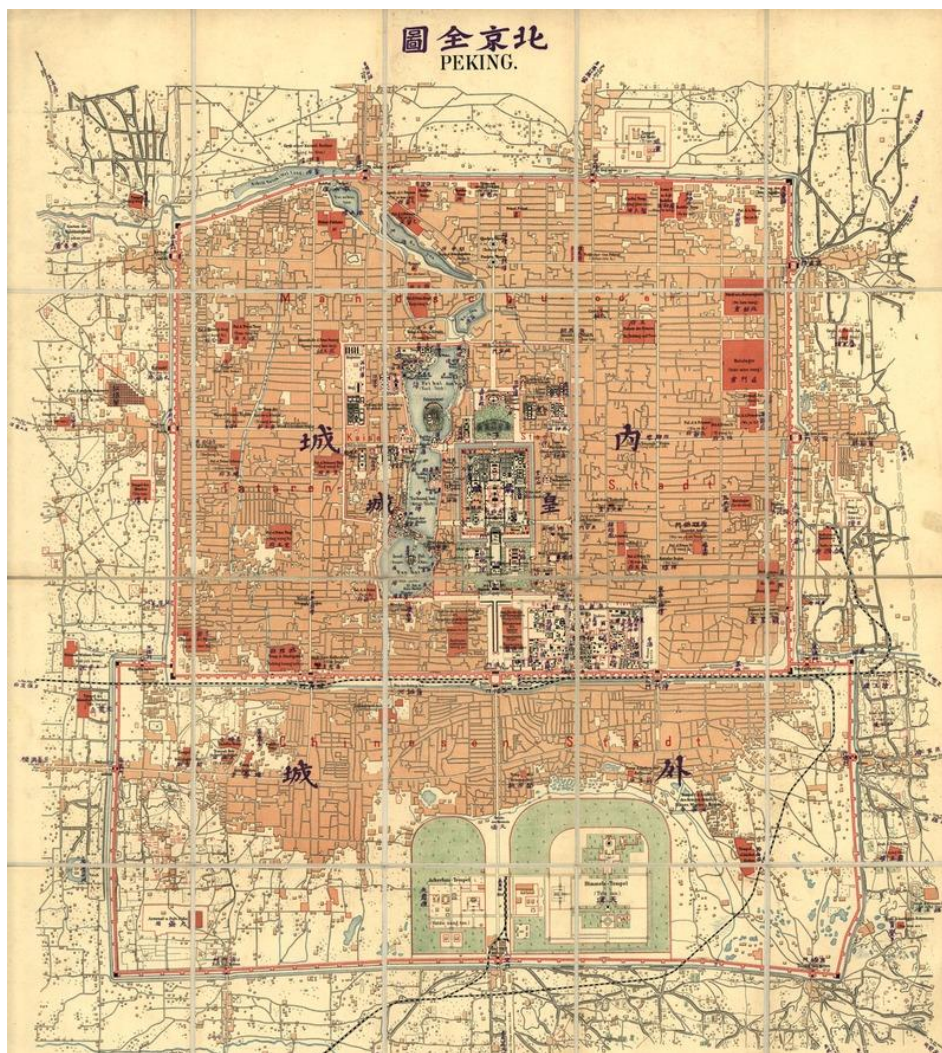
Figure 2.3 Beijing city map in 1910
Source: Dong, 2004; Zhao and Long, 2014
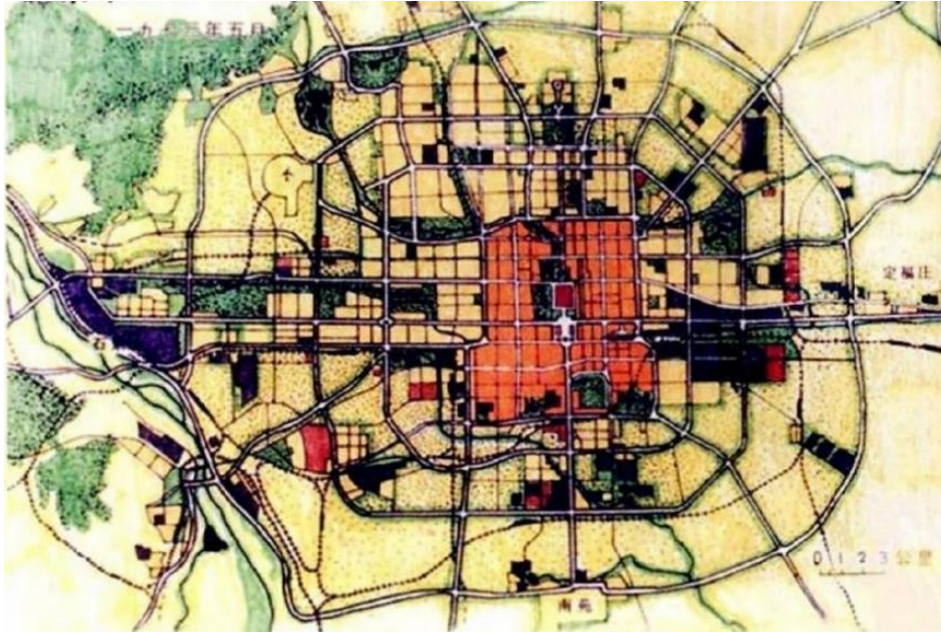
Figure 2.4 Beijing city map in 1970s
Source: Zhao and Long, 2014

Despite the retention of the traditional courtyards in inner urban areas, new residential patterns emerged with regard to the planning and allocation of individual work units; these were mostly located in the suburban rings of cities (Wang and Murie, 1999; Li *et al*., 2012). Within individual work units, various social attachments arose through the delivery of social welfare and public goods such as housing, medical services, education provision, community infrastructure and so on. However, these were only applicable to the employees (and families) of the individual work units (Lin and Xie, 1988; Lu, 2006; Bray, 2005; Wu and Ma, 2005; Xu and Yang, 2009; Zhang and Rasiah, 2014). With the exclusion of other urban social groups, the individual work unit became 'a territorial unit that possessed a distinctive spatial form' within the socialist urban landscape (Lu, 2006, p.48). Due to the residential attachment associated with the work unit, the planning and construction of workers' villages commonly integrated traditional residential patterns and a schema of the neighbourhood unit that was broadly designed by Clarence Perry (Perry, 1929; Mumford, 1954). The daily lives of individual families were mainly organised, delivered and sustained by the work units. The existence of such a collective lifestyle reflected a clear process of spatial exclusion, as may be seen in the example of the Baiwanzhuang workers' village in Beijing (see Figure 2.5) (Bjorklund, 1986; Chai, 1996). It follows that individual social interaction occurred on the basis of place-based ties, and that these were formed with reference to an individual's professional relationships and the close proximity of residences

(Chai, 1996; Miao, 2003). To a certain extent, such community life within individual workers' units reflected the socialist state's success in transforming the traditional residential pattern, and can also be seen to have been dependent upon the political control of urban grassroots in the Socialist era (Miao, 2003; Lu, 2006; Bray, 2005, 2006; Li and Huang, 2006; Li *et al.*, 2010; Smith, 2010).
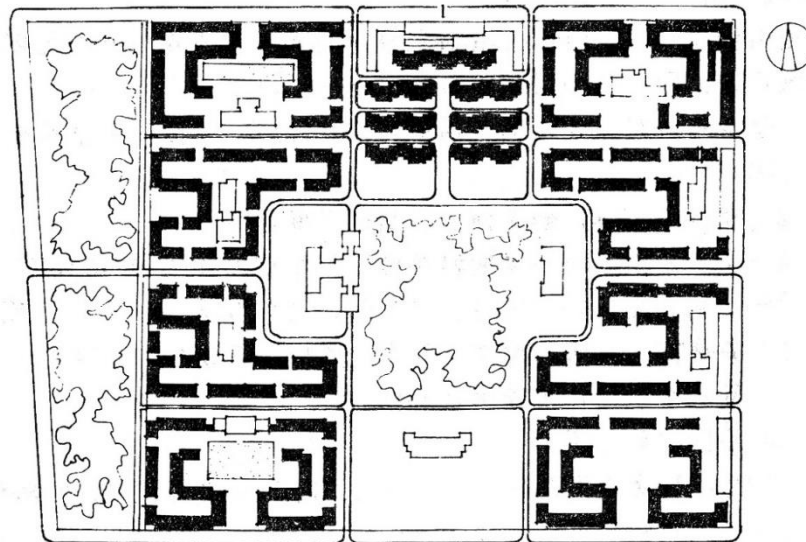
Figure 2.5 Baiwanzhuang workers' villages in Beijing
Source: Dong, 2004

2.2.3 Walled community life as the basis for local collectivism

From the feudal era to the socialist era, the walled residential pattern characterised many Chinese cities. As suggested by Huang (2006), the walled residential pattern indicates the collectivist culture that was deeply embedded in Chinese urban residential culture (Wu, 1992; Knapp, 2000 Wu and He, 2003; Chen and Lu, 2007; Yang, 2012; Zhai and Ng, 2013; Hu and Scott, 2016). From the feudal era to the socialist era, as reflected by the common walled neighbourhoods, such collectivist culture remained central in maintaining individual social identities and fostering local solidarity (Zhai and Ng, 2013). Certain place-based social ties did exist and tended to be based upon occupational, geographical, or clan-based linkages local individuals as the basis of community life (Sangren, 1984; Miao, 2003; Huang, 2006; Chen and Lu, 2007; Wu and Gaubatz, 2013; Qian, 2014). In the workers' villages there existed, with regard to issues of proactive socio-spatial isolation (Huang, 2006), a subculture 'underpinned by intensive social interactions and extensive mutual help as well as strong community identity' (Li *et al.*, 2012, p.238). Based on this it can be argued that the walled residential pattern was capable of

cultivating a form of community life which reflected the existence of social capital and social cohesion as the basis of place-based ties (Lin and Bian, 1991; Logan *et al*., 2002; Forrest and Kearns, 2003; Huang, 2006; Li *et al*., 2012; Yang, 2012). Therefore, with regard to the collectivist ideology that was deeply rooted in Chinese culture, the Chinese urban walled residential pattern that existed before the reforms of 1978 created a certain form of community life in delineated urban spaces which was different to the common perceptions of urban communities in Western contexts (Wellman, 1979). In reference to such a neighbouring culture, Huang (2006) sumarrized it as follows,

'The collectivist culture deeply embedded in Chinese society and the tight political control actively pursued by the Chinese government offer a specific explanation for gating in Chinese cities. While walls and gates serve multiple purposes, such as defense, protection from harsh weather, and markers for private property, in a collectivist society such as China, they are used symbolically to define "collectives," which have always been valued as more important than individualism under the Confucian tradition. Despite various profound socioeconomic transformations in Chinese history, collectivism has remained central to Chinese culture, and walls and gates have also maintained their symbolic value to define collectives and foster solidarity among other functions' (p.512).

2.3 Restructuring contemporary cities in China

2.3.1 Chinese urbanism in the reform era

In 1978, the Chinese Communist Party promulgated the 'Open Door' policy to start market-oriented reforms which would restructure the national economy which had been proved to be inefficient during the socialist era. With regards to the ongoing reform of the past four decades, the Chinese reforms have resulted in the Chinese economy becoming the second largest in the world. With its neo-liberal features, such reforms can be seen to have, in addition to restructuring the economy, driven wide ranging socio-spatial transformations and the reproduction of urban spaces (Peck and Tickell, 1994, 2002; Jefferson, 1998; Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Peck, 2004; Harvey, 2007; Smart and Lin, 2007; He and Wu, 2009; He and Lin, 2015). With regards to global neo-liberal reforms, cities have become important spatial targets for action and institutional laboratories for various neo-liberal experiments that have sought to deepen social transitions (Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Smith, 2002; Harvey, 2007; He and Wu, 2009; Xu and Yeh, 2009). To a certain extent, contemporary global cities are no longer passive and naturalised entities shaped by

independent social and economic forces (Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Smith, 2002; Leitner *et al.*, 2007; He and Wu, 2009). Rather they have become 'active political and institutional arenas in and through which neoliberal strategies are emanated, contested and mediated' (Lin and Zhang, 2015, p.2774-2775). Urban space has been continually reproduced and consumed because of the freer state-market relations that exist as a consequence of intensified global competition.

Following the neoliberal urbanism conceptualised by Brenner and Theodore (2005),

> '…urban neoliberalism is not only a form of political, institutional and geographical change; it is also, centrally, a means of transforming the dominant political imaginaries on which basis people understand the limits and possibilities of the urban experience. In an urban context, as elsewhere, this redefinition of political imagination entails not only the re-articulation of assumptions about the appropriate role of state institutions, but also, more generally, the reworking of inherited conceptions of citizenship, community and everyday life' (p.106).

Chinese cities are also presenting the features of neo-liberal urbanism (He and Lin, 2015; Wu, 2015). Within the party-state's reform, Chinese cities are experiencing a great transformation in both spatial and social terms (Ma and Wu, 2005; McGee *et al.*, 2007; Smart and Lin, 2007; Xu and Yeh, 2009; Hsing, 2010; Wu and Gaubatz, 2013), with cities redefining the 'urban space in which capital, labour, and land are subjected to commodification and privatisation' (Lin and Zhang, 2015, p.2775). However, different to common understandings of global neo-liberal urbanism, Chinese neoliberal experiences have been mostly understood as having their own distinct characteristics which reflect both   very rapid urbanisation and great social changes (Harvey, 2007; He and Wu, 2009; He and Lin, 2015; Zhou *et al.*, 2019). Such distinct characteristics are further underlined by the local state's continual intervention in the market through urban land commodification (Ong, 2007; He and Wu, 2009; Ma, 2009; Wu, 2010a; Peck and Zhang, 2013; Lin and Zhang, 2015).

2.3.2 The role of the land finance regime in driving Chinese urbanism

Chinese urbanism occurred as a direct consequence of the decentralisation of party-state power, and was as central a part of the reform process as institutional restructuring. In the early 1980s, this institutional restructuring had hardly been implemented because of the central state's fiscal insufficiency, and the local governments had low incentives to change the central planned institution (Wang and Murie, 1996; Wang *et al.*, 2012). Then, after the stagnation of the reform

process in the early 1990s, there was an institutional shift which, through the creation of the fiscal-sharing system in 1994, led to a significant decentralisation of the central state's power, (He and Wu, 2009). This change restructured Chinese central-local fiscal relationships, and can be understood as a 'decentralisation of liabilities and responsibilities in combination with recentralisation of the power of tax revenue collection' (Lin and Zhang, 2015, p.2781). This fiscal decentralisation relieved fiscal pressures on the central state, but also placed local states in the relatively awkward position of having only limited budgets to cover the growing expenditures that they were required to make as a consequence of urbanisation and industrialisation (see Figure 2.6). Local states have increased incentives to promote economic growth and this has led to local governments, including municipalities and counties, proactively engaging in urban land commodification.
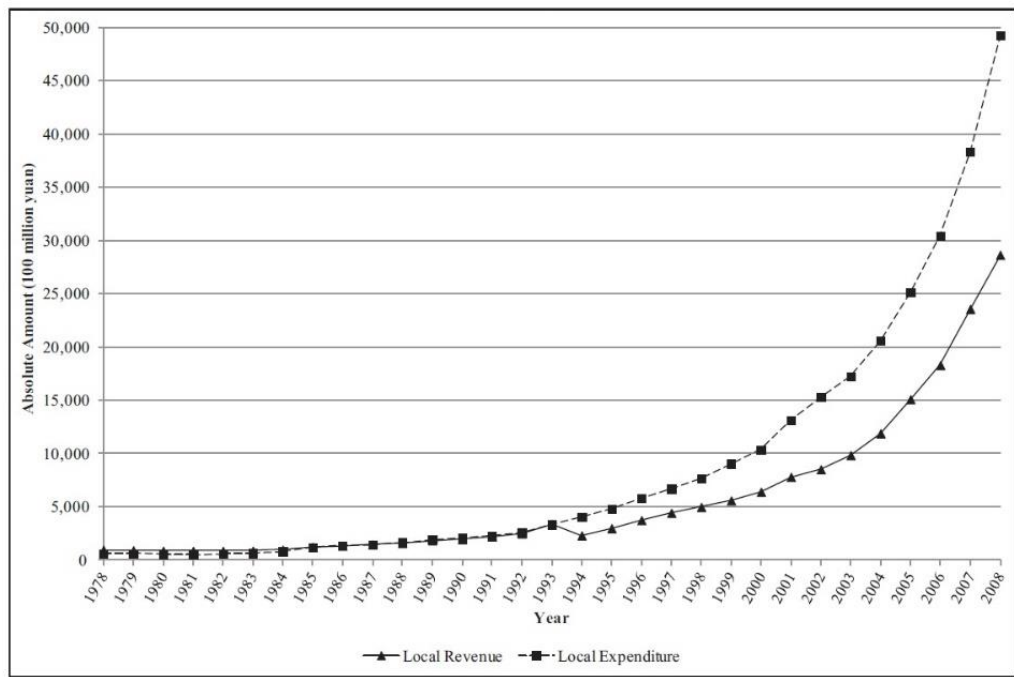
Figure 2.6 Chinese local fiscal revenue and expenditure, 1978-2008
Source: Chinese Ministry of Finance, 2009; Lin and Zhang, 2015

Land commodification was first launched in some big cities as an experimental policy in the late 1980s; it was formally institutionalised in the early 1990s. Moreover, with regard to the public ownership of land, some institutions, including the land leasing system and the land transaction system, were legislated for by the Socialist Constitution (Dowall, 1993). After the late 1990s, and with more reliable revenue streams emanating from the urban land commodification process, many

Chinese local governments increasingly practiced and promoted urban redevelopment as a mechanism by which to increase their fiscal revenues. These commonly state-oriented practices have been conceptualised as the land finance regime (Lin and Zhang, 2015; Wu, 2015; Wu *et al*., 2016). By the early 2000s, this land-related revenue accounted for nearly 60% of local city's income streams; and by 2013 it accounted for 8 trillion RMB of local government revenue (Ding, 2007; He and Wu, 2009; Wu *et al*., 2016). As a consequence, land commodification has effectively resolved the problem of local financial deficits and has become a reliable resource for covering growing local expenditure (Zhang and Zhou, 1998; Ding, 2007; Wu *et al*., 2016). Indeed, the land finance regime has supported local states' provision of public infrastructures and public services, and stimulated further urbanisation and industrialisation. Cumulatively such processes have further enhanced China's international competitiveness (Lin, 2007a; Douglass *et al*., 2012).

2.3.3 The ongoing consumption of Chinese urban space

With regard to the land finance regime, Chinese local states have, since the late 1990s, adopted radical policies and practices with regard to consuming urban space (Lin, 2007a; Douglass *et al*., 2012; Song *et al*., 2015; Kuang *et al*, 2016). The common growth and spatiality with features of neo-liberal urbanism have been emerged in Chinese cities with growing trends in consuming urban construction land before 2008, as presented in Figures 2.7 and 2.8 (Li *et al*., 2015; Yeh *et al*., 2015). Such ongoing consumption is conceptualised as a core issue for the generation of Chinese new urbanism with astonishing urban modern changes in both economic and spatial terms (Wu, 2015; Waley, 2016).
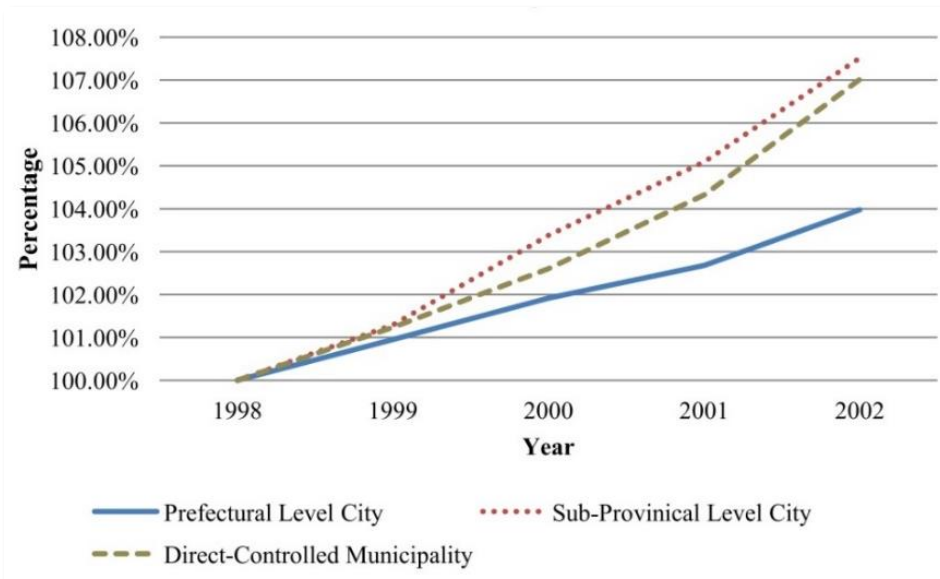
Figure 2.7 Urban land consumption from 1998 to 2002
Source: Li *et al*., 2015
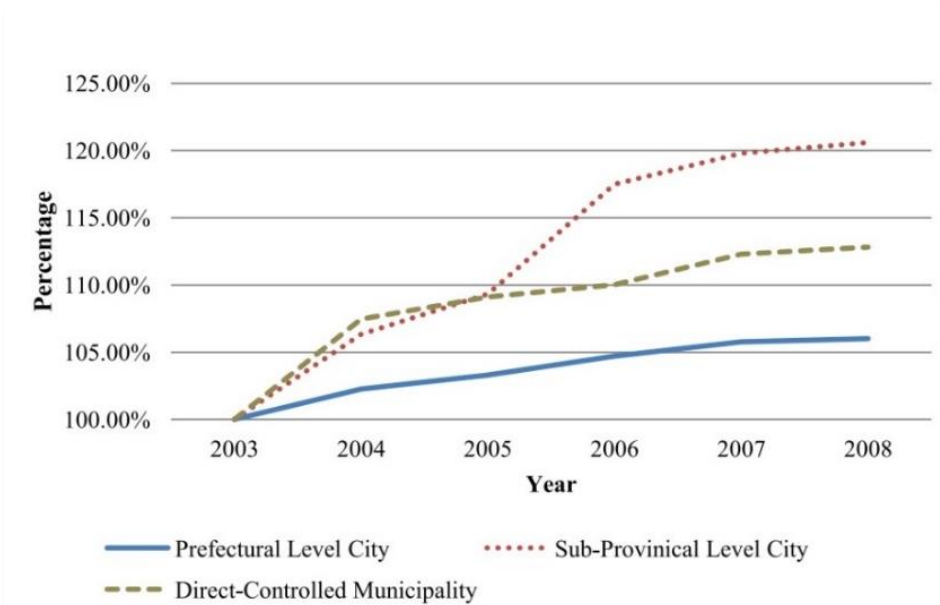
Figure 2.8 Urban land consumption from 2003 to 2008
Source: Li *et al*., 2015

By now, the Chinese party-state, including both the central state and local states, are no longer regarded as serving either the working class or social grassroots. Instead, they have become more focused upon supporting entrepreneurial economic growth with their contingent roles in Chinese marketed reform (Lin, 2007a; Wu, 2015, 2016a). It is worth noting that the urban grassroots state authorities have being actively involved in producing such ongoing consumption. Since the start of the reform period of 1978, Chinese political decentralisation from the central party-state to more local entities, including provincial, municipal, county, and township

state authorities, all 'represent a downward shift of state power from a single unitary national scale to multiple local scales' (Ma, 2004, p.478). The hierarchical administrative system (as shown in Figure 2.9) enables the party-state to control urban grassroots development (Ma, 2002, 2005; Chung and Lam, 2004; Hsing, 2006; Lin, 2007a, 2007b; He and Lin, 2015), and it has also enabled a 'retreat of state power from economic and social life' (Wu, 2002, p.1080). This seems to be increasingly challenged by increasing grassroots civic actions in the last two decades (Teets, 2014, 2015; Guan and Cai, 2015; Zhang *et al*., 2019). Urban and social administration at the grassroots level is now mainly undertaken by Street Offices (*Jiedao Banshichu*) and associated Residents' Committees (*Jumin Weiyuan Hui*). These local state authorities have been increasingly involved in the production of Chinese new urbanism, by following and implementing those higher urban state authorities' policies and administrations (Lin, 2007; He and Lin, 2015). Such involvement also raised disputes and conflicts with the grassroots, as reflected by the following two case studies. Whereas, even as the real producers of those disputes and conflicts, the higher urban state authorities, such as Municipal and District Government, performed as the petition arbitrators according to their institutionalised definitions within the Chinese urban hierarchical administration.
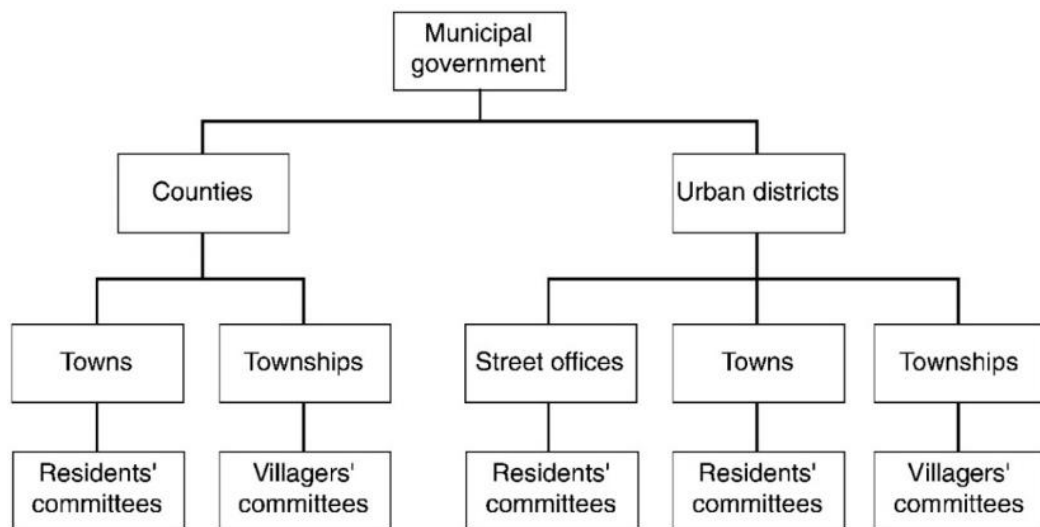
Figure 2.9 Chinese urban administrative system
Source: Wu, 2002

Such a kind of urban grassroots governance can be traced to the period in Socialist China, mainly for the state control. It is still valued by the party-state in contemporary urban China for these agencies' direct participation in the on-going production of Chinese new urbanism (Ma, 2002; Hsing, 2006; Lin, 2007b; Wu,

2010). Within this mode, a Street Office is defined as a representative agency of the District or Municipal government (Wu, 2002). Attached to the Street Office, the Residents' Committee is officially defined to be the local grassroots voluntary organisation, to serve the urban citizens' autonomy on their neighbourhoods. However, with regard to the fact, the Residents' Committee is considered to be lowest-level state authority, for a number of reasons (Ma, 2002; Wu, 2005). First, it undertakes many assignments given to it by a Street Office or urban higher state authorities (Duckett, 1998), 'such as the maintenance of public order, basic welfare provision and mobilising people during political movements' (Wu, 2005, p.1084). Second, it is directly funded by state authorities, with money allocated from part of the Municipal Government's annual budget for its' administrative expenditure (Mok, 1988; Wu, 2005; Guan and Cai, 2015). Third, the main staffs in these grassroots agencies, such as the party secretary and the local chairman, are all appointed by District or Municipal government through the state's enrolment, with identities as local civil servants (Wu, 2005; Yan and Gao, 2005; Guan and Cai, 2015). Moreover, within the jurisdictional area of a Street Office, several Residents' Committees will be found delivering their administrative functions and services to residents in a specific area (see Figure 2.10).
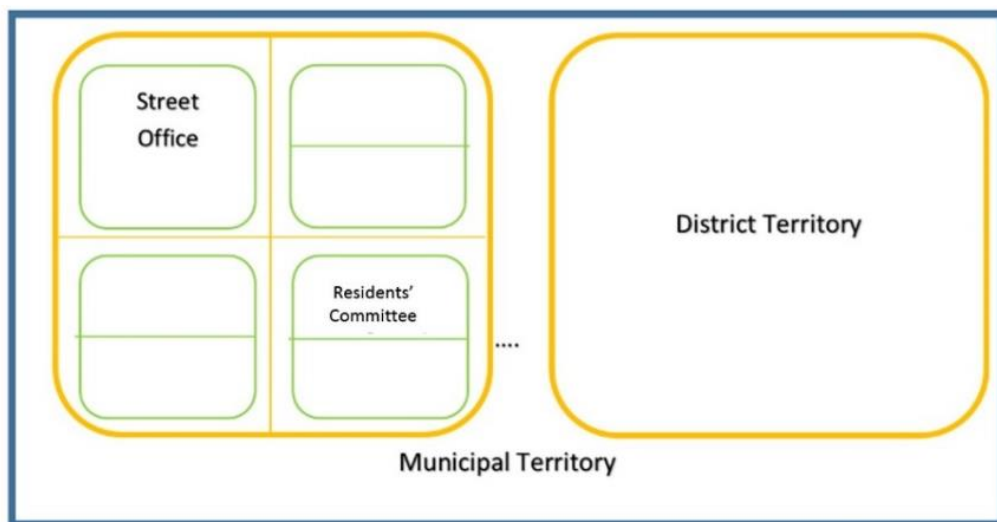
Figure 2.10 Inclusive relationship among urban hierarchical state authorities
Source: Ma, 2002; Wu, 2002; Author

Otherwise, Chinese societal forces have been also deeply involved in such a new urbanism, and they have contributed a lot to that with their consumption power. The increasing Chinese urbanisation and industrialisation brought greatly social desires as employment, housing, and living, which all drive the consumption of urban space

in producing industrial parks, commercial centres, and commodity housing estates in cities (Lin, 2007a; Douglass *et al.*, 2012; Yeh *et al.*, 2015). In the last decade, societal forces and market conditions have been proven to be significant drivers of urban space consumption. These factors have the capacity to influence the decisions of the local state (Wu, 2010a; Li et al., 2015; Song et al., 2015; Kuang et al, 2016; Miao and Maclennan, 2017). Cumulatively, state, market, and society are significant factors reshaping China's new urbanism (He and Lin, 2015). On the one hand, such new urbanism is produced on the occupation of farmland with lower compensation to Chinese farmers (Walcott, 2002; He and Lin, 2015). The rural landscape was continually transformed into individual industrial parks for industrial development and low quality housing estates as compensations for the land-lost farmers (Zhang *et al.*, 2010). Within this consumption pattern, Chinese cities have experienced significant land expansion as urban areas have expanded with lower densities, (see Figure 2.11 for examples of twelve different sized Chinese cities), (Deng *et al.*, 2010; Schneider and Mertes, 2014; Hui *et al.*, 2015; He and Lin, 2015; Song *et al.*, 2015). On the other hand, the growing social desires that emerge from rapid urbanisation, such as housing demands and modern lifestyles, have stimulated an enormous number of urban renewal projects that have been conducted by local states working with the market (He and Lin, 2015; Waley, 2016). As a result, urban inner and fringe areas have been continuously demolished and regenerated through new residential and commercial land development projects (Wang and Murie, 1999; Gaubatz, 2005; Marton and Wu, 2006; Deng, 2008; Puel and Fernandez, 2012; He and Lin, 2015). As a result, Chinese urban space has experienced profound physical changes through ongoing urban redevelopments, as indicated by Figure 2.12 with reference to changes in Shanghai's land use (Qiu and Xu, 2017).

MEDIUM, SMALL, and VERY SMALL CITIES

5 kilometers   5 kilometers

Úrumqi | Changji | Hutubi

Xi'an | Xianyang | Lintong

Chengdu | Pixian | Longquanyi

Kunming | Yuxi | Anning

area not classified
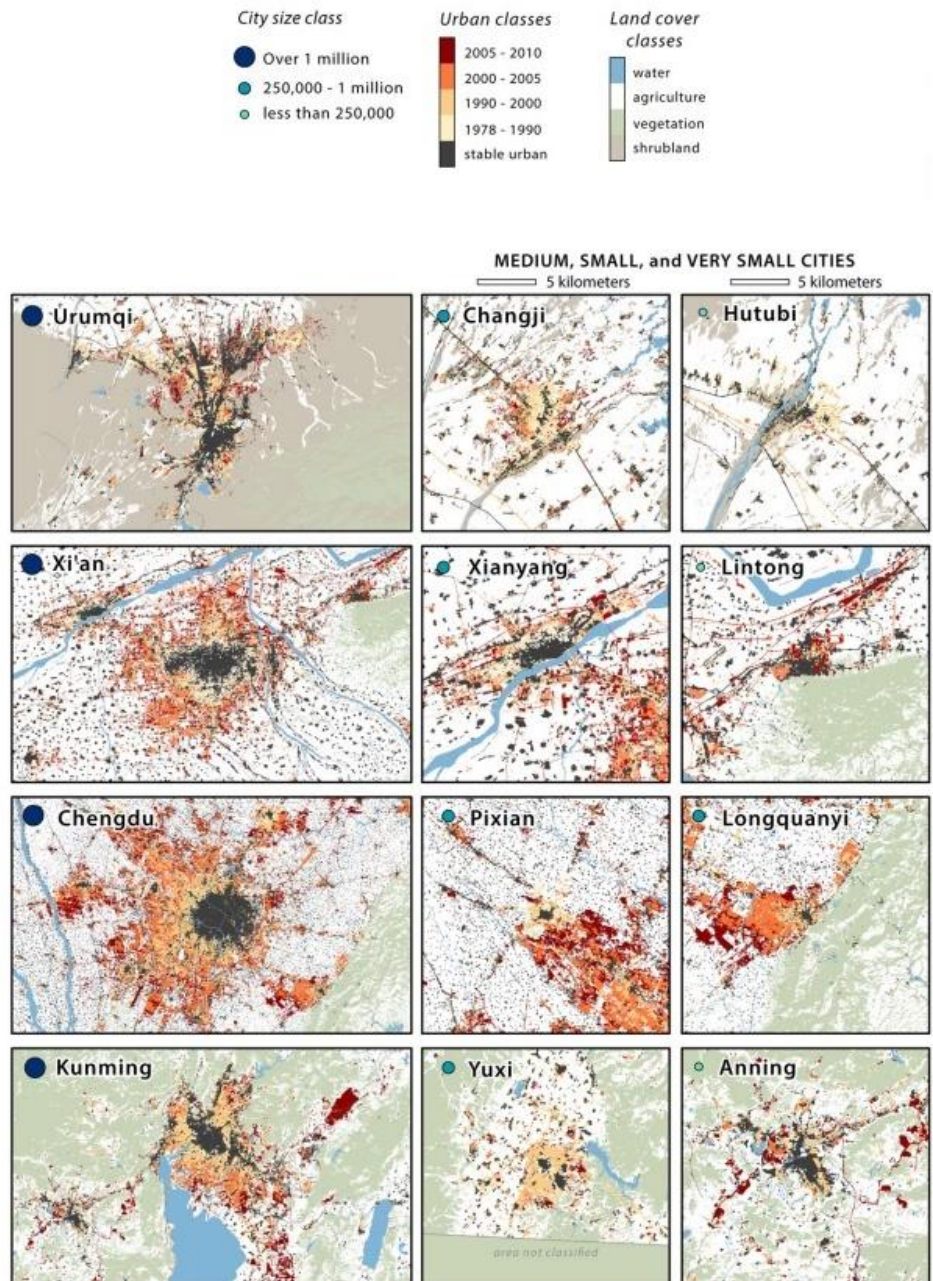
Figure 2.11 Urban land consumption from 2003 to 2008 with 12 examples
Source: Schneider and Mertes, 2014

Re-Developed land (2002-2006)
Concentrated Construction Zones & Industrial Zones

Re-Developed land (2006-2013)
Concentrated Construction Zones & Industrial Zones

Re-Developed land (2005-2013)
Concentrated Construction Zones & Industrial Zones

Mode III: Industrial to Non-Industrial 2002-2006 | Mode III: Industrial to Non-Industrial 2006-2013 | Mode III: Non-Industrial to Non-Industrial 2006-2013

Figure 2.12 Changes of urban land use consumption in Shanghai from 2002 to 2013
Source: Qiu and Xu, 2017

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Since the late 1990s, both the state and the market have shown a preference for producing commercial housing, which has been continually consumed by the ever-increasing societal desire for property ownership (Wang and Murie, 1999; Glaser *et al.*, 2017). Spatially, Chinese Commodity Housing estates (CCHEs) have emerged as the dominant form residential landscape (Wang and Murie, 1996, 1999; Wu, 2010a; Wang *et al*, 2012; He and Lin, 2015; Yeh *et al.*, 2015; Shin, 2016; Glaeser *et al.*, 2017).

2.3.4 The emergence of CCHEs as a consequence of Chinese new urbanism

Since the socialist reform in the late 1950s, no private housing have been existed in Chinese cities following the party-state's schema to provide public housing within individual work units and transform traditional courtyards into public property (Kirkby, 1990; Wang, 1995; Wu, 1996; Wang *et al.*, 2012; Wang and Shao, 2014). After 1978, the party-state was eager to solve the issues of severe housing shortages and the low quality of housing which existed in all Chinese cities (Wang and Murie, 1996, 1999). Responding to such common housing shortage in Chinese cities, the housing commodification scheme (which was adapted from Western contexts) inspired the party-state to attempt with some pilot experiments in the production of commodity housing in the 1980s (Dowall, 1994). In 1988, the central CCP initiated a strategy to encourage individual purchases of commodity housing (Liu, 1989). However, the implementation of this strategy was interrupted by the civic actions organised by students as exemplified by the Tiannamen Square events that occurred in 1989 (Wang and Murie, 1996, 1999; Wu, 2015). Following this interruption, housing commodification was relaunched with renewed vigour in 1991 following the state's promotion of the urban housing market and its passing of accompanying legislation and regulations that relaxed housing commodification (Wang and Murie, 1999). The response to this deregulation was the emergence of foreign and local investors into the Chinese housing market. Despite this, the Chinese urban housing market of the early 1990s can only be characterised as representing a quasi-market situation; a combination of commodity housing production and public residential unit provision (Zhou and Logan, 1991; Logan *et al.*, 1999; Li, 2000). By the middle 1990s, such quasi-market characteristics were common in many Chinese cities and significantly more CCHEs emerged in the urban landscape (Chen and Gao, 1993;

Lau, 1993, 1995; Chen, 1996; Chiu, 1996; Tong and Hays, 1996; Wang and Murie, 1996).

In 1997, the Asian Financial Crisis stimulated further state initiated economic reform. Due to declining exports and reduced economic growth, urban commodity housing development was seen as an efficient approach by which to generate greater industrial demand, provide more employment, and increase both national and international investment (Wang *et al*., 2012). Thus, one important urban housing reform policy was promulgated in 1998 (Chinese State Council, 1998). The provision of urban public housing by work units was stopped with new urban housing being instead created through a new system in which commodity residences (*Shangpin Fang*), affordable residences (*Jingjishiyong Fang*), and public rental residences (*lianzu Fang*) were designed to address the housing needs of China's rapidly growing urban population (Chinese State Council, 1998; Wang *et al.*, 2012). Although the state insisted on the need to provide affordable and rentable housing, commodity housing developments became the main form of urban housing provision (Chinese State Council, 1998; Wang and Murie, 2000; Zhao and Bourassa, 2003; Wang *et al*., 2012). From 2000 to 2007, over 2 million urban residences were built and consumed in Chinese cities (Chinese Bureau of Statistic, 2007). Among these tremendous constructions, over 70 percent of these units were commodity housing (Chinese Bureau of Statistic, 2007; Wang *et al*., 2012). As a result, the state shifted to a more radical policy of producing commodity housing which was consistent with the emergence of urban land finance regime (Wang *et al*., 2012; Wu, 2015). Since the early 2000s, booming commodity housing developments have become the main aspect of Chinese urbanism. It has had far-reaching impacts on Chinese urban landscapes and society (Chen *et al*., 2010; Li, 2010; He and Lin, 2015; Wu, 2015).

By 2008, Chinese commodity housing developments had entered a frenetic growth path because of capital flows from deteriorating manufacturing industries and failing stock market (Wu, 2015; Glaser *et al*., 2017). However, this boom was soon interrupted by deficiencies in investment potentials associated with declining national economic growth (Wang *et al*., 2012; Wu, 2015). Soon after this, the state initiated a stimulus package of 4 trillion RMB, which was mainly focused on state investment into infrastructure projects and housing development for affordable and

rental residences (Wang *et al.*, 2012; Glaser *et al.*, 2017). As conceptualised by the central state, this stimulus package was expected to reduce the over consumption that had been a product of the booming commodity housing development, and address the severe and increasingly apparent social problems (such as social inequality, social instability and skyrocketing house prices) associated with the growth of commodity housing developments (Wang *et al.*, 2012; Wu, 2015). However, in reality, this stimulus package was almost directed towards the provision of commodity housing, as driven by the local states (Ye, 2011; He and Lin, 2015; Yeh *et al.*, 2015; Wu, 2015). A spatial consequence of this was the continued growth of urban housing prices and the common acceptance of CCHEs as the residential image of Chinese new urbanism (Wu, 2015; Glaser *et al.*, 2017). It is undeniable that these changes resulted in significant improvements to the quality of Chinese urban residential areas. Improvements have included better quality residential environments, improved green infrastructure, and new lifestyle choices within individual CCHEs (Abramson, 2006; Wu, 2010b). Furthermore, these new residential compounds (which often possess a walled pattern), also meet societal aspirations to protect private property rights (Huang, 2006; Wu, 2010b; Smith, 2010; Fu and Lin, 2014; He, 2015b). Moreover, the booming nature of commodity housing developments in urban China has brought far-reaching impacts to the structure of the national economy. In the early 2010s, the consumption of CCHEs was the main driver that powered ongoing Chinese urbanism (He and Lin, 2015; Glaeser *et al.*, 2017). Urban space and urban society have both witnessed great changes because of the rampant growth and distribution of walled CCHEs (Wu, 2010b, 2015; Yeh *et al.*, 2015; Shin, 2016).

2.4 Walled CCHEs in Chinese urbanism

2.4.1 The new walled residential pattern

The new CCHE, with the enclosed residential pattern, has been conceptualised as gated communities from the western perspective. Indeed, the common application of physical fences and gated controls in individual CCHEs presents a physical barrier that creates isolation with regards to both urban space and urban life, as indicated in Figure 2.13 (Webster *et al.*, 2002; Blandy and Lister, 2005; Wu, 2010b; Yip *et al.,* 2012). However, by giving due consideration to Chinese urban history, it can also be seen that such walled CCHEs may not simply be a reconceptualisation

of the western 'gated community' concept (Webster *et al.*, 2002; Huang, 2006). With regard to the long history and tradition to the walled residential pattern in Chinese cities, this new walled pattern may endow a unique social discourse that is deeply rooted in Chinese residential culture (Webster *et al.*, 2002; Huang, 2006; Wu, 2010; Wang *et al.*, 2012; He and Lin, 2015). Huang (2006) pointed out that the walled elements in contemporary CCHEs may be better understood as following traditional Chinese urban residential patterns rather than representing a western imported concept (Xu and Yang, 2009; Fu and Lin, 2014; Wang and Goodman, 2014; Huang, 2006). If this proposition is accepted, it suggests that a collectivist lifestyle is still important in contemporary Chinese urbanism. Moreover, the walled CCHEs can best be understood as a spatial result of the process of Chinese urban redevelopment being based on an interaction between state, market, and society (Smith, 2007, 2010; Wu, 2010b).

Figure 2.13 The applications of gated control in CCHEs
Source: Author

As the entrepreneurs in the freeing market, Chinese local states were the main drivers of urban redevelopment during the reform era (Wu, 2015). With regard to the establishment of the fiscal sharing system in the 1990s, urban construction lands were continually released to the urban land market as a means of generating fiscal revenue (He and Lin, 2015; Wu, 2015; Yeh *et al.*, 2015). Local states applied

various administrative approaches to transforming urban space into construction lands and especially the application of statutory urban plans. As Wu (2015) pointed out, the Chinese statutory urban planning system turned 'cities into a growth machine' (p.79), whilst urban master plans (*Zongti Guihua*) and urban detailed control plans helped to realise rapid economic growth (Shin, 2016; Yeh *et al*., 2015). From the late 1990s to the late 2000s, enormous amounts of urban construction land were turned into areas of industrial land through creating industrial parks and economic development zones; each helped to attract market investments for manufacturing industry (Lin, 2007a; He and Lin, 2015; Yeh *et al*., 2015; Wu and Cheng, 2018). By that date, the urban residential development was more as the consequence of the urban industrialisation, as CCHEs were mainly layed out in a dispersel form in association with individual industrial parks and economic zones (Wu, 2010b, 2015, 2016). After 2008, with regard to the global financial crisis, Chinese local states shifted their administrative and planning practices towards offering more residential and commercial lands for commodity housing development (Glaeser *et al*., 2017). Numerous old urban neighbourhoods, including traditional courtyards and socialist work villages, were demolished and replaced by new residential and commercial developments (Wu, 2015). Sooner, there emerged a common picture that Chinese cities became the laboratories in producing individual walled CCHEs with investments from the state and market (Wu and Cheng, 2018). Otherwise, within such booming commodity housing development, Chinese societal forces also presented their great consumptions on these private properties. As a social consequence of Chinese new urbanism, Chinese citizens' increased awareness of ownership rights and traditional collectivist residential cultures are integrated with gated management commonly emerged in urban residential landscape (Bray, 2005, 2006; Huang, 2006; Xu and Yang, 2009). As suggested by some empirical evidence, such gated managements applied in CCHEs are spontaneously reinforced by the local homeowners, with their minds on forming a collective lifestyle as a part of Chinese urban culture (Abramson, 2006; Huang, 2006; Xu and Yang, 2009; Douglass *et al*., 2012; Fu and Lin, 2014).

2.4.2 The emerged urban enclavism in redefining Chinese new urbanism

The continual emergence of walled CCHEs and other walled urban blocks have greatly challenged the original spatial orders of Chinese cities (Webster *et al*., 2002;

Huang, 2006; Wu, 2015). CCHEs are, as individual fortresses, changing existent urban spatial structures into an enclaved pattern. In addition, the growth of CCHEs has also resulted in a restructuring of urban society, because 'increasingly stratified, polarised, and revanchist urban landscapes with enduring and widespread social discontents' have emerged (Lin and Zhang, 2015, p.2775). The new urban middle class experiences a better residential environment and public services within the individual walled CCHEs (Wu *et al.*, 2014). In contrast, some urban marginalised populations are excluded from the quality urban residences and have been forced to move out of inner-urban areas because of the widespread growth of the CCHEs (Lu, 2006; Douglass *et al.*, 2012; Wu, 2015). Numerous dilapidated neighbourhoods, ghettos, and urban villages (*Chenzhong Cun*) have emerged in suburban areas. The result, therefore, has been the emergence of an increasingly differentiated pattern of residences in Chinese cities; with these stances, urban enclavism is defined as being emerging in Chinese cities (Douglass *et al.*, 2012; He and Lin, 2015). Moreover, in recent years, the rampant production of walled CCHEs along with further gentrification within inner urban areas has further enhanced the extent to which enclavism exists (Atkinson and Blandy, 2005; Li *et al.*, 2012; Blandy and Wang, 2013; Shin, 2016; Hendrikx and Wissink, 2017).

Within such an conceptualised urban enclavism, CCHEs have been regarded as the localised spatial entities, which provide the certain lifestyles for the urban middle class as the Western gated communities (Webster *et al.*, 2002; Lu, 2006; Douglass *et al.*, 2012). In fact, following the collectivist lifestyle, some CCHEs have been proactively transformed into the collective realm by local property owners (Huang, 2006; Yip, 2012; He, 2015a, 2015b). This social transition can be observed by the common establishment of Homeowners' Associations (HOAs) within the individual walled CCHEs (Webbster, 2003; Yip, 2012; Hendrikx and Wissink, 2017).However, as suggested by empirical evidence, the walled CCHEs do not reflect the essential feature as Western gated communities, as self-segregated from urban society (Iossifova, 2009; Xu and Yang, 2009; Wang *et al.*, 2012; Hu and Scott, 2016). Indeed, in individual CCHEs, the neighbourhood tends to be heterogeneously and inclusively formed (Douglass *et al.*, 2012; Yip, 2012). Therefore, the walled residential CCHEs may be better understood as the reflection of the ongoing social changes within Chinese new urbanism, rather than as the driver of social

stratification that tended to be radical within the Western urban enclavism (Huang, 2006; Douglass *et al.*, 2012).

2.4.3 The deteriorating place-based community life in CCHEs

The global urban enclavism witnessed the great social changes in global cities and fragmenting urban societies (Atkinson and Blandy, 2005; Wissink, 2013), as 'enclaves with innovative governance forms such as special economic zones, gated communities, shopping malls, and factory towns are grafted onto the existing spatial mosaic of neighbourhoods, cities, and states' (Douglass *et al.*, 2012, p.168). Similarly, the rampant emergence of walled CCHEs suggests that urban neighbouring has deteriorated. Typically, the traditional urban neighbourhoods and socialist worker's villages that used to characterise Chinese solidary urban society have been greatly replaced by individual CCHEs that reflected the current fragmented urban society (Bray, 2005, 2006; Shieh and Friedmann, 2008; Gui *et al.*, 2009; Xu *et al.*, 2010; He, 2013; He and Lin, 2015; Zhu, 2015; Verdini; 2015). Meanwhile, place-based primary social ties have been replaced by multi-dimensional secondary social ties between individuals, based upon higher social mobility (Huang, 2005, 2006; Wu and He, 2005; Chen and Lu, 2007; Ye, 2011; Zhai and Ng, 2013). There has been increased separation between where individuals work, live, and engage in social activities (Zhai and Ng, 2013; He and Lin, 2015; Verdini; 2015; Shin, 2016; Glaeser *et al.*, 2017; Wu and Cheng, 2018). In addition, ongoing Chinese urbanism has shown that the influence and control of the state on urban society at the grassroots scale has weakened. Before the reform, the Chinese party-state used to be effective in organising and uniting grassroots neighbourhoods (Bray, 2006; Shieh and Friedmann, 2008; Wang, 2016). However, the political decentralisation and the local state entrepreneurial transition in the reform era has shifted the local states' emphasise to economic growth (Shieh and Friedmann, 2008; Fu and Lin, 2014; Wang, 2016). The grassroots social activities and entertainments that used to be organised by these grassroots state authorities became rare in the reform era, and such absences of local state authorities in grassroots social life witnessed the deterioration of placed-based ties among neighbours. To a certain extent, grassroots social development as maintaining the community life and place-based ties is no longer the main contents of current Chinese urban governance (Huang, 2006; Bray, 2006; Shieh and Friedmann, 2008; He, 2013; Verdini; 2015;

Wang, 2016).

However, in another stance, there emerged some new images of place-based neighbouring life in contemporary CCHEs (Breitung, 2014; Fu and Lin, 2014; Zhu and Fu, 2017). Initially, as following the traditional walled residential pattern, the walled CCHEs repress some aspects of local collectivism. Empirically, such local collectivism can be observed through the emergence of local voluntary organisations as HOAs (Fu and Lin, 2014; He, 2015b). These local organisations have proved to be functional in organising collective living within the walled neighbourhoods (Huang, 2006; Gui *et al*., 2009; Ye and Jiang, 2011; Fu and Lin, 2014; Zhou, 2014; He, 2015b). For example, in some coastal cities, property owners in CCHEs have applied the local HOAs to structure their self-governance and civic actions (Li, 2000; Wu, 2002; Tomba, 2005; Fu and Lin, 2014; He, 2015b). However, such examples do not evidence the existence of community structures within the CCHEs based exclusively on the existence of local HOAs. Empirically, the organisational social networks within local HOAs are proved to be loose and small in number with limited ability to create place-based social ties among property owners who have limited knowledge of each other (Yip and Jiang, 2011; Fu and Lin, 2014; He, 2015b). Therefore, although there exists local collectivism among neighbours, place-based neighbouring and/or community life seems to be poor in walled CCHEs (Yip and Jiang, 2011; He and Qian, 2017).

2.5 The CCHEs' role in framing Chinese new urban society

Since 1978 Chinese cities have not only created new urban spaces for rapid urbanism, they have also produced new socio-economic spaces that have consistently restructured urban society (Friedmann, 2000, 2005; He and Lin, 2015; Yeh *et al*., 2015; Wu, 2016a, 2016b; Gao and Yuan, 2017; Gao *et al*., 2017; Zhou *et al*., 2019). The spatial consequences of the Chinese new urbanism, such as the commodification of urban land, commodity housing, and social stratification, all may provoke the adequate application of the neo-liberal framework in evaluating the changes that occurred in Chinese cities. Neo-liberal concepts, such as neo-liberal urbanism, urban enclavism, and gated communities, also limit the objectives and detailed observations of ongoing Chinese urbanism with its unique characteristics (Wu, 2016a; Zhou *et al*., 2019). Initially, the neo-liberal stance proved inadequate within the Chinese urban context (Huang, 2006; Keith *et al*.,

2013; Wan, 2016; Zhou *et al*., 2019). Otherwise, the unique driving mechanism in Chinese new urbanism, with the involvements of state, market, and society, also presents a significant challenge to the global neo-liberal perception that views capital as the central driver of tremendous urban changes (Hsing, 2010; He and Lin, 2015; Wu, 2016b; Horesh and Lim, 2017; Li and Chan, 2017). Indeed, the neo-liberal perception certain ignores the activeness of Chinese states and societal forces in producing those tremendous urban changes (Wu, 2016b). So far, the dynamics expressed within Chinese new urbanism in the reform era have been proved to be more various and hybrid than those experienced in other regions globally (Zhou *et al*., 2019). There is a point that Chinese urban transitions 'provide a laboratory' to observe the different nature of ongoing urbanism in Chinese cities (Wu, 2016a, p.346). As Zhou *et al.* (2019) emphasized,

> 'Chinese cities also display novel developments that may well pioneer the future trends of cities. These are often not on urban scholar's radars, either because of a lack of precedence elsewhere or because of a mismatch with the prism of neoliberalism' (p.39).

The neo-liberal perception of Chinese urban society on the basis of booming commodity housing development may present a certain degree of subjectivity, commonly with CCHEs conceptualised as gated communities (Huang, 2006; Wu, 2016b). It is certain that the booming CCHEs in Chinese cities witnessed a deterioration of neighbouring in urban residential spaces. To an extent, this can be understood as a consequence of the ongoing land finance regime and housing commodification within the neo-liberal framework. In contrast, societal forces' active responses may have been neglected due to the ongoing social transitions. With regard to Chinese urban culture and collectivism, the formation of community life needs long-term social interactions among neighbours in close proximity (Wu, 1992; Miao, 2003; Huang, 2006; Xu and Yang, 2009). It follows that community life in a Chinese context is different from western perceptions of urban community which tend to be portrayed as open and mixed (Wellman and Leighton, 1979; Forrest and Kearns, 2001). Therefore, even though some empirical studies indicate that there is poor neighbouring in CCHEs, it is too simplistic to make a direct clam about the disappearing place-based community life in these new emergent walled residential compounds. There also exists subjectivity with regard to defining the loss of urban community in contemporary China (Bray, 2005; He and Wu, 2009; Douglass *et al*., 2012; He, 2013; Breitung, 2014; Glaeser *et al*., 2017).

With regard to the homeowners' collective actions that have occurred in some CCHEs, there exists a certain degree of local collectivism that may also indicate the existence of place-based ties among neighbours (Tomba, 2005; Fu and Lin, 2014; Fu *et al*., 2015; He, 2015b). Specifically, within such homeowners' collective actions, local voluntary organisations, as HOAs, express the structuring functions of local organisational social networks (Yip and Jiang, 2011; Yip *et al*., 2014; Fu and Lin, 2014). By now, the homeowners' associations (HOAs) have been widely formed in individual CCHEs, to serve the local residents' self-management on their collective and private properties (He, 2015a). Commonly, there exists the election of HOA members in individual CCHEs, to represent the local residents to have exchange, trades, and contracts with state authorities or market forces (Li, 2010). It is undeniable that, to a certain extent, these HOA have replaced the state's insufficient social control at the local scale (Li, 2010; He, 2015b; Fu *et al*., 2015).

So far, the booming of commodity housing developments in urban China has brought individual property compounds to cities (Wang *et al*., 2012; Wu, 2015, 2016a). As agglomerations of these private and collective properties, CCHEs provide residences and modern lifestyles to growing urban populations who have higher civic consciousness and legal awareness of the need to defend their property ownership (Wang *et al*., 2012; Shin, 2016; Wu, 2016a, 2016b; Xu and Lin, 2018; Zhou *et al*., 2019). Since 2000s, the property owners' collective civic actions in association with constructions of CCHEs have been rapidly increased (Shi and Cai, 2006; Cai, 2008a, 2008b; Shi, 2008; Yip *et al*., 2014). Such social facts enable civic development within walled CCHEs, and supports self-governance and collective action by the local property owners (Fu and Lin, 2014; Yip *et al*., 2014; Fu *et al*., 2015). In addition, local voluntary organisations and some HOAs have also supported civic development in CCHEs through the development of organisational social networks amongst property owners (Yip and Jiang, 2011; He, 2015b). By regarding HOAs as local civic organisations, He (2015a, 2015b) pointed out that property owners in CCHEs can be united as the local collectives with their organisational social networks formed by the local HOAs. Since the early 2010s, the rising number of homeowners' civic actions that have occurred in CCHEs may indicate the emergence of new place-based ties, which are neither clan-based nor karmic-based but property-led (Yip *et al*., 2014; Fu and Lin, 2014; Fu *et al*., 2015;

He, 2015b; Huang and Sun, 2015; Fu and Distellhorst, 2018; Xu and Lin, 2018). Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that local collective actions may enhance local social capital and social cohesion in the new urban communities within urban China.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has, through a review of literature, outlined the tremendous changes that have occurred in Chinese new urbanism since the reform era. This chapter has provided an understanding of the potential and possible grassroots social developments inside CCHEs within a Chinese context. These contexts serve as the theoretical foundations for the empirical studies that follow. The chapter reviewed Chinese urban neighbourhoods in both Feudal and Socialist eras, in order to provide readers with a thorough understanding of community life and how collectivist ideology is involved in walled residential patterns. Current academic arguments and observations as to Chinese new urbanism within a neo-liberal framework were also presented and these reflect ongoing changes in urban China. Such arguments and observations may, however, also restrict an objective evaluation of ongoing grassroots social changes inside CCHEs because of the walled pattern and the collectivist living ideology, which are both deeply rooted in Chinese collectivist neighbouring culture. Evidence pertaining to homeowners' civic actions implies, as shown in this literature review, the potential emergence of new urban neighbouring in CCHEs; this may reshape the 'powerfully theoretical terrain' within neo-liberal discourses (Zhou *et al.*, p.40).

To conclude, the homeowners' civic actions that have occurred in CCHEs may provide a focus point for evaluating community formation and restructuring in present-day urban China. However, with regard to contemporary civil society in urban China, there exist some obstacles in the evaluation of community life in CCHEs with regard to homeowners' civic actions because of civic development is differentiated at various scales (Cai and Sheng, 2013; Wang *et al.*, 2013; Teets, 2014; Fu and Distellhorst, 2018). The next chapter, Chapter Three examines the development of civil society in urban China after the reform and evaluates as to whether homeowners' civic actions are consistent within the booming CCHEs.

Chapter Three

Chinese civil society and property-led civic actions

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the notion of Chinese civil society which is fundamental in supporting the research deployed in this thesis. In so doing, the chapter initially demonstrates the common acceptance of the concept of modern civil society within both global neoliberal contexts and the Chinese context. Since the open door policy reforms that were begun in 1978, increasing grassroots' civic actions and numerous civic organisations have emerged. This is perhaps indicative of the bottom-up nature of the development of Chinese civic society when it comes to changing urban society. Currently, the party-state's repression of Chinese civil society can be illustrated by the continued growth in grassroots' civic actions in the form of civic petitions. Furthermore, the rising number of property-led civic actions that have occurred in Chinese Commodity Housing Estates (CCHEs) indicates the development of a new form of social capital which is facilitating local collective action in reaction to the actions of state authorities and market forces.

This chapter is organised as follows. First, the common acceptance of modern civil society in global neoliberal contexts is discussed. Secondly, and moving to the Chinese reform context, section 3.3 focuses on the bottom-up development of China's civic society. Thereafter, section 3.4 describes how civic development within the state-sanctioned channels of China has emerged, with an especial focus on collective civic petitions. In section 3.5, property-led civic actions in CCHEs are discussed as an illustration of grassroots' civic capacity to defend homeowners' collective rights and interests. Finally, the conclusion presents a rationale for evaluating collective civic petitions that have occurred in CCHEs as a means to re-evaluate place-based community life in contemporary urban China.

3.2 Civil society within the global neoliberal context

The concept of civil society has its origins in Western ideologies pertaining to democracy. It has been commonly translated into global political, social, and economic discourses related to neoliberal reform since the 1980s; it 'was reinvented in Eastern Europe and Latin America in the 1980s and found its way into the policy

language of international development agencies during the 1990s' (Glasisu *et al.*, 2004, p.3). Following Tocqueville's original treatise upon civil society, the self-governing character of American common associational life is an impressive phenomenon, in which 'Americans combine to give fetes, build churches, distribute books, and send missionaries to the antipodes' (Spires, 2011, p.3). With regard to this stance, civil society is built on the fundamentals of local voluntary organisations which are capable of maintaining grassroots' associational order and place-based social ties (Spires, 2011). By regarding local voluntary organisations as the bedrock of civil society, some extensions of Tocqueville's thesis have led to the creation of a logic link between civil society and politic institutions (Foley and Edwards, 1996; Theiss-Morse and Hibbing, 2005; Spires, 2011; Fung, 2015). However, a dynamic civil society may not lead to a strong democracy, and it is now widely accepted that civil societies may thrive in both democratic and non-democratic state contexts (Glasisu *et al.*, 2004). As Alagappa (2004) remarked,

> 'Civil society is an arena of power, inequality, struggle, conflict, and cooperation among competing identities and interest. It is populated by diverse formal and informal organisations with widely varying structures, resources, purposes, and methods (p. 46)'.

Since the 1980s, neoliberal reforms across the globe have produced common social and economic threats to citizenship, such as reductions in social welfare, high rates of unemployment, widespread social inequality, and insufficiently active, efficient and effective governance (Bartley, 2003; 2007; Theiss-Morse and Hibbing, 2005; Bair and Palpacuer, 2012; Lim and Tsutsui, 2012; Almeida and Chase-Dunn, 2018). The global homogenising impacts of neoliberal reforms have consequently induced and stimulated grassroots civic responses at local, national, and transnational levels. The fallout from the 2009 global financial crisis with regard to, for instance changed socio-economic structures, has further stimulated grassroots civic actions with anti-neoliberal campaigns in various country contexts (Wood, 2012; Almeida, 2014; Castells, 2015; Almeida and Chase-Dunn, 2018). In addition, the global popularisation of voluntary organisations such as NGOs (Non-governmental Organisations), with their functions in leading grassroots civic actions and re-shaping socio-economic institutions, has also supported the growing acceptance of the role of civil society within global contexts. With empirical evidence from Eastern Asian and Middle Eastern contexts (Cotton, 1989; Elbayar, 2005; Hsu,

2008), numerous voluntary organisations have been recognised as being active in leading grassroots collective resistance against the privatisation of public services and the unequal provision of public goods (Spires, 2012). To a certain extent, these active voluntary organisations deliberately take an opposite stance to the state, including democratic and authoritarian states, with their consistent struggles for absolute citizenship and social equality. However, as suggested by evidence from post-Soviet, African, and Asian contexts in the last decade (Lewis, 2002, 2004; Hilhorst, 2003; Glasius *et al*., 2004; Bair and Palpacuer, 2012; Almeida and Chase-Dunn, 2018), the boundaries between voluntary organisations and the state have been blurred with the increasing involvement of NGOs in political spheres. This blurring of distinctions has also supported the widespread acceptance of the formation of civil society in the contemporary global world.

As part of this wider movement, civil society in contemporary China has also been accepted within the authoritarian context of the state. Similar to global experiences, the emergence of contemporary Chinese civil society is a direct consequence of the state-driven reforms that occurred since 1978 and especially the neoliberal transitions which have taken place (Teets, 2014). From the 1980s to 2010, growing social and political challenges have emerged because of the process of reform, and grassroots civic actions are continually challenging both the state's authority and that of market providers. The emergence of numerous voluntary organisations is also impacting the evolution of Chinese social and political institutions. With the recognition of the double-edged role of bottom-up civic development, the Chinese party-state is striving to institute one consultative institutional mechanism to respond to bottom-up civic development whilst simultaneously repressing those contentious civic actions which could challenge the party-state's legitimacy (Teets, 2014). So far, civil society in China has not democratized the state, but the enormous number of grassroots civic actions and civic organisations that have facilitated active grassroots citizen participation have foostered the common civic development in urban China (Yang, 2003a, 2003b; Cai, 2008a; 2008b; Teets, 2014, 2015). Such bottom-up civic development in China has brought about profound changes to the Chinese political and social system at the urban grassroots level.

3.3 The changing nature of Chinese civil society from 1978 to 2012

The tremendous socio-economic changes that have occurred since 1978 have

resulted in further social inequality in Chinese cities and villages (Oi, 2003; Cai, 2008a, 2008b; Teets, 2014). Such changes have, not unreasonably, stimulated grassroots resistance whereby communities claim their citizenship and legalised rights. Moreover, the relatively lax political atmosphere that existed after the Cultural Revolution (from 1966 to 1976) provided an opportunity for the formation of voluntary organisations, which were initially started by university students and intellectuals in the 1980s (Hsu, 2010). Some of these voluntary organisations undertook civic action that influenced Chinese political and social development at both local and national level, most notably, the national students' civic actions in 1986 and 1989 (Cai, 2008a). Although they experienced severe setbacks following the events in Tiananmen Square in 1989, Chinese voluntary organisations have emerged again and started to (re)engage in debates regarding the delivery of public services (Cai, 2008a; Heberer, 2009; Hsu, 2010; Duckett and Wang, 2013). With the apparent emergence of unstoppable bottom-up civic movements, the party-state adopted more flexible and adoptive practices towards managing such bottom-up civic developments. To a certain extent, the party-state tolerated the growing engagement of Chinese citizens and the emergence of voluntary organisations because such civic developments proved to be effective in solving problems within the state's insufficient institutional setting (Shi, 1997; Teets, 2014, 2015). However, the party-state always reacts cautiously to social changes and has repressed radical grassroots resistances that are ideologically understood to be threats to the party-state's legitimacy (Yang, 2003a; Cai, 2008a, 2008b; Heberer, 2009; Teets, 2014, 2015).

3.3.1 The Chinese citizen's growing civic participation

The party-state's ending of the Chinese Cultural Evolution (*Wenge*) certainty helped bottom-up civic development in China, with the relative freeing up of the political and social atmosphere that existed at that time (Wakeman, 1993; Shi, 1997; Cai, 2008a). Some civic actions at the local scale level were actioned to try and reclaim individual and collective legalised rights that had been unequally negated in the Cultural Evolution. Furthermore, some civic actions were led by university students and intellectuals who claimed that there was a need for further reforms in both political and social institutions (Cai, 2008a; Teets, 2014, 2015). Such civic actions by students became national civic actions in 1986 and 1989, and were repressed by

the party-state in that summer. After this, grassroots civic actions at the national level almost disappeared because of the state's serious repression (Shi, 1997; Wang, 1997; Teets, 2014). However, some severe social problems emerged following the party-state's ongoing reforms of the 1990s, such as land loss in rural areas and job losses in state-owned enterprises. Such social problems immediately resulted in grassroots grievances that stimulated grassroots civic actions against the local scale (Rakin, 1993; Wankman, 1993; Oi, 2004; Cai, 2008a). However, these grassroots civic actions were mostly small in scope, and thus represented only minor challenges to the party-state's legitimacy (Shi, 1997). By the middle of the 1990s, these severe social problems, alongside newer problems, had been become acute; this resulted in a common grassroots civic resistance revival. By the end of the 1990s, and as a consequence of the national reforms, these radical social problems had become even more dramatic and transformed into glaring disparities between rich and poor, giving rise to labour abuses, and had also resulted in land seizures in urban and rural China (Kahn, 2006; Lum, 2006; Cai, 2008b; Nonini, 2008; Fu and Distelhorst, 2018).

As a consequence of such glaring social disparities, Chinese grassroots civic actions tended to become broader in scope, enjoyed greater numbers of participants, and also became more aggressive (Lum, 2006). Grassroots civic actions against state authorities and the consequences of market reform have grown exponentially since 2000s. As Lum (2006) indicated, based on reliable sources from the central party-state, grassroots civic actions across the whole nation grew by nearly 50% from 2004 to 2005. The civic actions were more aggressive than they had been in the 1990s and in 2011 some 180,000 actions were reported (Lagerkvist, 2015). Cai (2008b) indicated through a survey conducted with more than 10,000 people in 2005 (including urban citizens and rural residents) more than 9 percent of the interviewees reported that they had participated in civic actions. 2.5 percent reported that their participation in civic resistance was against state authorities; both local and higher-level state authorities. Moreover, as indicated in another survey conducted between 2003 to 2004, about 6 percent of rural interviewees confirmed their participation in contentious resistance against local state authorities in the last two decades (Landry and Tong, 2005). Even within the party-state's repressive management of Chinese civil society since 2012, grassroots civic actions have still

experienced continual growth. For example, in 2015, grassroots administrative lawsuits and civic petitions increased dramatically and 'reached a per capital level almost 50 percent higher than in any of the previous fifteen years' (Fu and Distelhorst, 2018, p.120).

Consistent with this explosion in activity since the late 1990s, Chinese grassroots civic actions have become more varied with regard to the concerns upon which they raise resistance. At the beginning of the reform era, in the 1980s, grassroots civic actions were mainly a response to state actions at the local level, except for the national student protests of 1986 and 1989. For example, grassroots collective actions mostly sought direct contacts with local leaders within the grassroots state's authorities (including rural Villagers' Committees, urban Street Offices, and urban Residents' Committees) and individual state-owned enterprises (Shi, 1997; Cai, 2008a, 2008b). After the 1990s, however, there was a transition that grassroots were starting to apply administrative lawsuits and civic petitions, which were institutionalised as state-sanctioned channels (Cai, 2008a; Duckett and Wang, 2013). Such a shift may indicate citizens' rising awareness of using legislation as a means to promote resistance. Concurrently, Chinese citizens also started to undertake their civic actions through non-institutionalised modes, mainly in the form of violent clashes directly against state authorities. These were mostly recognised as not permitted or illegal. These illegal civic actions were mainly led by marginalised populations, such as farmers who had suffered land loss, laid-off workers, and migrant workers, whose legal rights and interests were adversely affected by the state's reforms (Lum, 2006). After the 2000s, and as a consequence of the popularity of the internet, online civic actions have emerged as a significant kind of citizenship participation in contemporary China (Yang, 2003a, 2003b, 2014; Bryson *et al.*, 2014; Xue and van Stekelenburg, 2018). These grassroots civic actions are undoubtedly evidence of the growth of a bottom-up oriented civil society in contemporary China. Such bottom-up civic development also indicates citizens' growing awareness of their ability and willingness to participate in reforming China.

3.3.2 Voluntary organisations in Chinese civic development

Following the Chinese national students' protests of 1989, the active involvement of various voluntary organisations formed by university students and intellectuals across a range of activities emerged (McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Snow *et al.*, 1980;

Chamberlain, 1993; Huang, 1993; Madsen, 1993; Rankin, 1993; Rowe, 1993; Wakeman, 1993; McAdam, 2010; Spires, 2011). Such active involvement suggested that there existed organisational social ties in facilitating and structuring national civic action (Wakeman, 1993; McAdam, 2010; Spires, 2011; Teets, 2014). As Calhoun (1993) discussed, based on his own observation of the events in Tiananmen Square, voluntary organisations, as the institutions outside the realm of the party-state, had substantial civic capacity to raise integrated grassroots civic resistance against the party-state. Such a description about Chinese voluntary organisations in the 1980s is certainly similar to the descriptions of civic organisations within Tocqueville's and Putnam's theses, in which the local organisational social networks were vital in structuring a local civic action (Putnam, 2001a, 2001b; McAdam *et al.,* 2003; Tarrow, 2011; Lu and Tao, 2017). However, after 1989, the active participation of Chinese voluntary organisations reduced significantly and became almost stagnant because of the high levels of repression from the party-state. This state of affairs only changed in the late 1990s when some voluntary organisations re-emerged at both national and local scales; this is consistent with the explosion of Chinese grassroots civic action (Howell, 1996; Hsu, 2010). By the beginning of the 21st Century, an enormous number of Chinese voluntary organisations had been constituted and routinely operated within the popular public sphere (Ma, 2006; Spires, 2007), dealing with such issues as 'poverty alleviation, educational equality, the environment, and health care' (Hsu, 2010, p.259).

However, not all of these voluntary organisations can be categorised as genuine civic organisations, which reflect the real civic virtue and function (Lagerkvist, 2015). This is because of the special relationships that some of them have association with the party-state (Hsu, 2010). Some of them, especially those that are continually active in the national public sphere, are directly created and operated by the party-state (Saich, 2000; Yu, 2007; Unger, 2008; Lu and Tao, 2017). The party-state provides financial support to such voluntary organisations and permits official registration of their activities at both national and local scales (Yu, 2007; Lagerkvist, 2015; Lu and Tao, 2017). By 2013, the number of party-state supported voluntary organisations had reached 511,000. It was only 4,446 in 1989 (Lagerkvist, 2015). As Howell (2007) discussed, the development of such voluntary

organisations, with clear involvement of the party-state, was a direct consequence of the party-state's intervention and concessions to the ongoing fierce tensions between the state and society during the reform era. From the state's perspective, these official voluntary organisations offered more flexibility to deal with any grassroots crises and claims compared to the party-state especially with the latter having undergone extensive political decentralisation since the late 1990s (Lu and Tao, 2017). In practice, such official voluntary organisations have been able to promote interactions between grassroots and state authorities, and have also been able to fill the gap left by the state's privatisation of public services in the reform era. Entirely different to the conception of civic organisation, these official voluntary organisations mostly as supporter taking a supporting stance to the state authorities or market forces (Lu and Tao, 2017). As Hsu (2010) pointed out, most of these official voluntary organisations were permitted, without any intention of weakening or replacing party-state governance, but rather to strengthen the party-state's legitimacy. Specifically, and as empirically observed, most of these official voluntary organisations lack a real sense of autonomy in their operations (Zhang and Baum, 2004; Lu and Tao, 2017).

Nevertheless, some of the official voluntary organisations can be identified as civic organisations because of their own institutional interdependence which is achieved through the semi-autonomous nature of their organisational operations (Lu and Tao, 2017). These semi-autonomous voluntary organisations include local associations, such as the Homeowners' Associations (HOAs) which exist in individual urban residential compounds, and Villagers' Committees in individual villages. Without direct state-control but enjoying a relatively close relationship with the local state's authorities, these semi-autonomous voluntary organisations are capable of safeguarding the common interests of local neighbourhoods, and even structuring local civic actions against the state or market if either (or both) compromise local interests (Deng and Ruan, 2006; Hurst *et al*., 2013; Lu and Tao, 2017). At the other end of the spectrum, some unregistered voluntary organisations exist as autonomous organisations. These organisations have high autonomy and are actively involved in bottom-up civic development (Teets, 2014; Lagerkvist, 2015). These unregistered voluntary organisations have also frequently emerged as bodies which mobilise grassroots discontent and facilitate civic resistance (Lagerkvist,

2015; Lu and Tao, 2017). Such activities could be considered to reflect a perceived lack of intervention in grassroots civic development on the part of the party-sate. Moreover, the emergence of these semi-autonomous and autonomous voluntary organisations could help to explain the explosion in Chinese grassroots civic action since the late 1990s, because of their role as meaningful civic organisations. However, being active in challenging the party-state, these civic organisations are only 'allowed to exist as long as they remain small, local, and apolitical' (Lu and Tao, 2017, p.1738). Such a flexible attitude from the state certainly benefit the increasing emergence of these semi-autonomous and autonomous civic organisations in China. Although there are no official or specific statistics, the number of these genuine civic organisations was estimated to be over eight million in 2003 (Wang and He, 2004; Lagerkvist, 2015). Moreover, involvement in these civic organisations through bottom-up civic development reflects the important application of organisational social networks in facilitating and structuring civic actions (Spires, 2011; Teets, 2014, 2015; Lu and Tao, 2017).

3.3.3 The party-state's response to bottom-up civic development

Since the late 1990s, the emergence of grassroots civic actions combined with the growth of genuine civic organisations in China has reflected a bottom-up civic development which has restructured contemporary civil society within the party-state political institutional framework. The escalating application of civic action against state authorities and the market by grassroots' organisations has proved to be a constant challenge to the state's legitimacy within the ongoing reform process; there have been rising grievances in both urban and rural China (Cai, 2008a, 2008b; O'Brien and Han, 2009; He, 2010; Zhu, 2011; Li *et al*., 2012; Duckett andWang, 2013; Bryson *et al*., 2014; Lagerkvist, 2015). However, the party-state has adopted limited polices and laxer governance since 2000. Due to the dramatic increase in socio-economic disparities within and between Chinese urban-rural societies, the party-state has followed Maoist ideology in encouraging grassroots citizenship participation and set up state-sanctioned channels for providing limited empowerment to grassroots groups. Challenges from grassroots groups, contentious resistance, and active civic organisations are certainly tolerated by the party-state. However, following on from the potentially regime-threatening students' civic resistances of 1989, the party-state also legislated, to a certain extent, to curtail

certain grassroots contentious actions in order to maintain social stability within the context of growing social conflicts (Cai, 2008a, 2008c).

Such state resistance is reflected in the decentralisation of managing Chinese civil society from the central party-state to the local state. This decentralisation has been integrated into the Chinese national administrative system since the early 2000s. Such decentralisation in state governance was initially set up with the aim of releasing pressure and costs from the central state in response to the explosion of grassroots civic action that emerged in the late 1990s (Cai, 2008a, 2008b; Duckett and Wang, 2013; Teets, 2015). Moreover, this decentralisation helped to protect the central state's legitimacy by distancing it from massive grassroots civic action, but still enabled it to have access to grassroots voices via local state authorities. Beyond this, and with responsibility shifting from the central state, local states were authorised to have flexibility in managing bottom-up civic developments (Cai, 2008a, 2008c). For example, censorship on contentious civic actions or declaring civic organisations' activities as legal or illegal could be fluid depending on the local state's judgement as to whether there were any threats to social stability or political legitimacy (Spires, 2011). Such a fluid management approach was conceptualised as the consultative democracy framework (Teets, 2014), 'which is a system whereby through deliberation and consultation with relevant constituencies the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) builds consensus around policy decisions' (Teets, 2015, p.173). Therefore, with the common application of this consultative democracy at a local scale, some grassroots civic actions with contentious form, as violent clash, can survive because they are apolitical, small in scope, and limited in terms of the challenging the state's legitimacy (Yang, 2003a). Some civic organisations, even those actively involved in grassroots civic resistance, also survived because they relieved the local state of tasks or obligations that focused on maintaining order among civic actors (Spires, 2011; Teets, 2014, 2015). The local states' flexible management of civil society, as consultative democracy framework at the local scale, were further understood as the contingent symbiosis (Spires, 2011). This local state's governance on grassroots civic actions provided the extending opportunities for the continual bottom-up civic development during the whole 2000s (Cai, 2008a, 2008c; Teets, 2014, 2015).

However, such a consultative democracy framework and contingent symbiosis are

not permanent as a consequence of the changing ideology of the central party-state. With the changed leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 2012, from Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping, the relax management of grassroots' civic development has been significantly changed in accordance with the party-state's ideological shift from decentralisation to consolidation (Teets, 2015; Fu and Distelhorst, 2018). Grassroots civic actions, especially contentious civic resistances, have been recognised as threats to local social stability and the party-state's legitimacy. Xi's central party-state has a propensity to criminalise civic actions and organisational activists that were out of the control of the state's institutions (Chen, 2012; Fu and Distelhorst, 2018). This meant that there was less fluid management of grassroots civic actions and civic organisations at the local scale. However, it is also worth noting that Xi's state did not aim to stop the bottom-up civic development; indeed, it seems to be unstoppable following the reform era (Teets, 2015; Fu and Distelhorst, 2018). As suggested by some empirical evidence, some civic organisations are now mobilizing grassroots civic actions in a disguised form (Douglass *et al*., 2012; Kuang and Göbel, 2013; Fu, 2017; Wu, 2017). Certainly, since 2012, Chinese civil society has experienced great changes because of the central party-state's shifted ideological position with regard to the bottom-up civic development that has emerged, and blossomed, since the late 1990s (Fu and Distelhorst, 2018).

3.4 Changes to Chinese civil society since 2012

As discussed by Fu and Distellhorst (2018), since 2012, three major shifts can be concluded to have occurred, namely; 'from framing repression as safeguarding social stability to safeguarding national security; from framing sporadic harassment to criminalisation, and from reactive to proactive repressions' (p.120). Within the current repressive management perspective, Chinese grassroots civic actions and civic organisations' activities are required to be institutionalised within the state's restrictive framework and supervised. However, this does not mean that there has been a total decay of Chinese civil society. Actually, there has been continued civic development within the state's institutions (Duckett and Wang, 2013; Teets, 2014; 2015; Fu and Distelhorst, 2018).

3.4.1 Institutionalised civil society

The institutionalised framework for managing contemporary Chinese civil society

is based on the party-state's dichotomised identification of explosive grassroots civic action since the late 1990s. The latter is generally classified into two forms; contentious civic actions and institutionalised civic actions (Teets, 2015; Fu and Distelhorst, 2018). Such a dichotomised identification by the party-state reflects the state's shifting ideology on the issue of social control; it tends to be lax with regard to grassroots civic action (Teets, 2014, 2015). Concerning the increase in social disparities that have emerged from the ongoing reforms, local state authorities are finding it more difficult to control and handle citizens' growing empowerment and resistance. Moreover, as some social disparities become more evident in contemporary China, especially housing inequality, the party-state's sanction of grassroots civic development seems to be an important mechanism to avoid any re-occurrence of the national civic action that emerged in 1989 (Teets, 2015; Distelhorst, 2017). As imagined by the party-state, such a dichotomised identification can be effective in maintaining the state's legitimacy and retaining the state's control on grassroots action (Duckett and Wang, 2013; Hou *et al.*, 2018).

However, at the local scale, it is very difficult to follow such a dichotomised classification in the practical management of current grassroots civic actions. For example, since the late 1990s most Chinese grassroots civic actions ended up being dealt with through the application of state-sanctioned channels, such as administrative lawsuits (O'Brien and Li, 2006; Distelhorst, 2017; Fu and Distelhorst, 2018). However, in contrast to the central state, local state authorities have adopted stricter strategies in trying to repress grassroots civic action since 2012. Most Chinese local states, including municipal and county governments, have applied a continual supervisory approach to grassroots civic action. Some advanced technologies have been applied to monitor citizens' social media activities to capture, reflect, and assess discontent (Liu, 2017). Moreover, it has been reported that some Chinese voluntary organisations, human right lawyers, and civic activists that used to be active in leading grassroots civic actions, are being strictly controlled and supervised by local state authorities (Teets, 2015; Hou *et al.*, 2018).

Chinese local state authorities have also broadened the state-sanctioned channels for more citizen empowerment and civic action in order to avoid contentious actions (Duckett and Wang, 2013; Teets, 2015; Fu and Distelhorst, 2018; Seligsohn *et al.*, 2018). For example, in 2012, the Hangzhou municipal government created new

channels by which grassroots activists could gain access to the political elites, such as a mayor hotline, a live television debate, and an online forum (Duckett and Wang, 2013). To a certain extent, within these new channels, the direct and immediate interaction between the state authorities and civic actors has improved the state's efficiency in resolving the grassroots problem, and it has also led to a reduction in violent clashes against state authorities (Dong and Kriesi, 2016). Such broadening of the channels for civic action has now been reproduced by most Chinese local state authorities (Duckett and Wang, 2013; Teets, 2014, 2015). Furthermore, traditional state-sanctioned channels, including administrative lawsuits and civic petitions, are being improved with increased administrative transparency (Wang and Peng, 2015; Chen, 2016). Such reforms are believed to be positive with grassroots civic groups increasingly using such applications to highlight their discontent (Chen, 2016). Therefore, even in the current repressive context, there seem to be more opportunities for empowering grassroots civic action within state-sanctioned channels, and less risk of challenge to the party-state's legitimacy (Duckett and Wang, 2013; Kuang and Göbel, 2013; Teets, 2015).

Currently, the significance of voluntary organisations in fulfilling the need to deliver social services and maintain grassroots social order is still highlighted by the state. However, genuine civic organisations – those which do not fall under the state's direct control, have been repressed within the state's institutionalisation of Chinese civil society to a certain extent. The local state's governance of these civic organisations has shifted to a highly constrained and supervisory role (Hsu and Hasmath, 2014; Teets, 2014, 2015). However, this does not mean that civic organisations have disappeared in contemporary Chinese grassroots civic development. Some unregistered voluntary organisations are still active in structuring some civic resistance, mainly raised by marginalised populations (Cao and Guo, 2016; Fu, 2017a, 2017b; Fu and Distelhorst, 2018). In addition, some civic organisations are now mobilizing grassroots collective actions through hidden pedagogical processes; such civic actions may be seen as spontaneously structured without organisational support (Fu, 2017). However, with regard to the contemporary party-state's repression, Chinese civic organisations have been negatively affected in organising the grassroots civic development (Hsu and Hasmath, 2014; Teets, 2014, 2015; Fu and Distelhorst, 2018; Seligsohn et al., 2018).

3.4.2 Civic petition as a common civic action

Empirically, the state-sanctioned channels seem to be increasingly trusted and used by Chinese citizens (Paik, 2012; Gao and Long, 2015; Wang and Peng, 2015). Appealing civic petitions (*Xinfang*), which is also termed as 'people's letters and visits' by the party-state, has continued its important function in Chinese grassroots civic action from the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 to contemporary China (Shi, 1997; Cai, 2008a, 2008b; O'Brien and Li, 2006; Ma and Li, 2014; Gao and Long, 2015). Originally, the party-state's establishment of the civic petition system in the 1950s can be seen as the succession of the Chinese traditional mode, in which citizens had their direct contacts with civil servants in seeking a solution (Huang, 1996; Cai, 2008a). After the Cultural Revolution and Mao's death in the late 1970s, appealing civic petitions became the grassroots' main choice in acquiring justice for individuals and collectives who received unfair treatment. After that, and with regard to the enormous emergent social disparities that have emerged from the reform period onwards, the civic petition has been commonly applied as an effective mechanism to resolve grassroots conflicts, improve local states' efficiency, and collect grassroots opinions by the party-state since the late 1990s (Howell, 2007; Gao and Long, 2015; Fu and Distelhorst, 2018). The party-state has also legislated and regulated the petition system by the promulgation of the 'National Regulations on Letters and Visit of the People's Republic of China' in 1995 (Chinese National Congress, 1995). Moreover, in the early 2000s, the central state amended the regulations of the petition system and decentralised the grassroots petition to the local scale. These party-state pieces of legislation and reforms to the petition system have the casual impacts on generating the explosive grassroots civic action and bottom-up civic development (Cai, 2008a, 2008b). Moreover, the Chinese party-state enabled hierarchical regulation and the management of grassroots civic petitions and these have been more repressive since 2012 (Liu *et al*., 2012; Fu and Distelhorst, 2018). According to the Chinese National Petition Regulation (Chinese State Council, 2006, 2014), a civic petition can only be legislated and institutionalised through an application to local government within the hierarchical system, (see Figure 3.1). For example, the civic petitions that occurred in CCHEs should first be presented to the District Bureau of People's Letter and Visiting (*Qu Xinfang Ju*) or District Government. If these district

departments cannot resolve the collective concern, then it can be considered by higher state authorities. Practically, civic petitions that occurred in CCHEs are fully processed by this state hierarchical governance structure, with civil servants appointed as arbitrators on individual petition (Liu *et al.,* 2012). Once the result of the arbitration is challenged by the petitioners, these citizens may further appeal to higher levels. However, with regard to the facts, most petitioners do not further present their challenges, because of more difficulties in processing these and their fears of state authoritarian (Teets, 2015; Fu and Distelhorst, 2018).
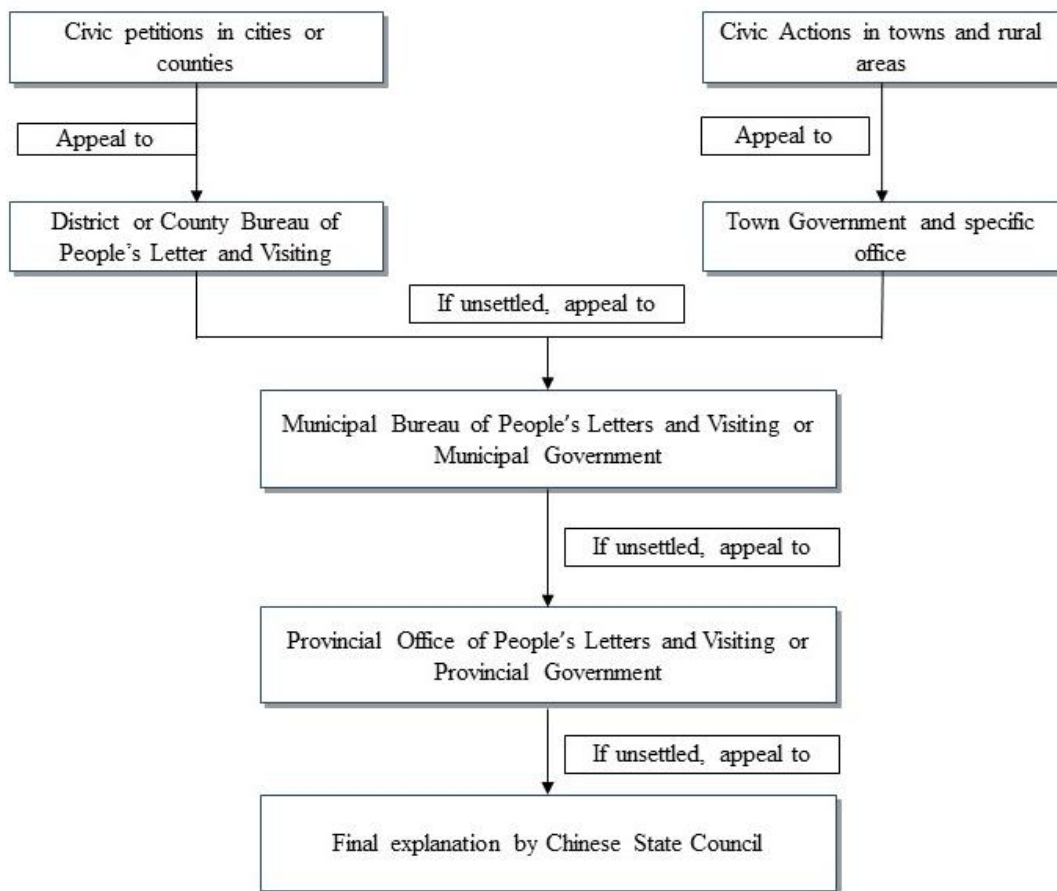
Figure 3.1 The China's hierarchical system of petition
Source: Teets, 2015; Fu and Distelhorst, 2018; Author

Chinese grassroots seem to place a lot of trust in civic petitions resolving their disputes. In a survey conducted by Cai (2008a) in 2005, over 15 percent of urban interviewees and nearly 10% of rural interviewees reported that they had taken part in a collective civic petition against their local state authorities and some other powerful market forces. In 2009, the number of grassroots civic petitions was estimated to be roughly 10 million across the whole nation (Dimitrov, 2015; Fu and Distelhorst, 2018). Moreover, among state-sanctioned channels, the civic petition

seems to be more trusted and relied upon by the grassroots than administrative lawsuits. Fu and Distellhorst (2018) noted in their estimation based on a national survey, proportionally more Chinese citizens apply for civic petitions than administrative lawsuits. Such a tendency can be explained by the relatively lower costs and political risks of petitioning, and by the party-state's ambiguous governance of Chinese civil society (Cai, 2008a, 2008b). Recently, with the integration of new media approaches such as online petitioning and hotline calling, appealing petitions has been estimated to be the most frequently applied approach in grassroots civic actions; it is a growing trend (Cai, 2010; Dimitrov, 2015; Gao and Long, 2015; Chen, 2016; Fu and Distelhorst, 2018).

Another difference from before is that there are a rising number of civic petitions with a collective focus on the civic sphere including collective property rights, primary education, environmental pollution, and other collective grievances (Cai, 2008a, 2008b, 2010; Fu and Distelhorst, 2018). Since 2012, appealing civic petitions has become a platform for grassroots empowerment and citizen participation that enables direct interaction with stakeholders (Cai, 2008b; Teets, 2015; Wong and Peng, 2015; Chen, 2016). Civic petitions are capable of reflecting the continual development of Chinese civic development within the contemporary party-state's repressing institutionalisation. Moreover, among these growing civic petitions, property-led civic action in Chinese cities is the outstanding trend both in terms of number and frequency in recent years (Lum, 2006; Yip *et al*., 2014; He, 2015b; Huang and Sun, 2015). Behind this widespread phenomenon, Chinese homeowners have become an important social group in leading civic resistance to the state and market (He, 2015b).

3.5 Rising property-led civic actions occurred in CCHEs

3.5.1 Homeowners' civic awareness in confronting property infringements

With regard to Chinese grassroots civic action from the late 1990s, Lum (2006) pointed out that urban homeowners living in CCHEs have been an important group in activating bottom-up civic development. Homeowners' civic actions are mainly based on their common awareness of property rights (Ho, 2005; Tomba, 2005; Li and Huang, 2006; Fu and Lin, 2014; Fu *et al*., 2015). Initially, on the basis of gated lifestyles and the quality of living environment within individual CCHEs, there is

common locality of interest articulation within Chinese homeowners' property awareness (Tomba, 2005; Yip *et al*., 2014; Huang and Sun, 2015). Moreover, the promulgation of 'Chinese Property Right Law' in 2007 legislated the inviolability of private and collective property, and witnessed the common sharing of rights' awareness in Chinese new urbanism (Chinese National People's Congress, 2007; Fu and Lin, 2014; Fu, 2015; Mattingly, 2016). This common awareness of private and collective property rights has supported Chinese homeowners' collective actions. Furthermore, the decentralisation of urban governance from the 2000s has enabled the growth in Chinese homeowners' civic actions with organisational support coming from local voluntary organisations. So far, homeowners' associations (HOAs) have been widely found in individual CCHEs as a form of self-organisation and self-governance replacing the party-state's insufficient social control at the local scale level (Li, 2010; Fu *et al*., 2015; He, 2015b). As unique voluntary organisations with local organisational social ties, HOAs are capable in providing organisational support for structuring and facilitating property-led civic actions (Fu, 2015; He, 2015b). Such organisational support from local HOAs has been proved by numerous studies (Yip and Jiang, 2011; Yip *et al*., 2014; Fu, 2015; Fu *et al*., 2015; He, 2015a, 2015b).

There has been an enormous increase in homeowners' civic actions and this is consistent with the rapid development of Chinese commodity housing since the middle 2000s (Shi and Cai, 2006; Cai, 2008b, 2008c; Shi, 2008; Yip *et al*., 2014; Huang and Sun, 2015; Fu, 2015). Alongside neighbourhood concerns, many civic actions are associated with infringements of local collective interests and common goods. As suggested by the aforementioned empirical studies, the key stakeholders who are active in Chinese urban housing market, the local state authorities (Street Office and Residents' Committee) and real-estate developers frequently have property-related conflicts with local homeowners (Breitung, 2014; Zhu and Ho, 2004; Huang and Sun, 2015; Fu, 2015).

Furthermore, in recent years, local homeowners have had more conflicts with property management companies (PMCs), which serve as private agencies that delivery property services to individual CCHEs (Yip *et al.,* 2014; He, 2015b). Private-led property management in CCHEs has been progressively developed as an integrated part of Chinese commodity housing developments, since early 2000s

(Wu, 2005). The emergence of PMCs are a consequence of Chinese new urbanism as state authorities have commodified some public services that used to be delivered either by local state authorities or state-owned enterprises (Li, 1997; Li and Siu, 2001; Wu, 2005; Blandy and Lister, 2006; Bray, 2006; Paris, 2006; He and Lin, 2015). They normally acquire contracts through HOAs or local collectives, and manage and maintain service provision within a number of separate but proximate collective properties (Li, 1997; Li and Siu, 2001). Different to Western property services, Chinese PMCs mostly serve as property maintainers and repairers for individual neighbourhoods in CCHEs, but have no controlment on any collective or private properties in CCHEs (Wu, 2005).

To a certain extent, such social facts are the consequences of an immature housing market which lacks legislated protections for homeowners' private and collective property rights (Breitung, 2014). Even without the specific statistics, property-led civic actions are estimated to be very popular in urban China with the frequency of their occurrence in CCHEs being greater than those that are staged with regard to all other issues (Tomba, 2005; Shi, 2008; Cai and Sheng, 2013; Jiang, 2013; Yip *et al.*, 2014; Huang and Sun, 2015; Fu, 2015).

3.5.2 The growth in property-led civic actions

With regard to their scope, property-led civic actions were, prior to 2012, mostly structured and facilitated by single neighbourhoods within a single CCHE, rather than being staged at an urban scale (O'Brien and Li, 2006; Jiang, 2013). Furthermore, the homeowners tend to make reactive actions to what they perceive to be infringements on their property rights (Cai, 2008b; Cai and Sheng, 2013; Jiang, 2013). Moreover, with regard to the action mode, property-led civic actions tend to be rational civic resistances, and tend to be more moderate and less confrontational than other forms of civic resistance (Cai, 2008a, 2008b; Tomba, 2005; Jiang, 2013; Dimitrov, 2015; Huang and Sun, 2015; Chen, 2016; Fu and Distelhorst, 2018). As suggested by Yip *et al.,* (2014), on the basis of a sample from four coastal Chinese cities from 2003 to 2010, most property-led civic actions that have occurred in CCHEs were resolved or ended through collective civic petitions or administrative lawsuits to the local state authorities.

Since 2012, homeowners have no longer simply argued about defending their

property rights. They have also raised concerns as to communal claims with regard to their desire to consume urban commodity housing (Fu, 2015; Dong and Kriesi, 2016; Sheng, 2017; Hu *et al*., 2018). Property-led civic actions seem to have changed greatly through homeowners' creative strategies and contentious orientations being applied (Merle, 2014; Fu, 2015; Hu *et al*., 2018; Ong, 2018). Homeowners have generally applied contingent approaches in their civic actions, with mixed use of state-sanctioned channels and contentious resistance (Cai, 2008a; Yip and Jiang, 2011; Hu and Chan, 2012; Jiang, 2013; Yip *et al*., 2014; He, 2015b; Fu, 2015). Typically, homeowners employ institutionalised approaches 'creatively as part of their action strategy in settling their problems' compared with the other radical and contentious approaches (Yip *et al*., 2014, p.175), including media exposure and violent clashes, to intensify pressure on local state authorities (Huang and Sun, 2015). As supported by some empirical evidence, such contingent approaches have, when applied, been proved to be effective in affecting the local state authorities' efficiency in responding to satisfy homeowners' collective claims and desires (Merle, 2014; Fu, 2015; Huang and Sun, 2015; Hu *et al*., 2018).

The property-led civic actions that have occurred in CCHEs seem to be more tolerated by the party-state than other civic actions. Some scholars regard this more relaxed approach as a consequence of grassroots democracy in current urban China, as grassroots self-governance and autonomy has been or is being formed in individual CCHEs as a consequence of grassroots' civic capacity (Derleth and Koldyk, 2004; Tomba, 2004, 2005; Chen and Lu, 2007; Wu, 2018; Wu *et al*., 2019). Furthermore, the internal attributes of current property-led civic actions have also affected the party-state's attitude. Although property infringements have become a common civic issue in current urban China, homeowners' civic actions are mostly single-issue focused and small scale (Kuang and Göbel, 2013; Shin, 2013). In comparison to other civic actions that have occurred, those focused on property pose a very limited threat to the overall social stability of the state or the party-state's legitimacy (Kuang and Göbel, 2013; Fu, 2015; Teets, 2015; Wu *et al*., 2019). To a certain extent, these new emergent transitions in current Chinese civic society have further stimulated civic development in urban neighbourhoods.

3.5.3 Homeowners' local civic capacity

The current rising number of property-led civic actions is testimony to homeowners'

growing awareness of their civic right and a desire to protect and defend their collective rights and interests in individual CCHEs. As discussed in Chapter Two, within the Chinese urban commodity housing development, such common awareness is assumed to be positive in cultivating place-based ties and may also support the formation of new community life in urban China (Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Martin, 2003; Tomba, 2004, 2005; Brown-Saracino, 2010; Fu and Lin, 2014; Fu, 2015; Audin, 2017; Wang *et al.,* 2017). As discussed by Fu (2015), an individual's civic awareness is contingent on a homeowner's sense of community and represents the intensity of his or her social networks, because it can 'inform residents of who they are, what their role in neighbourhood governance should be, and why they become stakeholders of their neighbourhood' (p.302). Such a sense of local belonging and the intensity of the local social networks within a CCHE enable spontaneous engagement and cooperation in local collective activities and actions. As a result, individual social networks can be combined into civic capacity and help to achieve collective concerns, and these facts have been proved through some empirical studies that were conducted in CCHEs (Yip *et al*., 2014; He, 2015a, 2015b).

The organisational function from local HOAs in property-led civic actions is also fundamental in mobilising local civic capacity (Shi and Cai, 2006; Huang and Sun, 2015). So far, the common development of HOAs in individual CCHEs has been highly contingent upon their interplay within the continual privatisation of Chinese urban space and the decentralisation of Chinese urban grassroots governance (Read, 2008; Yip, 2012; He, 2015a). To a certain extent, the HOAs have replaced local state authorities, such as Street Offices (*Jiedao*) and Residents' Committees (*Juweihui*), in implementing social control and delivering collective goods (Yip and Jiang, 2011; Yip, 2012; Fu and Lin, 2014; Yip *et al*., 2014; He, 2015b). As indicated by empirical evidence, HOAs in contemporary CCHEs are certainly performing as local voluntary organisations in structuring local self-governance, and some of them are also acting as civic organisations in facilitating local civic actions (Read, 2003; 2008; Tomba, 2005; Kelly, 2006; Perry, 2008; Yip, 2012; He, 2015a). As supported by these empirical observations, there are dense and reciprocal social networks among homeowners who routinely participate in local HOAs' activities, with their mutual trusts, attachments, and acquaintances, to

maintain the given localities' social order (Ostrom, 1998; Forrest and Kearns, 2001; He, 2015b; Ruef and Kwon, 2016). Certainly, such social functions undertaken by HOAs indicate the existence of organised social networks at the local scale which can, to a certain extent, be seen to promote place-based ties in CCHEs. As a local organisation, the HOAs can be understood as local organised networks among local residents, as Son and Lin (2008) theorised:

> 'They participate in and contribute to the productivity of the organisation by offering their own resources. Thus, voluntary organisations are social spaces where resources, much of which come from individual members, are mobilised for collective purposes. We note that voluntary organisations in this research include a wide range of social collectivises such as tax-exempt non-profit organisations, nongovernmental associations, and community organisations (p.333)'.

Therefore, as indicated by the contemporary property-led civic actions that have occurred in CCHEs, there exist both individual and organisational social networks which structure and facilitate local civic actions. Such local civic capacity may commonly emerge and grow in individual CCHEs (Tomba, 2004; 2005; Fu and Lin, 2014; He, 2015a; Audin, 2017; Wu *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, the emergent local civic capacity related to local social networks can be presumed to reflect a local consolidation of local social capital. This, in turn, may be capable of forming place-based community in the changing landscape of contemporary Chinese urban society and governance (Son and Lin, 2008).

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter initially presented the concept of civil society in a global context and placed it within the process of ongoing global neoliberal reforms. Thereafter, section 3.3 detailed the nature of Chinese civil society from 1978 to 2012. Associated with dissatisfaction with state inadequacies, the explosion in grassroots civic actions and the emergence of civic organisations indicated a process of bottom-up civic development in China. With the party-state's resilience to such bottom-up civic development, civil society has been predominantly formed in China within the reform era. However, with the change in leadership of the party-state in 2012, existing grassroots bottom-up civic development seems to have been repressed through the state's institutionalised management. However, grassroots civic development has not disappeared with grassroots groups and activities increasingly using the application of state-sanctioned channels, especially

appealing civic petitions to voice their concerns. Significantly, homeowners who live in CCHEs have increasingly used civic actions to defend and protect their property rights against what they perceive to be infringements from both state authorities and market forces.

Such discussions and descriptions of Chinese civil society provided the context for a discussion about place-based community in urban China. The growing number of property-led civic actions that have occurred in CCHEs reflect the existence of local civic capacity which is often rooted in individual civic awareness and often also includes organisational support from HOAs. Such emergent local civic capacity is capable of resurrecting community life in CCHEs. This is consistent with the conceptualisation of Son and Lin (2008) concerning the re-emergence of Chinese social capital and civic action.

Chapter Four discusses the role that local civic actions can play in forming or restructuring place-based community. Theoretical linkages and key themes related are discussed in framing an evaluation framework for this thesis's empirical research. Such discussions provide the theoretical fundamentals for this thesis and guide the methodology design that is subsequently presented in Chapter Five.

Chapter Four

Theoretical framework for evaluating the impact of civic actions on the formation or restructuring of urban communities in CCHEs

4.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters addressed the research contexts for this thesis; changing urban and civil society in reforming China. These contexts are helpful in devising the starting points of this thesis, namely evaluating the formation and restructuring of urban communities that have occurred through civic action in Chinese Commodity Housing Estates (CCHEs). In addition, these research contexts suggest the profound importance of individual and organisational social networks in facilitating local civic actions, and such applications of local social networks imply the existence of a certain degree of place-based community life (Wellman and Leighton, 1979; Unger and Wandersman, 1982, 1985; Chaskin, 1997; Talen, 1999, 2017). Based on such research contexts, this chapter explores the theoretical linkages between civic action and urban communities.

This chapter starts with a review of the definition of 'urban community' and subsequently considers the key themes of evaluating an urban community within the contemporary world. Then, this chapter reviews definitions of 'civic engagement' and 'civic action', and subsequently illustrates the key themes of civic action and the linkages between civic action and local social capital. With regard to these key themes; the theoretical linkage is framed into a conceptual model that pictures the mutual impacting mechanisms that exist between civic action and local social capital. Finally, in order to apply the designed conceptual model, the analytical framework for this thesis is suggested.

4.2 Urban communities and urban neighbourhoods

4.2.1 Overlapping definitions of place-based communities and urban neighbourhoods

'Community' (*Gemeinschaft*) is a specific term for describing human associations which first emerged in the late 19th Century. It was contrasted with the term 'society'

(*Gesellschaft*) to form a dichotomised description of industrialised society (Tönnies and Loomis, 2017). Within such a dichotomised description, 'community' was conceptualised in which a way as to stress personal social interactions, and the roles, values, and beliefs based on such interactions as a response to broader society within a period of rapid industrialisation (Tönnies and Loomis, 2017). Such dichotomised conceptualisation of society has been regarded as the disciplinary foundation of modern sociology with regard to theorising around the various social ties and interactions that emerge during industrial urbanisation (Durkheim, 1964; Park, 1924; Wirth, 1938; Gans, 1974). For example, as Park (1924) conceptualised, 'community is not only a collection of people occupying a more or less clearly defined area, but it is a collection of institutions' (p.674). Within this theoretical framework, community is conceptualised into a spatial agglomeration of primary ties and interactions at the local scale. This conceptualisation was subsequently reinforced by pioneering sociologists, and become the academic focus by which to analyse the tremendous social transitions that emerged in the Western World in the early 20th century (Durkheim, 1964; Wirth, 1938; Gans, 1974; Wellman and Leighton, 1979; Schiefloe, 1990; Talen, 1999; Bærenholdt and Aarsæther, 2002; Knox and Pinch, 2014). However, within progressive studies, there is no single meaning or definition of 'the community'. For example, there are some definitions and perceptions with agreements about social ties and interactions within the 'community' entity, the existence of networks, and sentiments of belonging (Crow and Allen, 1994; Forrest and Kearns, 2001). Such varied definitions and perceptions tend to commonly include these three ingredients; the networks of interpersonal ties, which provide sociability and supports to members; residence in a common locality; solidarity of sentiments and activities (Hillery, 1959; Wellman and Leighton, 1979). It is worth noting that, with regard to these three ingredients, there exists a common perception of the community that it could be place-based. In other words, the delineated urban space of the urban neighbourhood can function as the basic spatial unit and possesses a set of concentrated primary ties which reflect local community life (Park, 1924; Wirth, 1938; Gans, 1974; Chaskin, 1997).

Since the first half of the 20th century, discussions about the existence of urban communities within increasingly urbanised cities have been at the core of sociology. The concerns have mainly focused on the urban neighbourhood with a common

overlapping understanding of this as being an urban community (Forrest and Kearns, 2001). Such an overlapping position was axiomatic and became an accepted way of thinking about the changing primary ties that occurred within the continual division of labour forces in that period (Durkheim, 1964; Webber, 1963; Talen, 2017). According to McKenzie's (1921), the urban neighbourhood was clearly defined as the place, functioning to maintaining human ideals, similar to the classical perception of an urban community (Talen, 2017). Practically, there also emerged the planning idea of a neighbourhood unit for designing and structuring an idealistic community life within planned urban neighbourhoods (Perry, 1929; Patricios, 2002; Talen, 2017). Such a common recognition of urban community as an urban neighbourhood was captured, to some degree, in classical terms in defining communities in cities, such as the symbolistic communities of Park (1924, 1936) or the street corners of Liebow (1967) and Jacobs (1961) (Wellman and Leighton, 1979).

However, such an overlapping understanding was seriously challenged by the great variety of urban neighbourhoods that actually emerged in terms of social ties and interactions (Tilly, 1973; Chavis and Wandersman, 1990; Chaskin, 1997). As discussed, social ties and interactions within the classical definitions of community were the combination of shared beliefs, priorities, circumstances, relationships, and concerns, which may not exist in the new placed-based neighbourhoods with their delineated boundaries, nor in relation to the broader social context (Chaskin, 1997). In contrast, the social ties and interactions involved in urban neighbourhoods were mostly conceptualised as the shared proximity and circumstances that exist within a spatial unit (Keller, 1968; Howard, 1984; Chaskin, 1997). However, such challenges did not totally exclude the urban neighbourhood from the sphere of urban community. Rather, it tended to indicate that a looser, more inclusive relationship was involved, as Knox and Pinch (2014) argued,

> '…Neighbourhoods are territories containing people of broadly similar demographic, economic and social characteristics, but are not necessarily significant as a basis for social interaction. Communities exist where a degree of social coherence develops on the basis of interdependence, which in turn produces a uniformity of custom, taste and modes of thought and speech (p.193).'

Consequently, with regard to conceptual clarity, an urban community can be perceived as an urban neighbourhood with densely knit ties and tight boundaries

(Wellman and Leighton, 1979; Schiefloe, 1990; Chaskin, 1997). Specifically, the definition of a place-based urban community emphasizes more profound social ties and interactions existing in and among urban neighbourhoods, and these local ties and interactions can be applied as a collective resource for resolving individual or collective problems (Rich, 1979; Mitchell and Trickett, 1980; Unger and Wandersman, 1982, 1985).

4.2.2 The community question within urbanised and industrialised society

After World War Two, there has been ongoing tension regarding the existence and nature of urban communities following the destructive effects of the continual advancing modernisation, urbanisation, migration, communication, and technology in the global world (Fischer, 1975; Freudenburg, 1986; Sampson, 1988; Chaskin, 1997). Among such tremendous global changes, a population's fluid mobility resulted in a dispersal of primary social ties at the neighbourhood scale, and further facilitated social isolation, strangeness, and crime in cities (Sampson, 1988; Hofferth and Iceland, 1998). With regard to these images of social disorder, the question of community fate in urban society has been thoroughly debated in the discipline of sociology. Community is considered to have been progressively lost within urban neighbourhoods but to have survived within broader urban society (Wellman and Leighton, 1979; Schiefloe, 1990; Chaskin, 1997; Gieryn, 2000; Wellman, 2001; Logan *et al*., 2002; McPherson *et al*., 2006; Lucio and Barret, 2010). From such a stance, three types of arguments on the fate of community have been considered, including community lost; community saved; and community liberated. Among these three arguments, the lost and saved arguments both retained the classical perceptions of the place-based community, but the liberated argument denied any existence of community in spatial terms (Wellman and Leighton, 1979; Schiefloe, 1990; Chaskin, 1997; Talen, 1999).

With a common perception of the importance of retaining place-based community, the lost and saved arguments have both had far-reaching impacts on the contemporary community studies (Chaskin, 1997; Harvey, 2007). With regard to the lost argument, and in keeping with general anti-urban ideology, the primary ties, place-based social networks, and community structure in urban neighbourhoods were perceived to have been substituted by secondary ties within broader social and spatial spheres (Wellman and Leighton, 1979; Schiefloe, 1990; Chaskin, 1997).

However, according to some empirical studies that were conducted in Northern American and European contexts in the middle of the 20th century, the local community ties seemed to remain in the urban neighbourhoods, with the internal recognition among neighbours and external recognition by the state (Chaskin, 1997; Coulton, 2005; Chaskin and Joseph, 2010; Lyon and Driskell, 2011). Although defining those ties sparsely, these recognitions retained some elements of the place-based community (Keller, 1968; Wellman and Leighton, 1979; Fischer, 1981, 1982; Oliver, 2000; Brown-Saracino, 2010).

With regards to the saved argument, the urban community has tended to be retained in a single neighbourhood with multiple strands of place-based social ties, as suggested by the examples of working-class neighbourhoods in the 1960s and the emergent gated enclaves of the 1990s (Wellman and Leighton, 1979; Schiefloe, 1990; Logan *et al.*, 2002; Webster *et al.*, 2002; Rosen and Razin, 2008). Such saved urban communities can be redefined as local social units which possess various local social networks among neighbours and provide local public goods and services; creating strong interpersonal relationships; and maintaining the neighbourhood's order (Chaskin, 1997). To a certain extent, within the context of the fragmented urban society that commonly emerged from the middle 20th century, neighbourliness within a single urban neighbourhood was ideally valued as the structure most suited to form successful local community life (Jacobs, 1961; Newman, 1972). This included 'the tenacious conservation of its internal resources, the maintenance of local autonomy, and the social control of members in the face of powerful impinging external forces' (Wellman and Leighton, 1979, p.372). Following this saved argument, and utilising the network analysis approach, a series of discussions and empirical studies have suggested that the persistence and flourishing of place-based community based on multiple loose social networks has resided in urban neighbourhoods (Wellman and Leighton, 1979; Fischer, 1982, 1982; Schiefloe, 1990; Chaskin, 1997; Forrest aand Kearns, 2001; Logan *et al.*, 2002; Martin, 2003; Völker *et al.*, 2006; Clark *et al.,* 2017). Although acquaintanceship and cohesion among neighbours has experienced continual decline because of tremendous social changes (Ahlbrandt, 1984), neighbourhood ties continue to exist in terms of 'exchanging information, favours, and support as well as acting as 'gatekeepers'' in urban neighbourhoods (Chaskin, 1997, p.531).

Based on the community saved argument that emerged in 1980s, the common application of a network analysis approach in the discipline of sociology further brought urban community research into the broader global changes that occurred in the 21st century (Chaskin, 1997; Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Son and Lin, 2008).

4.2.3 Urban community within network perceptions

Although there seem to have been numerous discussions about community lost, or liberated, in the contemporary global context, there still exists a perception about place-based community in urban neighbourhoods that is sited within political and economic discourses. This perception regards an urban community as a social unit which promotes sustainable social control (Forrest and Kearns, 2001). Here, the nature of urban community has been given a practical definition, 'in which individuals derive important personal benefits for well-being from doing things together with others' (Völker et al., 2006, p.100). Such a practical definition has been integrated into contemporary sociological research relating to the saved argument. Through adopting a network analysis approach, there emerged an application of social capital and social cohesion in describing local neighbourliness in urban neighbourhoods. Furthermore, social capital and social cohesion have been commonly perceived as normative factors in defining an urban community in rapidly changing urban societies (Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Martin, 2003; Mayer, 2003; Middleton et al., 2005; Robinson, 2005; Letki, 2008; Dempsey et al., 2011; Lyon and Driskell, 2011; Huggins and Thompson, 2015; Liu et al., 2016). Empirically, deteriorating community life in urban neighbourhoods can be interpreted as evidence of a lack of social capital and poor social cohesion between neighbours (Crow and Allen, 1994; Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Robinson, 2005; Dempsey et al., 2011). With the emergence of more multi-stranded social ties in contemporary-changing urban society, 'the social cement of a previous era is crumbling and we are being collectively cast adrift in a world in which the previous rules of social integration and social integration no longer apply' (Forrest and Kearns, 2001, p. 2126).

The perception of social capital as a defining factor within an urban community is based on the analysis of local social network. Following Bourdieu's (1985) original description of social capital within s economic discourse, Coleman (1988) defined social capital as an intangible form of capital that exists in social networks among

individuals. Such a definition was further described as constituting resources that can be utilised to achieve common goals and maintain local social networks (Portes, 1998; Middleton *et al.,* 2005). Then, as a consequence of Putnam's (1993, 2001) studies in Italy and Northern America in the late 1990s, social capital was further explained as the 'features of social organisation such as networks, norms and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit' (1993, p.35). As a term for defining local social networks, norms and trust, social capital has been productive in having pro-social consequences for improving social interactions among neighbours and has been seen to further help to form or reform local community life (Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Putnam, 2001a, 2001b; Mayer, 2003; Robinson, 2005). With regards to Forrest and Kearns' (2001) conceptualisation, social capital can be further conceptualised into several domains which act as a reflection of local social networks, including empowerment, participation, associational activity and common purpose, collective norms and values, trust, safety, and belonging (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Key themes in defining urban community

Concepts	Domains	Main research elements
Social Capital	Civic participation	Attendance in associational activities; attendances and concerns to local events occurred;
	Supporting networks and reciprocity	Intergroup cooperation; mutual supports without gains
	Collective norms and values	Common value; norms of individual behaviour;
	Trust	Multiple trust to neighbours, local social leaders, and local social organisations;
	Empowerment	Personal authority among neighbours; leadership in taking action; affection to others;
Social cohesion	Common value	Common aims and objectives; common moral principles, high civic participation;
	Social order and social control	The absence of general conflict; effective social control; tolerance and respect to difference;
	Social networks	Acquaintances among neighbours; frequent social interaction;
	Place attachment and identity	Strong attachment to neighbourhood; intertwined place and personal identity

Source: Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Robinson, 2005; Dempsey *et al.,* 2011; Author

Applying social cohesion as a term to describe community life emerged in

government-oriented neighbourhood planning practices in England in the early 21st century (Robinson, 2005). Such a practical description was made on the basis of a common belief that there was less neighbourliness in English urban communities (Cars *et al*., 1998), and that such deterioration in neighbourliness resulted 'particularly from a lack of the qualities and elements which produce and sustain social cohesion' (Forrest and Kearns, 2001, p.2126). Undoubtedly, such a lack of social cohesion meant that there were insufficient social networks and social capital to produce collective engagements and form solid neighbourliness at the local scale (Forrest and Kearns, 2001). Theoretically, social capital has a direct and important influence on social cohesion (Dempsey, 2008), because of its' capacity to 'describ[e] the social network and the associated norms of reciprocity' (Dempsey *et al*., 2011, p.294). Based on this influential connection, social cohesion can be further understood as the expression of social capital in an urban neighbourhood, as a sort of dominant, or loose, moral order which asserts common values and a sense of community (Burneet, 2004; Robinson, 2005). Moreover, social cohesion is presumed to be capable of preventing the progressive erosion of grassroots social order, which has been transformed in the contemporary global world into 'a more fluid, individualised way of life' (Forrest and Kearns, 2001, p.2129). With these perceptions, social cohesion can be conceptualised into five domains: reflecting local neighbourliness, including common values and civic culture; social order and social control; social solidarity and reductions in wealth disparities; social networks and social capital; place attachment and identity, as presented in Table 4.1 (Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Robinson, 2005). These key themes about social capital and social cohesion based on the network analysis approach, are considered to be the key terminologies in evaluating place-based community in current urban neighbourhoods (Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Robinson, 2005; Dempsey *et al*., 2011; Talen, 2017).

4.3 Civic engagement and civic action

4.3.1 Civic engagement as citizen participation

Civil society with active citizenship expressed in the term of civic engagement was 'a goal of Thomas Jefferson' and one essential component of 'Jeffersonian democracy that stressed the role of common people, not aristocrats in influencing government' (Mandarano *et al*., 2010, p.123). As discussed in Chapter Three, civil

society has been commonly recognised in contemporary global contexts with different levels of active citizenship (Arnstein, 1969; Dekker and Van den Broek, 1998; Teets, 2014, 2015; Eagleton-Pierce, 2016). One symbolic indicator that global civil society is active in civic engagement is that citizens participate in different political institutions. As Eagleton-Pierce (2016) stated;

> '…it could be suggested that all citizens of a modern state, be it in the US or China, are participants in a political system…most analysts would place an emphasis on the need of some degree of active engagement in the making of political life, such as through voting, joining a political party or lobby for a policy change (p.133)'.

With this role as a hallmark of civil society, civic engagement serves as the 'space where citizens exercise rights, voice, and conscience' (McBridge *et al*., 2006, p.152). It ideally encourages more empowerment with citizens' having boosted civic knowledge and this, in turn, guarantees cohesive societal development with individuals possessing tolerance and attachment to others (Theiss-Morese *et al*., 2005). With regard to Arnstein's (1969) description of citizen participation as the categorical term of citizen power, civic engagement reflects 'the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future' (p.216). Such civic engagement enables citizens to negotiate and engage in a trade-off with governments and other powerful stakeholders. It also enables citizens to obtain decision-making seats or managerial power on issues that they are concerned about or struggle for. With reference to the typology of citizen participation categorized within the ladder pattern (Arnstein, 1969), the wide emergence of civic engagement in the contemporary global world, especially civic actions within a contentious mode, may reflect higher levels of citizen power through partnership, delegated power, and citizen control. As indicated by some evidence, even in some developing countries without true democracy, citizen participation can amount to more than simply non- participation or tokenism (Lewis, 2002, 2004; Glasius *et al*., 2004; de Souza Briggs, 2008; Spires, 2011; Teets, 2014, 2015).

Civic engagement has distinct nuances that distinguish it from political participation; it directly aims to influence state governance but not to change governance arrangements (Campbell, 2004; Theiss-Morese *et al*., 2005). As Campbell (2004) discussed, civic engagement consists of 'non-remunerative,

publicly spirited collective action that is not motivated by the desire to affect public policy' (p.7). Consequently, civic engagement mostly occurs in two spheres; as civic participation in voluntary associations within the social sphere, or voting and petitioning within the political sphere (McBridge *et al*, 2006). Functionally, civic engagement can be seen to include citizens' collective actions in resolving the problems that they face which have emerged from the inefficiencies of governmental policy (Portney, 2005). With regard to citizen participation, civic engagement serves to 'balance the power of the state and to protect individuals from the state's power' (Fukuyama, 2001, p.11). Moreover, civic engagement is normally excluded from 'other types of public behaviours such as work, leisure, and activities of daily living' (McBridge *et al.*, 2006, p.153). Therefore, with reference to the wide acceptance to civil society in global contexts, civic engagement is an appropriate reflection of contemporary citizen participation and grassroots social transition.

4.3.2 The understanding of civic engagement and civic action

Originally, civic engagement was conceptualised with a democratic meaning of civic virtue in '*Democracy in America'*, in which 'de Tocqueville highlighted the importance of civic associations to 19th century American democracy' (Hu and Chan, 2012, p.26). With regard to this original conceptualisation, civic engagement was understood to be a reflection of grassroots efforts in mobilizing social and political transitions. Individual civic participation in voluntary organisations, such as 'religious groups, sports teams, workplace connections, and friendly get-togethers' (Hu and Chan, 2012, p.26), can be broadly understood as civic engagements (Shils, 1991). However, such a broader understanding has been challenged by empirical scrutiny that suggests that associational activities do not necessarily seek to help anyone beyond those who are within the individual social network (Schneider, 2007; Son andLin, 2008; Hu and Chan, 2012). Apparently, struggling for common well-being, the sharing of civic virtues on the basis of local social networks is an essential element embedded in civic engagement. As Adler and Goggin (2005) summarized, civic engagement is 'an individual's duty to embrace the responsibilities of citizenship with the obligation to actively participate in volunteer service activities that strengthen the local community' (p.238). As a collective resistance to infringements (Van Benshoten, 2001), 'civic engagement may be defined as the means by which an individual, through collective action,

influences the larger civil society' (Adler and Goggin, 2005, p.238). Moreover, through political participation, civic engagement tends to specify the collective participation that is processed through a state's institutions (Diller, 2001; Adler and Goggin, 2005). As a conclusion to those various definitions, Son and Lin (2008) describe civic engagement generally as:

> 'Civic engagement can take many forms, from individual volunteerism to organisational involvement to electoral participation. It can include efforts to directly address an issue, work with others in a community to solve a problem or interact with the institutions of representative democracy. Civic engagement encompasses a range of activities such as working in a soup kitchen, serving on a neighbourhood association, writing a letter to an elected official or voting (p. 331).'

To a certain extent, this general perception can be related to Putnam's (2001) observations and explanations about civic engagement in his research about changing social lives in Western economies. Here, civic engagement was understood as part of a discussion of 'civic disengagement':

> 'Civic disengagement appears to be an equal opportunity affliction. The sharp, steady declines in club meetings, visits with friends, committee service, church attendance, philanthropic generosity, card games, and electoral turnout have hit virtually all sectors of American society over the last several decades and in roughly equal measure (p, 185).'

Putnam's (2001) perception further related civic engagement to local community life on the basis of the social networks that exist in urban neighbourhoods, and highlighted the importance of social capital in facilitating local civic action. With regards to this argument, - and within the context of an urban neighbourhood, 'civic engagement is experiencing a sense of connection, interrelatedness, and, naturally commitment towards the greater community' (Diller, 2001, p.22). Here, civic action is the coordination of action because of participants' civic virtue in improving their common life;

> '… (1) Participants coordinate interaction around a mission of improving common life, however they define "improving" and "common." (2) Participants coordinate their ongoing interaction together, expecting if not always attaining some flexibility in coordinating interaction rather than imagining their action as mainly, being predetermined, by pre-existing rules and roles. (3) Participants implicitly act as members of a larger, imagined society—however they are imagining it—to whom their problem solving can appeal' (Lichterman and Eliasoph, 2014, p.810).

With regard to this quote, it is worth noting that there are three key themes within

this concept of the civic action that is structured by Lichterman and Eliasoph (2014), as presented in Table 4.2. First, towards a collective concern, certain degrees of civic virtue and norms can be reflected by civic actors' coordinating interactions to improve common life or achieve common aims. In this interaction, the individual and organisational social capital can be applied to facilitate local civic action (Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Hu and Chan, 2012; Lichterman and Eliasoph, 2014). Second, the feature as an ongoing interaction illustrates the multiple steps involved in a civic action, which is processed through the state-sanctioned institution. Third, whomever the civic action is against (as civic actors' opponent) and whomever the civic action can be appealed to (as the judger or arbitrator) both indicate the role of multiple stakeholders' involvement in a civic action. In a civic action, the relationships among these stakeholders can be fluid with internal and external interactions; these direct the conflict since its origins through concessions in the processing of the dispute, to coordination in dispute resolution.

Table 4.2 Key themes of the civic action

Attributes	Domains	Main research elements
Collective concern	Civic virtue and norm	Local organisational and individual civic awareness and social capital to improve or defend the common life
Multiple steps	Origin	Individual and organisational initiating efforts
	Processing	Multi-stakeholder interaction; trade-off
	End	Arbitration; coordination; implementation
Multi-stakeholder involvement	Internal and external interactions	Conflicts, concessions, and coordination as external interactions among stakeholders;
		Collective actions with internal interactions.

Source: Son and Lin, 2008; Lichterman and Eliasoph, 2014; Author

As indicated by such key themes, a civic action is an ongoing procedure initiated by civic actors' civic virtue and facilitated with multi-stakeholders' interactions during multi-steps (Friedman and Miles, 2002; Freeman, 2010; Freeman *et al*., 2010; Lichterman and Eliasoph, 2014). Within such multi-steps, the civic actors and their opponents consistently focus on the value creation by their own fronts, within the institutions and rules that are pre-existing (Gray, 1989; Friedman and Miles, 2002; Freeman, 2010; Freeman *et al.,* 2010). Then, with the involvement of a third party

that possesses the role of an official institution, the relationship between the civic actor and their counterpart can be moderated on the basis of making concessions, and their relationship can be coordinated in the end. Therefore, within the state's institution, civic action is fluidly lead, activated, and processed by multiple stakeholders with their interactions as negotiations and trade-offs (Roloff, 2008; O'Higgins, 2010). Such interactions are combined with internal and external interactions, in which there are exchanges of resources both internally and externally (Son and Lin, 2008; Roloff, 2008; O'Higgins, 2010; Lichterman and Eliasoph, 2014). Specifically, in the origins of a civic action, the relationship between civic actors and their opponenst is hard to reconcile because of contractual controversies. At this time, there are abundant internal interactions among civic actors, in facilitating their collective actions (Friedman and Miles, 2002). In the processing of a civic action, some external interactions among different stakeholders are ongoing formed and developed within the competitive situation through trade-offs and negotiations (Roloff, 2008; O'Higgins, 2010; Lichterman and Eliasoph, 2014). Finally, at the end, the concessions made by the multiple stakeholders confirm the coordinative relationship among the civic actors and their opponents. Such interactions that occurred between multi-stakeholders within the multi-step process enables the continual exchange of internal and external resources, which enhances social networks among civic actors and multi-stakeholders (Albrechts, 2002; Scott *et al*., 2007; O'Higgins, 2010; Freeman *et al*., 2010). Moreover, the flourishing social networks, as enhanced and extended, also produce an improvement in the social capital of civic actors (Son and Lin, 2008; Lichterman and Eliasoph, 2014).

4.3.3 The linkage between civic action and social capital within the key themes

In the origins of a civic action, there is some degree of capturing social capital that is presented by the civic actors' application of their individual and organisational social networks (Son and Lin, 2008). Putnam emphasizes that such organisational and individual social networks are fundamental in facilitating a civic action because of the collective norms, trusts, and reciprocities that are shared through being part of a common civic virtue (Putnam, 1993; Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Putnam, 2001a; Crowley, 2007; Brown-Saracino, 2010; Hu and Chan, 2012). By confronting collective concerns, individual and organisational social networks make local

collectives more competent and may encourage others to join in the civic action (Verba *et al*., 1995; Boix and Posner, 1998; Son and Lin, 2008). Furthermore, the civic actors' social networks not only function as the capital in structuring their civic action, but also receive and benefit from investments that arise from additional internal interactions (Lim, 2008; Hu and Chan, 2012). This is because these internal interactions and exchanges of local resources between civic actors enable their social networks to become denser and to be extended (Dekker and Van den Broek, 1998; Galston, 2000; Putnam, 2001a; Son and Lin, 2008). Civic actors who trust their fellow members are 'more likely to believe that their participation will be valued and supported' (Hu and Chan, 2012, p.29). Consequently, from the start of a civic action, the civic actors' organisational and individual social networks experience ongoing strengthening, as 'a diverse set of people tend to produce a norm of generalised reciprocity' (Theiss-Morese *et al*., 2005, p.230), which is similar to the description of social capital given by Forrest and Kearns (2001).

Then, in the processing of a civic action, there occurs the continual internal interaction among civic actors to achieve their collective concern through state's institutions. Their organisational and individual social networks are continually extending and knitting together so that such changes bring further investments into both organisational and individual social capital. In addition, external interaction also occurs among civic actors and other stakeholders through negotiations and trade-offs in making their coordination. Such external interactions are positive in that they help to achieve coordination among multiple stakeholders by the end of a civic action. More importantly, such external interactions also reinforce civic actors' social capital at the end of the civic action (Paxton, 1999, 2002; Cheung and Chan, 2010; Hu and Chan, 2012). As presented in Figure 4.1, civic actors' multi-strand social networks are consistently important in facilitating their civic actions, and these benefit from ongoing internal and external interactions that occur during the multi-steps of a civic action (Fukuyama, 2001; Son and Lin, 2008).

As framed in Figure 4.1, a civic actor's social networks are the causal elements in initiating the civic action, and those social networks are also the beneficiaries within the flowing interactions among multiple stakeholders within the multi-steps of a civic action. As a consequence of these internal interactions, denser networks and more reciprocity among local civic actors can be identified as becoming the

bonding social capital (Putnam, 1993, 2001). Otherwise, as a consequence of external interactions among the multiple stakeholders, the beneficial social networks can be certain identified to be the bridging social capital (Putnam, 1993, 2001; Forrest and Kearns, 2001). Theoretically, the enhanced social capital that occurs through a civic action, may be capable of constructing and maintaining primary ties among civic actors (Fukuyama, 2001). Related to the contextual discussions that are presented in Chapters Two and Three, such a presumption as to the changes of local social capital through a civic action are in keeping with the empirical reflections from Chinese property-led civic actions that have occurred in CCHEs (Fu and Lin, 2014; Fu, 2015; He, 2015b), namely, that there is a degree of capturing social capital and place-based community life in the new and emerging walled residential compounds in reform China (Fu, 2015; Fu and Distelhorst, 2017).
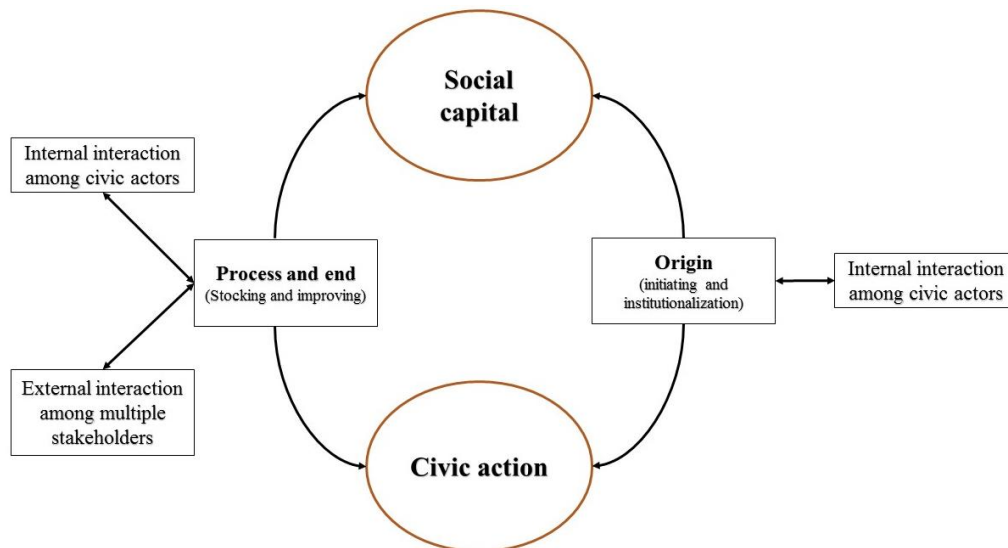
Figure 4.1 Civic actors' social capital in a civic action
Source: Fukuyama, 2001; Putnam, 2001a; Son and Lin, 2008; Author

4.4 A designed model for conceptualising community formation through civic action

The previous theoretical discussions confirm the links between social capital and civic action, as framed in Figure 4.1. A civic actor's individual and organisational social networks are capable of providing local civic capacity to confront collective concerns, and these social networks also benefit from ongoing enhancements through the flow of civic actions (Fukuyama, 2001; Putnam, 2001a, 2001b; Adler and Goggin, 2005; Middleton *et al*., 2005; Theiss-Morese *et al*., 2005; Son and Lin, 2008; Fu and Lin, 2014; Lichterman and Eliasoph, 2014). The local civic action

may also benefit local social capital and social cohesion (Tolbert *et al*., 1998; Putnam, 2001b; Messner *et al*., 2004; Son and Lin, 2008; Lichterman and Eliasoph, 2014; Fu, 2015; He, 2015b). With regard to the key themes that define an urban community, as presented in Table 4.1, the extended and knitted social networks that arise through a civic action may bring enhancements to local social capital and social cohesion. Therefore, the Chinese homeowners' civic actions, as have commonly emerged in current CCHEs, is the right research terminology by which to study place-based community in the new and new emerging walled residential compounds in urban China.
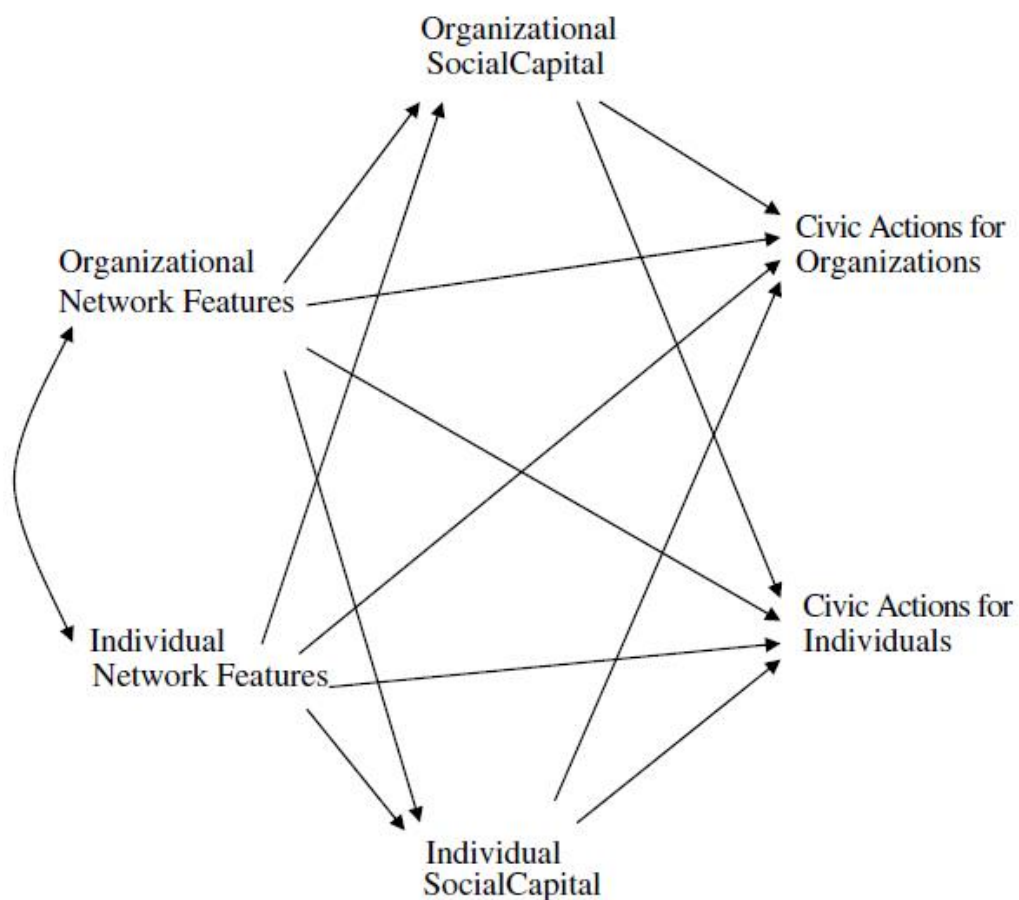
Figure 4.2 Original conceptual model of social capital and civic action
Author: Son and Lin, 2008

Such a conceptualisation about studying urban community through a civic action is partially supported by empirical studies in which local social networks are confirmed to be important in facilitating collective concerns and civic action (Son and Lin, 2008; Dekker *et al*., 2010; Fu and Lin, 2014). As suggested by Son and Lin (2008), a civic action can be understood as the conceptual framework by which

to conceptualise the critical roles of local social networks in structuring a local civic action, (as presented in Figure 4.2). With regard to this conceptual model, both organisational and individual social networks can be observed and evaluated within a civic action. Moreover, the mixed application of organisational and individual social networks in a civic action could also reflect inter-group cooperation among individuals with cohesive neighbourliness. Thus, this may also be a reflection of local community life (Dekker *et al.,* 2010). Such a conceptual model is certainly consistent with the contemporary definition of urban communities, which note local social capital and social cohesion. Moreover, Son and Lin (2008) further emphasized the role of local social capital in facilitating local civic action, as:

> 'Participation in such supportive and mutually reinforcing relations may provide a sufficient motivation for individual members to take action, and sufficient resources for the groups to take action. That is, participation in voluntary organisations may induce civic actions because such participation triggers or benefits from dense interactions and reciprocal relations, enhancing the propensity to take action' (p. 333).

In an urban neighbourhood, the local voluntary organisation always presents the organisational social networks among local residents (Putnam, 2001a, 2001b; Theiss-Morese *et al*., 2005). The organisational social network, as dense and reciprocal, could be capable of preserve the civic virtue and becoming a bonding social capital in uniting local residents (Putnam et al., 1994; Putnam, 2001a, 2001b; Son and Lin, 2008). Although tending to be sparse or open, the individual social network could be the bridging social capital with its application in a local neighbourhood's civic action (Putnam, 2001a). Individual social networks, as social connections in a broader social sphere, are capable of achieving rich and diverse resources in facilitating civic action (Son and Lin, 2008). Theoretically, bonding social capital, as the local organisational social networks, is more useful in initiating and facilitating expressive actions in defending common interests (Putnam *et al*., 1994; Putnam, 2001a, 2001b; Son and Lin, 2008). Otherwise, the bridging social capital, as individual social networks, is more capable of initiating and facilitating the instrumental actions in achieving collective claims (Putnam, 2001b; Son and Lin, 2008). However, as suggested by the empirical evidence, a civic action that occurs in an urban neighbourhood is commonly facilitated by the co-existence of organisational and individual social networks because of the complexity involved in civic actors' collective concerns (Lin, 1999, 2002, 2008; Son and Lin, 2008; Fu

and Lin, 2014; Fu *et al*., 2015; He, 2015b). Such coexistence of organisational and individual social capital can act as an explanatory framework for how multi-strands social networks shed light on civic action, as:

'First, social capital may be captured by both individuals and collectives, to be identified as individual and organisational social capital. Second, it may be postulated that both individual and organisational social capital may affect action outcomes…Further, the individual and organisational network features that enhance social capital may be specified (Son and Lin, 2008, p. 334) '.
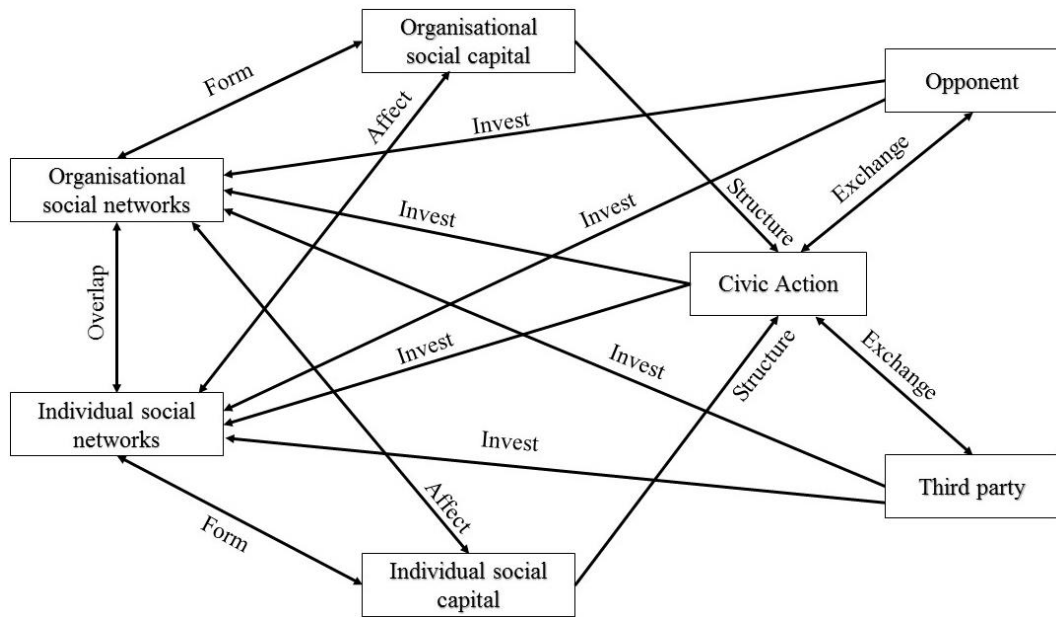
Figure 4.3 Designed conceptual model in studying social capital in a civic action
Source: Author; Son and Lin (2008)

In addition to their significant role in facilitating local civic action, the key themes of a civic action also hint at the significant impact that local collective action can bring to investments in civic actors' social capital (Fukuyama, 2001; Paxton, 1999, 2002; Theiss-Morese *et al*., 2005; Son and Lin, 2008). Within the multi-steps, the civic actors' ongoing interactions that occur internally and externally all enable continual exchange of various social resources. As suggested by the empirical evidence, such exchanges can effectively improve local organisational and individual social networks as they become more extensive and denser (Putnam, 1993; 2001; Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Fukuyama, 2001; Albrechts, 2002; Son and Lin, 2008; Freeman, 2010; Freeman *et al*., 2010; O'Higgins, 2010; Fu and Lin, 2014; Fu, 2015). Based on this empirical evidence, a new conceptual model with reference to the key themes about place-based communities and civic action was designed, as presented in Figure 4.3. In this newly designed conceptual model, there

are various presumed connections within emerging civic action. Therefore, the previous discussions about social capital and civic action are integrated into the design of the conceptual model, with civic action treated as a qualifying framework in studying the improvements of social capital. Currently, in urban China, these presumed connections that frame the new conceptual model can be evidenced by some civic actions. These suggest that local social capital has experienced significant improvement due to civic actions (Paxton, 1999; Tomba, 2004, 2005; Cai, 2008a, 2008b; Cheung and Chan, 2008; Cai and Sheng, 2013; Fu and Lin, 2014; Yip *et al.*, 2014; Fu, 2015; Fu *et al.*, 2015; He, 2015b; Zhu and Fu, 2017). Moreover, as suggested by the empirical evidence, denser, more extensive, and more reciprocal social networks have emerged from property-led civic actions. They certainly engender some degree of more cohesive neighbourliness in individual CCHEs (Fu, 2015; Fu *et al.*, 2015; He, 2015b; Zhu and Fu, 2017).

This designed conceptual model illustrates why and how individual and organisational social networks can structure civic action, and it also demonstrates why and how civic action can reverse existing trends and create investment in local social capital. It also illustrates the roles of civic actors' counterparts and third parties in providing investments for local organisational and individual social networks. Therefore, a civic action structured by individual and organisational social capital is presumed to enable ongoing investment into local social capital.

Initially, the origins of a civic action, and the overlapping of organisational and individual social networks enable interaction among local civic actors. From the beginning of the process to the end of a civic action, the internal interactions of civic actors enable a continual exchange of local resources. Externally, making concessions and trade-offs by multiple stakeholders enables an external exchange of social resources from a broader social sphere. Such external exchanges also result in investment into local social capital. Therefore, there is a reverse impact between social capital and civic action as framed in this designed conceptual model. Ideally, such progressive enhanced social capital may causally bring investment to local social cohesion. These presumed social outcomes from local civic action are in accordance with the definitions of contemporary urban community (Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Robinson, 2005; Dempsey *et al.*, 2011).

4.5 An analytical framework for defining urban communities within Chinese property-led civic action

4.5.1 Redefining property-led civic action as civic petition

As discussed in Chapters Two and Three, the booming CCHEs and the rising property-led civic actions in CCHEs all capture some degree of place-based community life in contemporary urban China. These contexts enable the application of the designed conceptual model to guide the evaluation of community formation through civic action. This addresses the general research aims of this thesis. However, such an evaluation cannot be easily conducted because of the broader sphere of property-led civic actions that have occurred in CCHEs (Ho, 2005; Cai, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c; Van Rooij, 2010; Fu, 2015; He, 2015b). This is for two reasons. First, the key themes of a civic action may be difficult to probe or observe, as homeowners are now producing their civic actions within contingent modes. Indeed, some property-led civic actions are now facilitated beyond state-sanctioned channels, and multi-stakeholders' involvement within a civic action become invisible at certain times (Zhu and Ho, 2004; Breitung, 2014; Fu, 2015; Huang and Sun, 2015). Secondly, within the current repression from the Chinese party-state, local civic capacity in facilitating a civic action becomes hard to evaluate as a consequence of the disguised application of local social networks. For example, some local voluntary organisations in CCHEs, mostly local Homeowners' Associations (HOAs), are disguised when they become involved in property-led civic actions to avoid potential clash with local state authorities (Yip, 2012; He, 2015b; Fu, 2017). With regards to such existing difficulties in conducting evaluation, it can be seen that redefining work on the property-led civic actions that have occurred in CCHEs becomes meaningful for place-based community life; as indicated by the designed conceptual model.

Such aforementioned difficulties can be overcome by redefining Chinese property-led civic actions, specifically as civic petitions which are undertaken by homeowners. As discussed in Chapter Three, the civic petitions that have occurred in CCHEs have been aggressively raised by homeowners trying to resolve their collective problems with the local state and/or market forces (Farh *et al*., 2004; Cai, 2008a, 2008b; Dekker *et al*., 2010; Van Rooij, 2010; Li *et al*., 2012; Deng and O'Brien, 2013; Duckett and Wang, 2013; Kuang and Göbel, 2013; He and Feng,

2016; Fu and Distellhorst, 2017). Furthermore, in property-led civic petitions, there is a clear reflection on the application of individual and organisational social capital in facilitating grassroots civic actions (Yip *et al*., 2014; Fu, 2015; Fu *et al*., 2015; He and Feng, 2016). Moreover, as a Chinese state-sanctioned channel for grassroots civic action, the civic petitions that have occurred in CCHEs enable the documentation of the key themes in property-led civic action, such as the multi-steps and roles of multi-stakeholders (Cai, 2008a; Van Rooij, 2010; Li *et al*., 2012). Therefore, the civic petitions that have occurred in CCHEs enable, to some degree, an ability to capture the key themes of civic action, and further enable an evaluation of their outcomes through application of the designed conceptual model.

4.5.2 The inevitable differences in Chinese property-led civic petitions

Redefining the civic petitions that have occurred in CCHEs as the objective of this research explicitly shapes the research design in the form of a case study paradigm, which provide the access to probe hose presumed changes in local social networks (Yin, 2003; Bryman, 2012). With specific observations into specific cases, the local social transitions that have occurred through a civic petition can be detailed and evaluated to probe the existence of any place-based community life in CCHEs. With reference to Chinese contemporary civil society, in individual property-led civic petitions there are internal differences related to the contexts of individual CCHEs and external differences related to the differentiated civic development that exists within Chinese cities (Li, 2008; Li *et al*., 2012; He and Feng, 2016).

Internally, with regard to the key themes of a civic action, the civic petitions that have occurred in CCHEs could be totally different, as defending the common interest or acquiring common goods and services. Such an internal difference can be significant in affecting local civic capacity to facilitate local civic action (Son and Lin, 2008; Fu and Lin, 2014; Yip *et al*., 2014; Fu *et al*., 2015). As Son and Lin (2008) observed, civic action with a focus on defending a common concern may be facilitated by organisational social capital, whereas civic action with a calim or demand may be more facilitated by individual social capital. Such different applications of local social capital have been confirmed for the different modes of local civic actions be they s contentious or moderate (Sampson *et al.,* 2005; Lichterman and Eliasoph, 2014).

In addition, there is another internal difference that exists because of civic actors'

different opponents: state authorities and market forces. With such a difference in petition counterparts, a civic petition can be differently processed. For example, Chinese property-led civic petitions against state authorities have experienced more difficulty in mobilising collective concern compared to those petitions against market forces (Lichterman and Eliasoph, 2014; Fu *et al.*, 2015; He and Feng, 2016). Moreover, even with common rights and rule awareness, local voluntary groups, such as local HOAs, are performing differently in facilitating local civic actions compared to other types of activity. The organisational function of local HOAs in local governance and civic action can be poorly delivered, because of neighbourhood changes and problems in individual CCHEs (He, 2015b). All these internal differences may affect the application of local capacity in facilitating civic petitions, and bring about difficulties in producing an evaluation based on a single case.

Externally, however, there has been a continued boom in bottom-up civic development in China since the reforms of the 1980s. That said, there remain different levels of civic development amongst Chinese cities because of unbalanced socio-economic development (Reese and Rosenfeld, 2002; Andrews, 2007, 2009, 2015; Li *et al.*, 2012; Jiang, 2013; Kuang and Göbel, 2013; Hsu and Hasmath, 2014). As suggested by empirical studies, citizens' civic knowledge, such as their rights and rule awareness, appears significantly higher in coastal cities that possess more advanced socio-economic conditions, while it tends to be less well developed in inland cities with less advanced socio-economic conditions (Yip *et al.*, 2014; Fu, 2015; Fu *et al.*, 2015). Typically, as empirical observing, citizens who live in Chinese inland cities tend to participate less in local civic actions, especially those that confront local state authorities (Reese, 2002; Pattie *et al.*, 2003; Saegert, 2006, 2012; De Souza, 2008; Andrews, 2007, 2009; He, 2015a, 2015b).The different level of civic development among Chinese cities is also highly related to commodity housing developments. The relative higher constructions of CCHEs in Chinese metro cities and big cities has resulted in these places experiencing more occurrences of property-led civic actions (Tomba, 2005; Breitung, 2014; Wang, 2015; Wang *et al.*, 2017). Whereas, in some medium and small sized cities which have a higher preponderance of dispersal distributed CCHEs and numerous remaining old neighbourhoods, (including old courtyards and workers' villages),

have witnessed far fewer occurrences of property-led civic actions (Wong and Peng, 2015; Wang *et al.*, 2017). These external differences between different sized Chinese cities is also reflected in the numerical occurrences of property-led civic petitions contained within the state's own documentation (Paik, 2012; Teest, 2015; Wong and Peng, 2015). To a certain extent, and from an objective perspective, these external differences related to urban civic knowledge and commodity housing development may produce highly dispersed features of property-led civic petitions between Chinese cities. Therefore, such external differences are also noted in the evaluation framework to enhance research value and replicability.

4.5.3 The general research framework of this thesis

In order to have representative findings as premised by the general research aim, certain specifying efforts need to be deployed on selecting the property-led civic petitions that have occurred in CCHEs for the case study (Li, 2008; Li *et al.*, 2012; He and Feng, 2016). Therefore, the research framework is settled in a case study paradigm with embedded case studies as presented in Table 4.3. Initially, a comparative case study between two different sized Chinese cities was conducted with regard to all the property-led civic petitions that have occurred in CCHEs within those two cities. The selection of the two case cities was informed by the significant differences in their respective urban socio-economic contexts (Andrews, 2007, 2009; Chen and Partridge, 2013; Li *et al.*, 2015). With regard to those external and internal differences in civic actions, one typology was deployed for all petitions. Toward individual civic petitions, local civic actors' behaviours were classified into three types, including the claim, the protest, and hybrid. In addition, a classification of the petition opponent was aimed, namely; state authorities, real estate developers, and property management companies. Based on this deployed typology, a multi-scalar analytical framework was applied to justify the embedded cases. The initial survey included a numerical analysis, statistical analysis, and spatial analysis. These were used to explore the representativeness of the specific civic petitions, which form the embedded case studies. Then, an evaluation of the embedded cases was undertaken. The embedded case studies method was based on a network analysis approach with detailed observations on the transition of local social networks and the interactions between stakeholders. The evaluation of individual embedded cases related to the key themes identified in defining place-based communities. This in

turn enabled this thesis to produce a new academic understanding of Chinese contemporary grassroots social life in walled residential patterns.

Table 4.3 Research framework for the evaluation with the designed conceptual model

Analysis unit	Dimensions	Research elements	Key themes
	Typology	1) Civic actors' concerns; 2) Civic actors' opponents	1) The local civic behaviour and norms
Property-led civic petitions in two cities	Multi-scalar	1) Numerical changes of civic petitions annually; 2) Statistical correlations of petition types and local civic capacity; 3) Spatial distribution of property-led civic petitions within the urban commodity housing development	1) The civic petitions in reflecting the growing property-led civic development in China; 2) The civic petitions with strong reflections of local civic capacities; 2) The civic petitions in reflecting the impacts from the commodity housing development to property-led civic development
Embedded cases	Social networks	1) Local social networks, including individual and organisational social networks; 2) Extended social networks with multiple stakeholders; 3) The state's governance on local property-led civic actions and grassroots social transitions;	1) The civic petitions' impacts on local social capital and social cohesion; 2) The formation of place-based community life in CCHEs; 3) The opportunity and constraints for Chinese community development within the constructions of CCHEs

Source: Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Andrews, 2007, 2009; Song and Lin, 2008; Author

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented a literature review concerning the definitions of an urban community and civic engagement with an explicit view of promoting civic action. An urban community has been understood as the spatial order that can be formed and defined by social capital and social cohesion in urban neighbourhoods. The definitions of civic engagement always reflect the civic actors' social capital in

facilitating their civic action with a view to promoting civic virtue. Furthermore civic actions can also benefit local social capital with the exchanges of internal and external resources resulting from the interactions between multi-stakeholder following multi-steps. Therefore, there are mutual impacting linkages among social capital and civic action as presented in the conceptual model in Section 4.4 and Figure 4.3. These linkages offer the opportunity to probe urban community formation, or restructuring, through civic action. Based on the designed conceptual model, analytical frameworks within a case study paradigm are constructed to study the property-led civic petitions' impacts on the neighbouring development in CCHEs, which may lead to urban community formation and restructuring.

With regard to Chinese current civil society, the collective civic petitions that have occurred in CCHEs are identified as an appropriate research objective for evaluation. By revisiting the general research aim of this thesis, an analytical framework that is deployed in case study paradigm is framed to produce the evaluation of grassroots social changes through civic petitions that have occurred in CCHEs. Following such an analytical framework, Chapter Five develops the methodological design in explaining the research considerations, rationality in deploying case study paradigm, and research approaches. First, the rationale for deploying the case study paradigm is explained with the philosophical considerations of the whole research project and research objectives. Second, given that it is necessary to conduct a case study, a broad survey among two case cities is used to framework the selection of specific collective civic petition as embedded cases for further oberservation. Then the specific data collection and data analysis approaches for the embedded case studies are explained.

Chapter Five

Research design and methodology

5.1 Introduction

The research design of this thesis flows directly from the general research aims and questions as well as the general analytical framework that was discussed in Chapter Four. This chapter presents the justification for the general research strategy, the rationale of the research design as a case design paradigm, data collection methods, and a consideration of the ethical issues that were relevant to this research. Initially, the justification of the research strategy provides the philosophical underpinning for this thesis. By focusing on the real social world, social scientific research should be carried out systematically and ethically (Robson, 2002; He and Lin, 2015; Zhou *et al.*, 2019). Ontological considerations, epistemological considerations, and other links from relevant theories to the research are utilised to identify the nature of the research as being predominantly qualitative. Thirdly, in association with the analytical framework discussed in Chapter Four, the rationale for adopting a case study paradigm is explained. Adopting a multiple case study approach, the two steps of a case study paradigm are explained alongside the relevant data collection and analysis methods used at each stage of the research. Finally, ethical concerns and approaches are described to ensure that the applied data collection and analysis follow the highest levels of ethical practice.

5.2 Justification of Research Strategy

The term 'social research' is conceptually defined as academic research on topics and issues which are connected to questions relevant to social scientific fields (Robson, 2002). There is a widely held perception that justifies contemporary urban studies within the sphere of social scientific research. For example, there is a common application of social science research strategy in various topics, including spatial strategies, urban land-use planning, urban housing research, urban transportation research, and other topics (Kaiser *et al.,* 1995; Niemelä, 1999). In this thesis, and on the basis of contextual discussions noted in Chapters Two and Three, this researcher is motivated by the enormous social changes that have occurred through the reforms of Chinese new urbanism. As a consequence, he

explores the potential (re)formation of an urban community in CCHEs through the increasing use of local property-led civic actions (Logan *et al*, 1999; Wu, 2002; Wu and He, 2005). Such a motivation, with regard to the general analytical framework that is discussed in Chapter Four, strongly invokes the research strategy as a social science research that 'provides an interesting point of departure for the investigation' on the changes within Chinese new urbanism (Bryman, 2012, p.5).

5.2.1 Ontological considerations

Ontological considerations cannot be divided from the research design because ontological assumptions may feed into the ways of operationalising data collection and analysis (Bryman, 2012). As Bryman (2012) discussed, the orientation of ontology in social research is the question 'whether social entities can, and should, be considered objective entities that have a reality external to social actors, or whether they can and should be considered social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors' (p.32). There are two common ontological positions; objectivism and constructionism. Objectivism respects social entities as external factors beyond the social actor's reach. Within such an objectivist stance, social entities in human everyday discourse have an existence that is independent from social actors. In contrast, within constructionism, there is an emphasis on human actors' impacts on social entities. Within such a constructivist stance, knowledge is identified as being entirely constructed by social context, and social realities are subjective.

As the studied social entities in this research, place-based communities are presumed to be formed by local neighbourliness, including social capital and social cohesion, both of which can be invested by resource exchanges and intergroup cooperation through civic action. As discussed in Chapter Four, an urban community is a spatial pattern and moral order which has been constructed by individuals who are struggling to earn the given localities' place-based social status, self-respect, personal prestige, and other social resources (Park, 1926). Such a definition suggests that the formation of local community life in CCHEs is not only produced through the social interactions that occur among local civic actors and multiple stakeholders in the civic action, but can also be considered to be in a constant state of revision from local civic actors' changing perceptions of local social capital and social cohesion. With reference to such theoretical understandings,

the researcher presents one specific version of the studied social entity with a constructionist stance, rather than the definitive stance which regards the studied entities as totally objective (Bryman, 2012). With such a constructionist stance, the formation of place-based community in CCHEs is conceptualised as something that is mentally constituted and impacted by residents' collective action and their cooperation in civic petitions. This constructionist consideration is entirely employed in this research as the ontological perspective, and also permeates the design of the research paradigm with appropriate data collection approaches and analysis. Nightingale and Cromby (2002) suggest that constructionism is compelling and credible with the application of a case study in social scientific research. Therefore, given its constructionist stance, this research places its emphasis on peoples' perceptions of local neighbourliness, including social capital and social cohesion, through the enhancement of local social networks due to civic petitions.

To a certain extent, the constructivist stance has been criticized with critical realism because of its impossibility of referentiality and objectivity (Manicas and Secord, 1983; Shotter, 1990, 1992; Bhaskar, 2010). With reference to the general research aim, to evaluate the impacts of collective civic petitions on the formation, and restructuring, of urban communities in CCHEs, the constructionist stance may provide some philosophical advantages. As Nightingale and Cromby (2002) suggest:

> 'Constructionism can potentially elaborate the social, material and biological processes that shape our subjctives rather than confine itself to an analysis of nothing more than that the discursively available outcomes of such processes' (p.710)'.

5.2.2 Epistemological considerations

Epistemology is understood to be the source and nature of knowledge, and it is also conceptualised as important in designing research. The central issue in epistemological considerations is the question of whether a social entity can be studied by the same research approaches that are adopted in natural sciences (Bryman, 2012). There are two different epistemological considerations to social science research; positivism and interpretivism. If s/he/it adopts a positivist stance, the researcher affirms the importance of imitating natural research approaches in social science studies; while if it/he/she adopts an interpretivist stance they take a

critical view to the raw application of those natural research approaches in studying social realities as experiments (Bryman, 2012).

The research content in this thesis is an empirical evaluation of the impacts of local civic petitions on local community life in CCHEs. This may lead to the formation of new urban communities in contemporary urban China. The revisiting of the key themes of the civic action and the urban community asserts that it is necessary to probe local residents' perceptions toward their civic actions and hence interpret residents' perceptions as to the changes in local social networks that may further strengthen local social capital and social cohesion (Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Adler and Goggin, 2005; Bryman, 2012). To a certain extent, such perceptions of local civic action are similar to the research conducted by Weber (1947), in which there was a clear interpretivist stance, as:

> 'Science which attempts the interpretive understanding of social action in order to arrive at a causal explanation of its discourse and effects (p. 88)'.

Given the direct interaction between the researcher and the studied entity, the epistemological consideration in the thesis can be defined as interpretivist. With such an interpretivist stance, the researcher is critical of the application of natural research approaches in studying changing urban society within Chinese new urbanism. So far, numerous empirical studies concerning Chinese contemporary urban social changes have been conducted using experimental research approaches, whereby local grassroots social changes have been mainly reviewed as the subject matter from state-market reform (Lin, 2007b; He and Lin, 2015; Zhou *et al*., 2019). With a common application of neoliberal discourse in these empirical studies, these subjective perceptions of Chinese urban social changes have ignored the bottom-up development that has commonly happened (Xu and Lin, 2018; Zhou *et al*., 2019). Natural science research approaches cannot interpret the continual processes that are occurring at the grassroots level in current urban China (Bryman, 2012), whereas, an interpretative stance may help to provide insights and access to the tremendous social changes, especially neighbourhood changes initiated by local civic action. The interpretivist position enables an in-depth interpretation of those elements of local residents' social capital and social cohesion that are shaped and reshaped as a consequence of their civic action. Thus, the application of an interpretive stance as the epistemological position herein may help to represent the

changing processes and tendencies of the local social networks in the CCHEs rather than residents' definitive points of correspondence from the petition (Bryman, 2012).

5.2.3 The link between theory and research

The practice of social research should be dictated by theoretical concerns, as suggested by Bryman (2012):

> 'The practice of social research does not exist in a bubble, hermetically sealed off from the social sciences and the various intellectual allegiances that their practitioners hold' (p. 19).

Given this, and in order to justify the research strategy, it is essential to characterize the nature of the link between theory and research in this thesis. As Bryman (2012) concluded, the relationship between theory and research can be categorized into two different types, as deductive and inductive (Shils, 1957; Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Aneshensel, 1992; Fawcett and Downs, 1999). With a deductive strategy, the researcher deduces the research aims and objectives from theoretical considerations and observations of the studied entity, and translates the research aims and questions into operational terms on data collection and analysis (Bryman, 2012). Such a deductive strategy is described as 'principally used in sociology to guide the empirical inquiry' (Merton, 1967, p.39). Differently, the inductive strategy implies that the theoretical ideas are derived from the researcher's empirical observations, studies, and findings, rather than being formed before starting the research (Charmaz, 1994; Bryman, 2012).

However, with reference to such a dichotomised perception on the relationship between theory and research, Bryman (2012) suggested that both deductive and inductive research strategies should be better understood as research tendencies because of there being no clear-cut of theory and research in contemporary changing research circumstances. As discussed in Chapter Two, previous literature demonstrates that there is common academic perception that there has been a decline in place-based community life in China since the 1978 reform period (Wang, 2005; Xu *et al.*, 2005; Tani, 2014; Zhu *et al.*, 2012; He and Lin, 2015; Zhou *et al.*, 2019). However, there have also been emerging, and growing, grassroots civic engagements, and especially explosive civic actions; these reflect the grassroots social transition in China's changing urban society (Davis *et al.*, 1995; Tomba, 2005; Teets, 2015). Specifically, with regard to the rising number of property-led civic

actions that have occurred in CCHEs, local residents' growing civic participation and the cooperation that have employed implies that there has been a possible emergence of new place-based community life in CCHEs (Fu and Lin, 2014; Wang and Goodman, 2014; Fu, 2015; Fu *et al*., 2015; He, 2015b). This research is also conducted with an inductive strategy. Therefore, there is no clear application of deductive and inductive strategies in this thesis, but there is a co-existence of the application of relevant theories and the generation of new theoretical findings, see Figure 5.1.
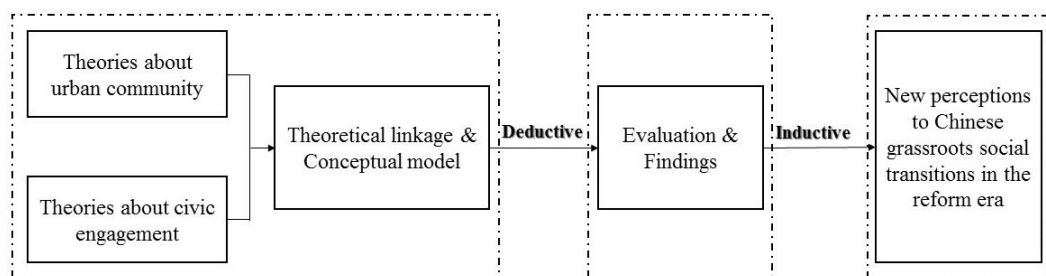
Figure 5.1 Link between theory and research
Source: Bryman, 2012; Author

5.2.4 Justification of the general research strategy

The above philosophical discussions about ontology, epistemology, and the link between theory and research helped to identify the general research strategy used within this thesis. Bryman (2012) highlights the importance of distinguishing between quantitative and qualitative research;

> 'The quantitative/qualitative distinction …[is important] because it represents a useful means of classifying different methods of social research and because it is a helpful umbrella for a range of issues concerned with the practice of social research' (p.35).

Table 5.1 Fundamental differences between quantitative and qualitative strategies

	Quantitative	Qualitative
Ontological orientation	Objectivism	Constructionism
Epistemological orientation	Positivism as natural science	Interpretivism
The link between theory and research	Deductive; Testing of theory	Inductive; generation of theory

Source: Bryman, 2012; Author

There are fundamental differences between quantitative and qualitative research strategies, as illustrated in Table 5.1. These fundamental differences can be clearly reflected by three aspects within the research design.

According to the above philosophical considerations, the nature of this research can be generally identified as qualitative. By revisiting the general research aim and sub-questions, the qualitative research strategy showed its suitability for conducting this research, with its several internal strengths. Initially, a qualitative research strategy places more emphasis on the generation of theory and new research findings which corresponds to the general research aim of feeding into theoretical understandings about Chinese new urbanism. Second, the qualitative research strategy places more emphasis on the individual's perceptions of their social world and social actions, which corresponds to the epistemological understanding of studied entities. Epistemologically, a new place-based community life is presumed to be progressively formed through civic action, because of local residents' perceptions of changing neighbourliness. Third, a qualitative research strategy also embodies a view of the social entity as one that is a constantly changing property of the individual's own creation. With regard to the designed conceptual model that was presented in Chapter Four, such a view of the formation of place-based community life in CCHEs corresponds to local residents' subjective investments in local social networks through their cooperation and resource exchanges within civic actions.

However, it is important to emphasize that the application of a qualitative research design does negate the application of quantitative research approaches. Nowadays, a mixed methodological approach is commonly applied among various social science disciplines (Amaratunga *et al*., 2002; Johnson *et al*., 2007; Berg *et al*., 2009; Bryman, 2012). In contemporary studies about Chinese cities, there also exists the belief that applying mixed research approaches in exploring the characteristics involved in Chinese new urbanism is appropriate (Yeh and Wu, 1999; Huang, 2006; Fu and Lin, 2014; Tani *et al.*, 2014; He and Lin, 2015; Zhou *et al*., 2019). In this thesis, the application of mixed research approaches improved the completeness of the research (Bryman, 2012). As discussed in Chapter Four, before conducting the empirical evaluation of the civic petitions that occurred in CCHEs, a selection of representative cases was conducted to outstand the property-led civic petitions that variously occurred with local civic actors' different behaviours and civic capacities. Within this selection, as the broad survey in cities, quantitative research approaches were applied to study the civic petitions that have occurred in CCHEs. Moreover,

in evaluating the specific petitions selected from the survey, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to promote data analysis. Therefore research design was predominantly qualitative with the application of mixed research approaches.

5.3 The research design as a case study paradigm

5.3.1 Rationale for applying a case study paradigm

In social science research, there is a long tradition of applying a case study paradigm because of its unique strength for studying social entities (Creswell, 1998; Bryman, 2012). Such strength is significant because it 'investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used' (Yin, 1994, p.23). In addition, and with regards to qualitative research strategies, 'qualitative research assumes that there are multiple realities that the world is not an objective thing out there but a function of personal interaction and perception' (Merriam, 1988, p.17). Such realities can be more clearly observed and evaluated using a case study paradigm. Discussions about a case study paradigm allows for an exploration of the 'how', 'why', and 'what' questions in relation to the formation of place-based community life in current urban China. As illustrated in the analytical framework (presented in Chapter Four), the researcher is interested in:

- How civic petitions have occurred differently in CCHEs on the basis of local civic capacity;
- Why and how local residents in CCHEs participate in civic petitions against infringements from state authorities and market forces;
- What impacts (if any) local civic petitions have on the residents' local neighbourliness;
- What kinds (if any) of place-based urban community were formed or are forming through civic petitions.

However, the application of a case study paradigm requires a certain grounding, which enables an exploration through 'detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information' (Creswell, 1998, p.73). As discussed in Chapter Four, property-led civic petitions that have occurred in CCHEs have now been

popularized as reflecting bottom-up civic development in contemporary Chinese (Teets, 2014, 2015; He, 2015a, 2015b). These property-led civic petitions certain perform the grounding in the case study, with its attributable to be the multiple bound systems (Creswell, 1998). On the one hand, the processing of a civic petition is bounded by the involvement of multiple stakeholders (Lichterman and Eliasoph, 2014). At the same time, however, the civic petition is also an official social phenomenon with restrictions set by the state. As presented in Section 3.4.2, the legislated civic petition is processed and settled in a legislated context, which only includes the relevant stakeholders. Moreover, the party-state's institutionalisation for property-led civic petitions, as the Chinese petition system, enables a clear and reliable documentation of the petition with reliable data generated from multiple sources (Teets, 2014, 2015). These elements within the property-led civic petitions suggest that the application of a case study paradigm is appropriate for this thesis.

There is also another rationale for applying a case study paradigm in this thesis. With regards to philosophical considerations, a case study paradigm enables a detailed investigation into local residents' perceptions of the impacts of their civic petitions on the local social networks. By studying individuals' perceptions, the case study paradigm is a rational application to evaluate the progressive changes occurring in local social networks through property-led civic petitions and community formation within these changes.

5.3.2 The type of case in this research

Determining the types of studied cases is positive for clearing the boundaries of an individual case, which had significant meaning in structuring the case study paradigm (Baxter and Jack, 2008). According to Yin (2003) there are five types of case; the critical case, the extreme or unique case, the representative or typical case, the revelatory case, the longitudinal case, as listed in Table 5.2. Each type has its own strengths, functions, and features, which are all essential in designing a case study paradigm. Theoretically, such a justification of the type of case is dependent on the logic identification of the unit of analysis (Yin, 2003; Bryman, 2012).

Table 5.2 Different Types of Case

Case Study Type	Definition
The critical case	With a well-developed theory, the researcher chose the case on the grounds, which may provide a better understanding of the research hypothesis;
The extreme or unique case	As a common focus in clinical studies, the unique or extreme case is selected by the researchers' intrinsic interest;
The representative or typical case	The researcher chose the case to capture the circumstance and conditions of one daily or common situation;
The revelatory case	With this type case study approach, the researcher owns an opportunity of study one phenomenon which used to be inaccessible to scientific research;
The longitudinal case	It suggests that the selected case may afford the opportunity to be studied at two or more junctures.

Source: Yin, 2003; Baxter and Jack, 2008; Bryman, 2012

As discussed in Chapter Four, the general analytical framework invokes the idea that units of analysis should seek to capture a representation that reflects on contemporary Chinese property-led civic development. By revisiting the general research aim, to evaluate the impacts of collective civic petitions on the formation of urban communities in CCHEs, the unit of analysis in the case study should be the representative or exemplifying civic petitions that occurred in CCHEs. Such a justification is related to the common co-existence of various differences in Chinese property-led civic actions. As discussed in Chapter Three, Chinese civil society has witnessed growing property-led civic actions and this indicates that bottom-up civic development is occurring in CCHEs (Chen and Huang, 2009; Wu, 2013; Chen, 2015). However, such development is fluidly differentiated among Chinese cities and CCHEs (Huang and Chen, 2008; Li *et al.,* 2012; Jiang, 2013; Hsu and Hasmath, 2014). Commonly, with regard to the advancing socio-economic development that is occurring in China's large cities, citizens are found to be more willing to participate in local civic actions and to have higher civic awareness than those who live in small sized cities (Li, 2009; Wu, 2013; Chen, 2015; He, 2015b). At the CCHEs scale, those differentiated neighbourhood contexts, collective concerns, and local organisations' impacts also affect local civic participation and the processing of civic petitions (Son and Lin, 2008; Lichterman and Eliasoph, 2014; Fu *et al.,* 2015; He, 2015b; He and Feng, 2016). Therefore, with regards to the choices used when selecting the representative cases, there is a need to ensure that there is a broad survey of differently sized Chinese cities so that the various property-led civic petitions that occurred in various CCHEs can be classified (Bryman, 2012; Hsu and

Hasmath, 2014). The selected civic petitions from the broad survey are an appropriate unit of analysis through which to reflect the representativeness of contemporary Chinese property-led civic actions.

Furthermore, in association with the general research aim, the empirical evaluation about community formations in CCHEs through a local civic petition should also involve a critical attribute, because of the diversity within the Chinese urban social transition and property-led civic actions. With regard to this stance involved in the case study paradigm, there exists another justification for the cases used as critical. The critical case study may provide challenges to the current academic understanding about Chinese new urbanism, as this understanding was mostly developed in a neo-liberal discourse (Zhou *et al*., 2019). This justification, as critical case, is also supported by a series of empirical studies, which have provided grounds for adopting a critical case study paradigm (Tomba, 2005; Fu and Lin, 2014; Fu, 2015).

As discussed in the general analytical framework, the identification of critical cases is founded on the basis of representative cases. Those property-led civic petitions selected from the broad survey among cities are multiple cases with their representativeness of civic development occurred in CCHEs. Within the ground of each representative cases, some specific civic petitions that occurred in CCHEs are critical studied as the embedded cases. With regard to these justifications of the types of studied cases, the case study paradigm in this thesis is the multiple case studies with embedded cases. With a replication involved in this case study paradigm, as critical cases within the ground of representative cases, the empirical evaluation can improve the external validity in producing contributable research findings (Ying, 1994, 2003; Bryman, 2012).

5.3.3 The structure of the case study paradigm

The research was structured around two phases as presented in Figure 5.3. Within phase one, there exists comparisons among property-led civic petitions that have occurred in CCHEs in cities with significant differences. In phase two, comparisons were evident in the evaluations of the multiple cases and the embedded cases. Within the multiple cases, the critical evaluations on embedded cases are presented and compared. Then, at the end of phase two, the synthesised research findings

within each multiple case are also compared thereby generating the general research findings. These research findings will feed into academic perceptions about urban community formation within the on-going production of CCHEs in Chinese cities.
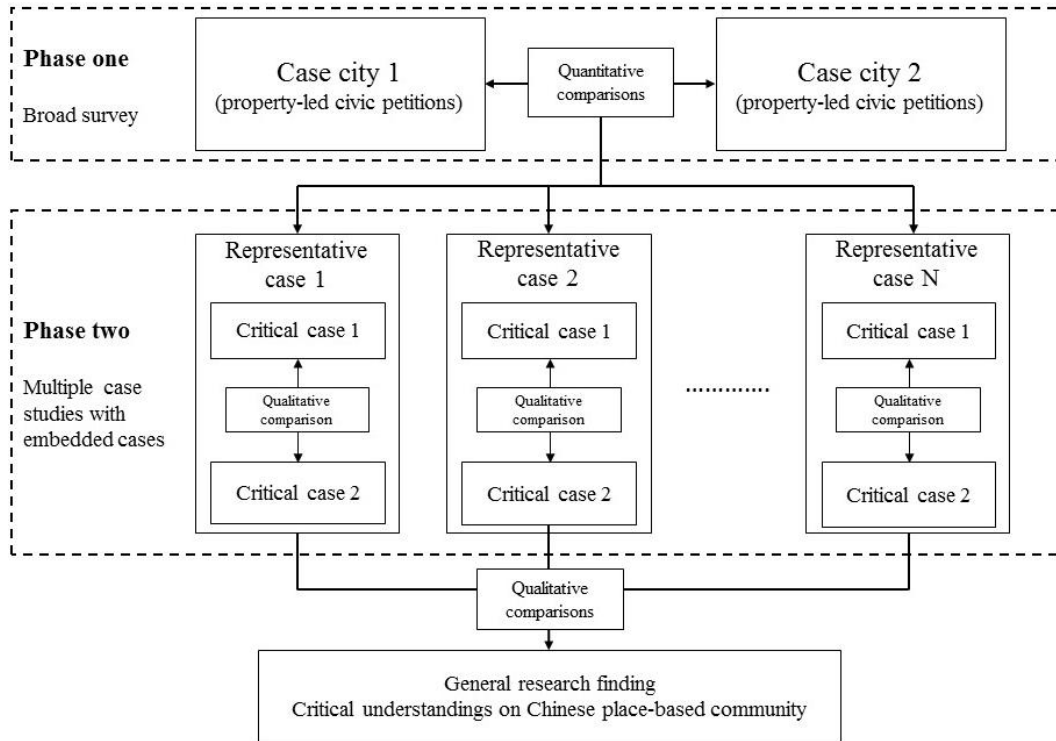
Figure 5.2 Case study structure
Source: Author

As framed in figure 5.2, the broad survey and multiple case studies with embedded cases are progressively connected in a linear manner. In phase one, the comparative study between the two cities was analysed to select the representative cases. On the basis of quantitative comparisons, some representative cases were selected as capturing property-led civic actions that have occurred in CCHEs. In phase two, the selected embedded case study entities were critically evaluated through mutual comparisons in presenting the local civic petitions' impacts on the local social networks in individual CCHEs. Then, the research findings from the multiple case studies were further synthesised and mutually compared to provide the critical findings about the formation of place-based community life in the local property-led civic petitions occurring in CCHEs. Such critical research findings were consistent with the researcher's motivation in conducting this research.

5.4 Phase one: a broad survey among two Chinese different cities

The Phase one is conducted to control the potential pitfalls involved in diversities

of Chinese property-led civic petitions. With this stance, the selection of representative cases during phase one becomes quite important in seeking to build robustness into validity of the research findings. Furthermore, a broad survey between two case cities is also meaningful in selecting the representative cases. As discussed in Chapters Three and Four, the internal and external differences in Chinese property-led civic petitions cannot be ignored because of their potential to affect the reliability and external validity of this research. In an attempt to avoid such pitfalls, certain research strategies were initially applied in phase one before the quantitative analysis of the property-led civic petitions between the two cities was undertaken. The selection of the two studied cities was based on city size and socio-economic differences in accordance with the views espoused by Chen and Partridge (2013) and Li *et al* (2015). Then, one typology with two dimensions related to the civic actors' processes and opponents were deployed to evaluate the internal differences that exist in property-led civic petitions. Based on these two considerations, one analytical framework for this broad survey was design, as presented in Table 5.3. The analytical results from the broad survey were regarded as criteria in selecting the representative cases within the two cities. These representative cases act as the ground in selection the embedded cases for the empirical evaluation.

Table 5.3 Analytical framework of the broad survey

Sections	Research elements	Objective
Urban civic development	(1) General condition of civic petitions that have occurred in CCHEs; (2) Amount and proportion of civic petitions in CCHEs within the typology	To select the petitions which are representative in presenting the rising urban civic development among cities
Internal mechanism of local civic capacity	(1) The local civic capacity reflected in the correlation; 2) Specific correlation among petition typology and neighbourhood contexts	To select the petitions which are representative in reflecting the local civic capacity of individual CCHEs among cities
Spatial distribution	(1) Spatial distribution of civic petitions that have occurred in CCHEs; (2) Spatial agglomerations of civic petitions that have occurred in CCHEs	To select the petitions which are representative and consistent with urban commodity housing development among cities

Source: Author

5.4.1 Selection of two cities

Following the analytical framework in the broad survey, two Chinese cities were selected for conducting this broad survey. The two cities were selected based on

several criteria. The criteria were set out because of the diversities of Chinese cities' civic development within different discourses, typically in the political discourse and socio-economic discourse. Besides that, the consideration of research time and cost was also involved in such a selection.

Initially, within the Chinese political discourse, there existed a hierarchical classification of Chinese cities, as the provincial cities (such as Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, and Chongqing), vice-provincial cities (such as each capital city in individual provinces), prefectural cities, and counties (Yeh and Wu, 1995). This administrative hierarchy was constructed in the Socialist era within the resource distribution of the central economic planning system (Wu and Yeh, 1997, 1999). This administrative hierarchy was also reflected by the different levels of CCHEs' construction among cities, within the on-going Chinese new urbanism (Li *et al.*, 2015). For example, the CCHEs initially emerged in provincial cities, and then transited to sub-provincial cities, prefectural cities, and counties (Wang, 2005; He and Lin, 2015; Zhou *et al.*, 2019). The higher administrative hierarchy of a city mostly witnessed more advanced commodity housing development in the reform era. In addition, the higher administrative hierarchy of a city may present more openness to grassroots civic actions, and consequently witness more occurrences of the same (Teets, 2014, 2015). With regard to such differences in Chinese political discourse, the two cities should be selected from different administrative hierarchies, to guarantee the research representativeness and rigor. Thus, one sub-provincial city and one prefectural city are defined as the first selecting criteria of selecting the case study cities. The county level city is excluded from the selection for the potential difficulties in data collection (Yip *et al.*, 2014; Teets, 2015).

Second, within the Chinese socio-economic discourse, there has emerged significant socio-economic differences among Chinese cities since the reform. As indicated by empirical studies, the urban socio-economic differences had been connected to different urban civic developments, commonly with reflections of individual civic awareness and participation (Andrews, 2009, 2015; Berg *et al.*, 2009). The Chinese urban socio-economic differences also witnessed the different mode of civic actions among cities (Tomba, 2004, 2005; Teets, 2014). Besides that, those tremendous socio-economic differences among Chinese cities also reflect different commodity housing development. Towards such differences, with regard

to the Chinese party-state's discourse, there is one hierarchical term in classifying Chinese cities as tiers, including first-tier city, second-tier city, third-tier, fourth tier, and so on (Chinese Academy of Social Science, 2017). By considerations to the research representativeness of this thesis, the two case study cities should have significant socio-economic differences. Thus, the second selecting criteria of the two cities is that the broad survey should be conducted in one first-tier city and one third-tier city, to exemplify the significant socio-economic difference.

Furthermore, in order to limit research time and cost, a purposeful sampling strategy was applied in selecting the two cities, with considerations of the above two criteria. Given the researcher's social identity, as a lecturer in a public university in Jiangsu Province, two Chinese cities were selected within this province. The first-tier city selected is Nanjing City, with its political hierarchy as sub-provincial; and, the third-tier city selected is Huai'an City, with its political hierarchy as prefecture-level city. As presented in Table 5.4, the two cities possess significant territorial, social, and economic differences. The location of the two cities is presented in Figure 5.3. Initially, the administrative hierarchy of the two cities, as sub-provincial and prefectural cities, presents significant differences in terms of urban territory, urban population, and development of CCHEs. Then, the socio-economic classification of the two cities as, respectively, first-tier and third-tier cities, presented significant difference in the two cities' GDP. Such contextual differentiations among two cities are consistent with those two considerations.

Table 5.4 Contextual differentiation in two cities.

Categories of city contexts	Nanjing	Huai'an
Political hierarchy	Sub-provincial	Municipal
Socio-economic hierarchy (2016)	First-tier	Third-tier
City GDP in 2016 (Billion RMB)	10,503.02	3048
City territorial area (Km^2)	6622.45	10,072.03
Urban area (Km^2)	653	330
Urban registered population in 2013 (Million)	2.11	0.86
Urban registered population in 2014 (Million)	2.17	0.91
Urban registered population in 2015 (Million)	2.21	0.95
Constructed CCHEs (2013)	1511	573
Constructed CCHEs (2014)	1609	589
Constructed CCHEs (2015)	1627	606

Figure 5.3 Location of the two different-tier cities: Nanjing City and Huai'an City.
Source: Author

5.4.2 Data collection in broad survey

In phase one, the main data sources were official petition documents, which were documented between Janurary 2013 to December 2015. Those official petition documents were collected from the relevant state authorities, namely the Municipal Bureaus of People's Letter and Visit (*Renmin Xinfang Ju*) in both cities. Such official documents are always important in social research, as they can 'produce a great deal of statistical information' for quantitative analysis (Bryman, 2012, p.549). These petition documents consisted of open documents in online archives and paper archives. They were reviewed in order to enhance the reliability of the researcher's data collection. From 2013 to 2015, 188 petition documents were submitted to Nanjing's Municipal Bureaus of People's Letter and Visit, and 74 petition documents were presented to the Huai'an's Municipal Bureau of People's Letter and Visit.

5.4.3 Data analysis: documentary analysis

Coding procedures were applied to the civic petitions that had occurred in CCHEs. Initially, those that were 'single' or 'non-civic' petitions were excluded from the civic petitions.

1) 'Single' means a petition with the signature of single homeowner or a household (Adler and Goggin, 2005; Sampson *et al*., 2005; He, 2015a).

2) 'Non-civic' means that the concern of the petition was shaped to a single or certain group's interest (Adler and Goggin, 2005; Sampson *et al*., 2005; He, 2015a).

After the identification of these CCHE-based civic petitions one event coding was implemented to apply the typology. The typology was subjectively developed according to the classification rules applied in the research about collective concerns of individual civic action, as the petition type (Sampson *et al*., 2005). The civic petitions were categorized into three types; claim, protest, or hybrid. The claim petitions explicitly stated the local homeowners' proactive demands and actions, which pertain to common goods or collective private goods from other stakeholders. Differently, the protest petitions explicitly illustrated the homeowners' joint opposition and resistance to infringements from other stakeholders, whilst hybrid petitions were a blend of claim and protest petitions. In addition to this topological coding on petition types, another typology was applied on the basis of different petition opponents. The petition opponents were also categorized into three categories; state authorities (including all party-state departments and some attached agencies), property management companies (PMCs), and real estate developers (RDs). Moreover, within these petition documents, some distinct socio-territorial information was coded for its objective attributes as dependent variable in indicating the socio-economic diversities of individual CCHEs-based civic petitions (Andrews, 2009, Hu and Chan, 2012). In total, five categories of information code were applied:

1) Petition type (e.g., claim, protest, or hybrid),

2) Petition opponents (e.g., the state authorities, property management companies, and real estate developers),

3) Numerical information (e.g., the number of petitions that had occurred in the two case cities from 2013 to 2015, the number of petitions that had occurred in CCHEs, and the number of collective civic petitions that had occurred in CCHEs),

4) Contextual information (e.g., event date, individual CCHE's location, the size of individual CCHE, as well as the time that had elapsed since the individual CCHE was built),

5) Households' involvement in individual petitions (the number of families that signed the given petition document).

With regard to this coded information from official petition documents, to follow the analytical framework of the broad survey, the data analysis on the relevant petition documents is structured into three sections, all of which deployed a quantitative data analysis approach. The first section is a numerical analysis of civic petitions that have occurred in the two cities between Janurary 2013 to December 2015. The civic petitions that occurred in CCHEs are initially compared to other petitions. These were then compared within the applied typology so as to present any similarities and differences that have occurred in characteristics of CCHE originated petitions. The second section is a statistical analysis that arose from examining the internal mechanisms of those civic petitions that occurred in CCHEs mainly using correlation and logistic regression analysis (Pattie *et al*., 2003; Kim and Ball-Rokeach, 2010; Hu and Chan, 2012). Within this statistical analysis, the petition types, as dependent variables, were tested against correlations to the independent variables, including the territorial contexts of individual CCHEs, petition opponents, and other contexts. The third section involved a spatial mapping of these targeted petitions within urban spatial structure. These are normally associated with where commodity housing development have occurred within in cities (Andrews, 2007, 2009; Kim and Ball-Rokeach, 2010; Manturuk *et al*., 2012).

5.5 Phase Two: The multiple case studies with embedded cases

Based on the justification for the representative cases from the broad survey, empirical evaluation was applied to study the changes in local neighbourliness in the embedded cases. As presented in Table 5.5, one evaluation framework was produced to conduct the critical evaluations on each embedded case; guided by the designed conceptual model that was presented in Chapter Four. Within this

evaluating framework, the linkages between local social capital and civic petition were deployed as the key concepts in the evaluation process. This evaluation was dependent on the application of qualitative research approaches.

Table 5.5 Evaluating framework for the embedded cases

Steps	Research elements	Objective	Key concepts
Origin	1) Collective concern and civic participation in initiating the petition; 2) Application of local social network in initiating the petition; 3) The petition opponents' reactions to the petition;	To probe original neighbourliness and civic capacity in CCHEs	1) The linkage between local social capital and civic action; 2) The community formation on the basis of local social capital and social cohesion
Process	1) Local civic participation in producing concessions and trade-offs; 2) Interactions among multiple stakeholders;	To evaluate intergroup cooperation and local neighbourliness in processing the petition	
End	1) Changes of local social networks after the petition; 2) Local civic participation after the petition; 3) Local residents' reactions to the social changes;	To evaluate changed neighbourliness after the petition	

Source: Author

5.5.1 Selection of embedded cases

In selecting the embedded cases, from the grounding of multiple cases selected from the broad survey, there is some degree of following a purposive sampling strategy. As Bryman (2012) defined, purposive sampling can make the case selection more relevant to the general research aim. Moreover, this purposive sampling strategy can benefit the critical evaluation on the embedded cases, with supports from the multiple data sources (Creswell, 1998; Hood, 2007). As Bryman (2012) observed, purposive sampling can ensure that case selection ids relevant to general research aims and sub-questions. Moreover, the purposive sampling strategy is 'relatively open-ended and emphasizes the generation of concepts and theories' in the case study (Bryman, 2012, p.422). Besides that, the selection of embedded cases strongly depends on the researcher's access to the multiple data sources: the key

actors from multiple stakeholders and local homeowners. For example, in order to collect data from petition arbitrators who served as civil servants, there exists difficulties in gathering the relevant data from them, because of the current state's institutionalisation on managing the civic petition (Fu and Distelhorst, 2018). Otherwise, with regard to the common gated management of individual CCHEs, the permission to contact local homeowners became more and more difficult. Therefore, after selecting the multiple case, the researcher should select the embedded cases on the basis of evaluation of permission to those multiple data sources. Totally, within each case grounding, two embedded cases from each city were selected as examples of specific civic petition activities occurring in CCHEs.

5.5.2 Data collection from multiple data sources

Within the critical evaluation on the embedded cases, data collection strongly invokes the researchers' direct access to multiple data sources, as the key actors involved in individual civic petition and the local residents. Such multiple data sources are considered important for data triangulation, as they enable the researchers' broader observations to the changes occurring in local social networks through the petitions (Grix, 2004; Bryman, 2012). As emphasized by Yin (2014), using multiple data sources is a major strength of a case study paradigm. Two approaches were applied to collect data from the multiple sources. First, semi-structured interviews are deployed to collect relevant data from key actors. Secondly, structured questionnaires were deployed to collect data about local residents' reflections. Such questionnaires were used in order to triangulate the research findings from key actors and provide better critical understandings on the petition's impacts on local neighbourliness (Bryman, 2012).

(1) Semi-structured interviews with key actors

Interviewing is a commonly employed approach in collecting data in social science research (Frey and Fontana, 1991; Roulston *et al.*, 2003; Fontana and Prokos, 2016). Moreover, interviews can be classified into three types; structured, unstructured, and semi-structured (Fontana and Frey, 1994; Bryman, 2012). Among these three types, the unstructured interview and semi-structure interview are both identified as qualitative interviews for their great flexibility and variation in reflecting interviewees' points of view. Such flexibility and variation are important in

producing insightful evaluations concerning civic petitions' progressive impacts on local neighbourliness. As Bryman (2012) pointed out:

> 'In qualitative interviewing, rambling or going off at tangents is often encouraged-it gives insight into what the interviewee see as relevant and important…interviewers can depart significantly from any schedule or guide that is being used. They can ask new questions that follow up interviewees' replies and can vary the order and even the wording of questions…As a result, qualitative interviewing tends to be flexible, responding to the direction in which interviewees take the interview and perhaps adjusting the emphases in the research as a result of significant issues that emerge in the course of interviews' (p.470).

Semi-structured interviews are significantly different to unstructured interviews, as they capture a certain degree of interviewer's control. The interviews with key actors followed, as table 5.5 shows, a linear flow from petition origins to the process, and then to the outcomes. Perceptions of local social networks and actual civic participation were both core issues for the interview. Moreover, the data collected by interviewing key actors needed to be such that the author to could make comparisons. Given this, the interviewer used semi-structured interviews. In keeping with the opinions of Grix (2004) and Bryman (2012), they were conducted by asking prompted questions with fluid adjustment by considering the specific conditions in interviewing. The questions asked were mainly about how local residents initiated their civic petitions, how local residents collectively made concessions and trade-offs with other stakeholders within the state's institution, and what they had gained from their civic petition. In the individual embedded cases, at least two key actors from each stakeholder group were interviewed.

The interviews were all conducted face-to-face in Chinese. All interviews were audio recorded once permission had been granted by the interviewees. Thereafter, the interviewing transcripts were translated into English.

(2) The structured questionnaire

The quantitative data collected from the structured questionnaire involving local residents could act as a means by which to verify the research findings collected from the semi-structured interviews. The embedded case studies that combine qualitative and quantitative research methods can be mutually illuminating. As Bryman (2012) argued, such an integration can be defined as a paradigm, which inextricably intertwines the 'epistemological assumptions, values, and methods'

(p.629).

The structured questionnaire included several closed questions about local residents' memories and perceptions about changes that had occurred because of civic petitions. Initially, some questions were asked about individual participation in petitions; then, some questions were asked about individual perceptions about changing neighbourliness after the petitions, especially with regard to social networks in the local neighbourhood; finally, some questions were asked about individuals' willingness to engage in civic actions in the future. The structured questionnaire was a self-completion questionnaire, which was delivered into individual households with an applied response rate of 10%. In delivering those questionnaires in embedded cases, with the aim of improving the response rate and avoiding the unqualified responeses, the real delivery rate was 15% of all local households. The questionnaires were all handed out and collected back by the researcher.

5.5.3 Data analysis: detailed documentary analysis

The analysis of qualitative data is significant as there exist difficulties in probing a large and cumbersome database (Bryman, 2012). Such difficulties can be related to the flexibility and variation within those key actors' interview transcripts, which bring the richness in producing the attractive research findings and the difficulties in finding analytic paths together (Miles, 1979). These difficulties are common in social research, which mainly applys qualitative research methods (Miles, 1979; Dey, 2003; Taylor *et al*., 2015), as there are 'few well-established and widely accepted rules for the analysis of qualitative data' (Bryman, 2012, p.565). With regard to these inevitable difficulties, some extent of grounded theory was applied in analysing the qualitative data from the interview transcripts. Grounded theory has proved to be effective in analysing qualitative data because of its strengths in enabling theoretical saturation and constant comparisons to be made on the basis of coding (Glaser and Strauss, 2017). In the meantime, the application of grounded theory in qualitative analysis also enabled the generation of concepts, categories, and substantive theory (Bryman, 2012).

The coding procedures were implemented according to the research aim and questions. By using NVivo software, individual interview transcripts were cut up

into 'files of chunks data, with each file representing a code' (Bryman, 2012, p.577). Then, the redefined files with the explicit codes were analysed. Within the application of grounded theory in analysing qualitative data, narrative analysis is a common applied approach with its strength being in probing people's perceptions of specific events (Bryman, 2012). Such an analytical approach enabled clear observations on the progressive changes in local social networks that had occurred through civic petitions. The analytical results that are presented in the thesis are mainly in the form of quotes.

As well as an analysis of the qualitative data from the interview transcripts, there was also a quantitative data analysis of the structured questionnaires. The analysis was conducted by using numerical accounts through Excel software, with the visualised representation of analytical results being presented in the form as charts.

5.6 Ethical consideration in this research

With the specific concerns of key actors and local residents' perceptions, about the changes in local social networks through the local property-led civic petitions, the ethical issues may arise within the data collecting procedures. There are potential ethical risks that relate to harm to participants, a lack of informed consent, an invasion of privacy, and deception (Diener and Crandall, 1978; Punch, 1994; Bryman, 2012). With regard these potential ethical risks, the integrity of this research was initially maintained by closely following the ethical principles that exist in the United Kingdom and People's Republic of China. Before conducting the data collection, an ethics application was submitted and approved by the Committee on Research Ethics of the University of Liverpool. The information provided include a Participant Information Sheet, a Participant Consent Form, a University of Liverpool Research Ethics Application Form, and samples of the questions that were to be used in both the semi-structured interviews and structured questionnaires. Within this application, the design of the interviews and questionnaire was clearly explained, and the Committee was assured that the data collection in the embedded case studies would not include any vulnerable groups. Specifically, those aged over 80 and under 16 years of age, as well as other vulnerable groups were excluded from the data collection exercise.

Then, in the data collection procedures, more ethical considerations were followed

and maintained. In the broad survey, there also exists certain ethical risks which may potentially bring offence to relevant individuals and researcher. Although the petition documents are totally open to the public, there exist some ethical risks as some personal details are contained in the documents. Therefore, the petition documents collected from these open sources were stored in an anonymous format on the University's secure network. Once analysis and writing up had been completed, these petition documents were deleted to avoid any risk of leaking private information. In Phase Two, direct contact with individual key actors and local residents raised ethical risks again. Before answering any question the interviewees and all resident participants were told that their involvement was voluntary and participants were selected only once they had given their written informed consent in Chinese. All participants were informed of issues pertaining to confidentiality and their right to withdraw from the interview at any time; they were reassured that their responses and privacy would remain confidential and anonymous; and they were informed about how the data would be stored, analysed and presented in this thesis and other academic publications. In addition, the researcher's identity and research purpose were explained to individual participants before conducting the interviews and the questionnaires. The sponsorship of this thesis, by the University of Liverpool and Huaiyin Institute of Technology (China), was also explained to individual participants. Moreover, with regards to the contemporary Chinese state's repressive management of civil society, some special ethical considerations were also involved in the data collecting procedures to mitigate the likelihood of relevant agencies and people suffering legal problems. After data collection and during data analysis, the storage of interview and questionnaire transcripts in audio and image forms were stored and protected on the secured network services provided by the University of Liverpool. Only the researcher and his supervisor had access to this data during the research. All participants were able to get access to their data and they had the right to withdraw at any time. In writing the thesis and other publications, the names and identities of individual interviewees and participants have been anonymised.

Finally, it is important to explain the researcher's positionality in conducting this research, because such a positionality is vital in motivating the researcher's focus on the research topic. My personal experience, as living in CCHEs since childhood, enables my profound observation to the local neighbourhood. There are various

images to suggest the quality social capital and social cohesion among local homeowners. Such an observation further motivates I to challenge the contemporary Chinese urban studies, most of which greatly challenged the grassroots community living. Moreover, my career identity, as one university lecturer in China, also motivate myself to have detailed investigation on Chinese changing urban societies. Although Western studies provide profound observations and investigations about the global changing world in a Neo-liberal context, the Chinese reform always express its' unique characteristics that should be critically observed or evaluated (Zhou *et al.*, 2019). I believe such a critical study on community formation through local civic action may promote the academic understandings on Chinese urban grassroots society in nowadays. Therefore, these personal living experiences and career identity enable the research positionality in conducting this research, to be critical and objective.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the research design used in conducting this research, following the theoretical and analytical discussions presented in Chapter Four. One multiple cases study with embedded cases was applied with the philosophical consideration to the general research aim, sub-questions, and the research strategy. The whole research was designed into two phases, including a broad survey and the multiple case studies with embedded cases. The data collection and analysis approaches within the case study paradigm have been explained along with the decision to use a mixed research approach. The several qualitative research methods, including documentation, analysis semi-structured interview, and structured questionnaires, were applied in association with the multiple cases study with embedded cases. In addition, ethical considerations have been noted.

Following this research design chapter, the next chapter will present findings from the Phase One survey. The representative embedded cases are identified through multi-scalar analysis. These embedded cases form the basis of more detailed empirical analysis concerning local social changes brought about through civic petitions.

Chapter Six

An overview of property-led civic petitions in two different Chinese cities: Nanjing City and Huai'an City

6.1 Introduction

Chapter Six reports on the outcomes from the broad survey that was undertaken in two different Chinese cities to explore the general characteristics of property-led civic petitions. This broad survey acted as the basis for selecting the representative case study entities, the civic petitions occurred in Chinese Commodity Housing Estates (CCHEs), which are at the heart of this thesis. In this chapter, some common features of Chinese property-led civic petitions are illustrated by highlighting similarities in both cities. At the same time, it is evident that the two cities possess different urban contexts and especially significant socio-economic differences. This chapter initially reviews the general changes of property-led civic petitions in CCHEs (targeted petitions), comparing to all petitions submitted by urban populations and CCHEs' construction. Then, some statistical analysis is produced to explore the significant internal mechanisms within Chinese property-led civic petitions that exist in the two cities. After this, spatial mapping reveals the spatial characteristics of property-led civic petitions within the two cities. Finally, a justification for the selected cases for further empirical evaluation is made.

6.2 Changing trends in urban civic development

So far, empirical studies have suggested that there has been constant growth of citizens' property-led civic actions in urban China in the reform era (Read, 2003; Zhang, 2004; Wu, 2007; Shao *et al*., 2012; Fu and Lin, 2014; Cheng *et al*., 2015; He, 2015a; Liu *et al*., 2017; Wang *et al*., 2017). In the last four decades, Chinese hierarchical state authorities have established specialised petition systems (*Xinfang*) as a state-sanctioned channel to process the rising number of property-led civic actions (Shao *et al*., 2012; Cheng *et al*., 2015; Wang *et al*., 2017). These have been proved to be effective in addressing contemporary citizens' various desires for greater empowerment (Tang and Zhan, 2008; Shao *et al*., 2012; Leggett, 2017). Significantly, the common and growing emergence of property-led civic petitions

has been widely acknowledged as the reflection for increased citizen participation at the Chinese urban grassroots scale (Zhang, 2004; He, 2015a; Wang *et al*., 2017).

With reference to this growing trend, some empirical studies have been developed to illustrate and reflect aspects of property-led civic development in Chinese cities (Tang and Zhan, 2008; Hu and Chan, 2012; Shao *et al*., 2012; Cheng *et al*., 2015; He, 2015a; Leggett, 2017). However, none of these studies has illustrated whether the property-led civic developments are similarly or differently occurring in different Chinese cities, which have great varieties in socio-economic and civic development. In comparison, numerous Western studies have highlighted differences in the outcomes of civic developments and how these differences are dependent upon the different socio-economic contexts that exist at both a city scale and urban neighbourhood scale (Pattie *et al*., 2003; Sampson *et al*., 2005; Saegert, 2006; Andrews, 2007, 2009; Cohen *et al*., 2015). Within the Chinese context, any similarities and differences that exist in the targeted petitions may illustrate the changing trends of homeowners' civic behaviours. Such a quantitative review enables general observations on the growing urban civic developments of the two cities to be made and the selection of the targeted petitions which act as representative case studies.

6.2.1. General Trends

The general conditions of petitions submitted to the Municipal Bureaus of People's Letter and visit in the two cities from 2013 to 2015 are presented in categories with hierarchically inclusive connections, including all petitions, petitions that have occurred in CCHEs, and targeted petitions, as indicated in Table 6.1. The first trend worthy of note is that the number of petitions which have occurred in CCHEs in both cities has grown. Although the total number of petitions increased during this period, this growth was relatively insignificant compared to the growing trends of petitions that occurred in CCHEs. For example, in Huai'an City, the annual average rate of increase in the number of all petitions submitted was 2.5%, which is relatively insignificant compared to the annual growth of the targeted (CCHE) petitions (17.7%). Furthermore, regarding the constant growth of petitions that occurred in CCHEs, the targeted petitions increased constantly at a higher rate in both cities. This suggests that launching petitions, whether individually or collectively, has become more widespread amongst homeowners in urban China.

Moreover, the relatively higher growth of targeted petitions has occurred in parallel to property-led civic developments within Chinese commodity housing developments (Yeh and Wu, 1995; Wu, 2007; Wu, 2015; Wang, 2016).

Table 6.1 Petitions in Nanjing City and Huai'an City (2013–2015)

	2013	2014	2015	Annual Average Changing Rate
Nanjing City				
All petitions (amount)	113	121	135	6.1%
(proportion)	100%	100%	100%	
Petitions in CCHEs (amount)	71	89	99	11.7%
(proportion)	62.8%	73.6%	73.3%	
Targeted petitions (amount)	49	62	77	16.3%
(proportion)	43.4%	51.2%	57.1%	
Huai'an City				
All petitions (amount)	65	66	70	2.5%
(proportion)	100%	100%	100%	
Petitions in CCHEs (amount)	31	39	45	13.2%
(proportion)	47.7%	59.1%	64.3%	
Targeted petitions (amount)	19	24	31	17.7%
(proportion)	29.2%	36.4%	44.3%	

Source: Nanjing Municipal Bureau of People's Letter and Visit, 2014, 2015, 2016; Huai'an Municipal Bureau of People's Letter and Visit, 2014, 2015, 2016; Author

Another important trend is the increase in the number of targeted petitions in the two cities. From 2013 to 2015, targeted petitions increased from around 35% (Nanjing City, 43.4%; Huai'an City, 29.2%) to around 50% (Nanjing City, 57.1%; Huai'an City, 44.3%). In contrast, there was a decrease in both single and non-civic petitions. These changes suggest that there has been increased homeowners' civic awareness with regards to how to use civic actions to try and achieve common and collective goods. These trends also suggest that CCHEs are becoming a significant civic territory that fosters urban civic development in contemporary urban China (Fu and Lin, 2014; He, 2015a; Wang, 2016).
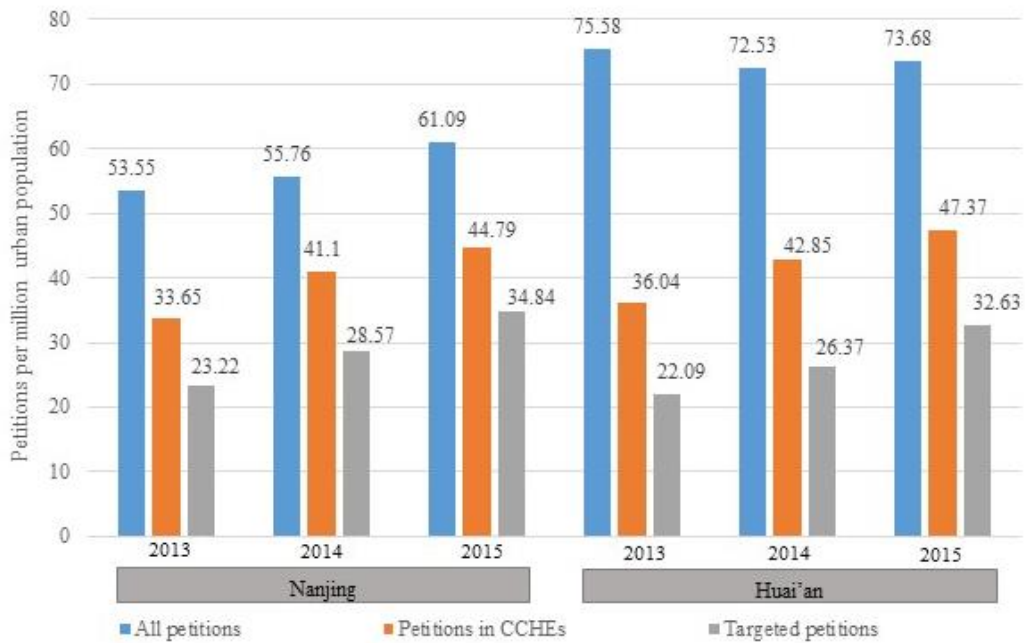
Figure 6.1 Property-led civic petitions within urban population (million) from 2013 to 2015
Source: Nanjing Municipal Bureau of People's Letter and Visit, 2014, 2015, 2016;
Huai'an Municipal Bureau of People's Letter and Visit, 2014, 2015, 2016; Author
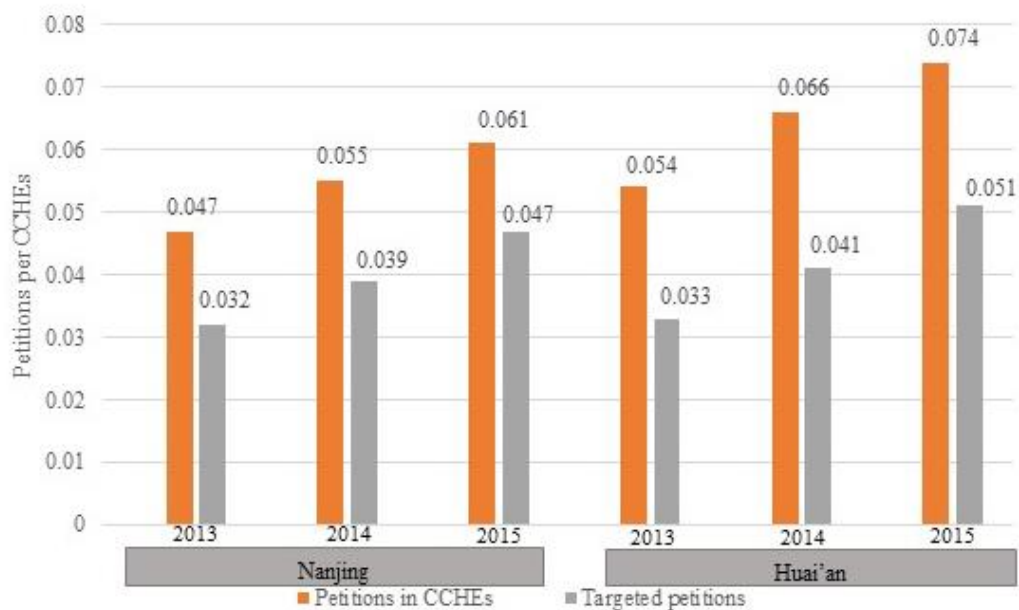
Figure 6.2 Property-led civic petitions within CCHEs from 2013 to 2015
Source: Nanjing Municipal Bureau of People's Letter and Visit, 2014, 2015, 2016;
Huai'an Municipal Bureau of People's Letter and Visit, 2014, 2015, 2016; Author

Among the two cities, there were similar trends in presenting the growing occurrences of property-led civic action within CCHEs. However, it is significant to note that some differences exist. First, with regards to the number of petitions, the number of targeted petitions in Nanjing City was significantly greater than those in Huai'an City. This difference could be related to the differentiated urban population, as there was a greater urban population in the first-tier city. As indicated

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in Figure 6.1, with per million urban population, there were more occurrences of petitions in CCHEs. In addition, and regard to the total number of annual occurrences of targeted petitions, there were more in Nanjing City than Huai'an City. This is in keeping with the total number of targeted petitions within CCHEs in the two cities. As indicated in Figure 6.2, even with less CCHEs in Huai'an City, there were more petitions in this third-tier city from 2013 to 2015. However, the number of targeted petitions in CCHEs in this third-tier city was lower than that recorded in Nanjing City. These trends, all suggest that there has been an increase in property-led civic development in the two cities. The relative lower number of targeted petitions in Huai'an City may be because of the relatively lower level of property-led civic development, by comparison the property-led civic development in Nanjing City.

6.2.2. Trends of targeted Petitions within the typology

With regard to petition type, a typological identification of targeted petitions illustrates the process and concerns of civic actors within their petition within the petition type, and this can be seen as a reflection of local civic culture (Sampson *et al*., 2005; Andrew, 2007). To a certain extent, individual civic awareness and behaviour are connected to the differentiated socio-economic development between cities (Andrew, 2007, 2009; Cai, 2008b; Chen *et al*., 2015). Those numerical similarities and differences in the general trends between the two cities can be further explained within the changing trends of different types of targeted petitions. It was noted that the similarities and differences between the two cities were quite significant with regard to the comparisons among petition types, as indicated in Table 6.2. Similarly, the claim petitions experienced constant growth in terms of both number and proportion. In contrast, the annual changes in terms of the number and proportion of protest and hybrid petitions were significantly different between the two cities. In Nanjing City, the claim petitions continually increased in amount and proportion; there was only a minor numerical change in the number of protest petitions, but there was a significant decrease in the proportion. In addition, there was a continual increase in hybrid petitions, and the hybrid petitions had been the main type in 2015. In Huai'an City, protest petitions were the dominant type, and there was a growth in their number as well as their proportion. Hybrid petitions experienced minor growth in terms of number with a decrease in proportion. Such

different trends may certainly suggest a higher level of civic development in Nanjing City, as local homeowners possess more advanced civic culture in adopting the hybrid actions to achieve and protect local collective goods (Sampson *et al.,* 2005),

Table 6.2 Civic petitions in CCHEs by type (2013–2015)

	2013	2014	2015	Annual Changing Rate
Nanjing City				
Claim (amount)	12	19	26	29.4%
(proportion)	24.5%	30.7%	33.8%	11.3%
Protest (amount)	21	23	19	−3.3%
(proportion)	42.9%	37.1%	24.7%	−16.8%
Hybrid (amount)	16	20	32	26.0%
(proportion)	32.6%	32.2%	41.5%	8.4%
Huai'an City				
Claim (amount)	5	8	10	26.0%
(proportion)	26.4%	33.3%	32.3%	7.0%
Protest (amount)	7	9	12	19.7%
(proportion)	36.8%	37.5%	38.7%	1.6%
Hybrid (amount)	7	7	9	8.7%
(proportion)	36.8%	29.2%	29.0%	−7.6%

Source: Nanjing Municipal Bureau of People's Letter and Visit, 2014, 2015, 2016; Huai'an Municipal Bureau of People's Letter and Visit, 2014, 2015, 2016; Author

Through cross-tabulating petition type and petition opponents together, the numerical differences can be seen in more detail as shown in Table 6.3. In Nanjing City, from 2013 to 2015, the state authorities were the dominant target for petition activities, with real-estate developers (RDs) being the least targeted petition group. Moreover, among those hybrid petitions, property management companies (PMCs) were the main petition opponents who were petitioned by local residents. In Huai'an City, the state authorities were rarely involved as opponents in hybrid petitions. In contrast, PMCs were the main petition opponents in all types and especially amongst those hybrid petitions. Similarly, in both cities, the state authorities always emerged as the main opponents among all targeted petitions, and especially in the claim and protest petitions in terms of both absolute numbers and proportions. In contrast, the significance of RDs reduced and became quite rare as homeowners' petition opponents, and PMCs were more involved in terms of both numbers and proportion within hybrid petitions. These similarities all indicate the variety of

property-led civic developments in the two cities. This is a consequence of Chinese new urbanism and the changing involvement of the state and market forces in grassroots urban life (He and Wu, 2007; Tavares and Carr, 2013; He and Li, 2015).

Table 6.3 Targeted petitions by type and opponents (2013−2015)

Year			State Authorities	RDs	PMCs
			Nanjing City		
2013	Claim		**8**	3	1
		%	**66.6**	25.0	8.3
	Protest		**14**	4	3
		%	**66.7**	19.0	14.3
	Hybrid		6	4	**6**
		%	37.5	25	**37.5**
2014	Claim		**14**	3	2
		%	**73.7**	15.8	10.5
	Protest		**16**	4	3
		%	**69.6**	17.4	13.0
	Hybrid		7	3	**10**
		%	35.0	15.0	**50.0**
2015	Claim		**20**	4	2
		%	**76.9**	23.1	11.5
	Protest		**17**	1	1
		%	**89.6**	5.2	5.2
	Hybrid		12	3	**17**
		%	37.5	9.4	**53.1**
			Huai'an City		
2013	Claim		**2**	1	2
		%	**40**	20	40
	Protest		**3**	2	3
		%	**37.5**	25.0	37.5
	Hybrid		1	1	**5**
		%	14.3	14.3	**71.4**
2014	Claim		**4**	1	3
		%	**50.0**	12.5	37.5
	Protest		**4**	2	3
		%	**44.4**	22.2	33.3
	Hybrid		1	0	**6**
		%	14.3	0.0	**85.7**
2015	Claim	%	**4**	3	0
			57.1	42.9	0.0
	Protest	%	**5**	1	1
			71.4	14.3	14.3
	Hybrid	%	1	1	**7**
		%	11.1	11.1	**87.8**

The bold text indicates the significant similarities in increasing numbers and proportions
Source: Nanjing Municipal Bureau of People's Letter and Visit, 2014, 2015, 2016; Huai'an Municipal Bureau of People's Letter and Visit, 2014, 2015, 2016; Author

6.3 Internal mechanisms reflecting local civic capacity and social capital

Civic culture is not only affected by socio-economic development at the urban macro scale, it is also influenced by territorial, economic, and social factors at the urban neighbourhood scale (Andrews, 2007, 2009, 2015; Lawless and Pearson, 2012; Abascal and Baldassarri, 2015). As suggested by Western empirical studies, grassroots civic participation and behaviour is highly correlated to various objective factors, such as the size and density of individual neighbourhoods (Pattie *et al*., 2003; Sampson *et al*., 2005; Saegert, 2006, 2012; Andrews, 2007, 2009; Cohen *et al*., 2015). Local neighbourliness may also be correlated to civic actors' differentiated behaviours and reflect different levels of local civic capacity in mobilizing civic actions (Torney-Purta, 2002; Kim and Ball-Rokeach, 2010; Jottier and Heyndels, 2012; Lawless and Pearson, 2012; Manturuk *et al*., 2012; Rasmussen and Reher, 2019). These correlations among civic actors' behaviours and various neighbourhood factors are the internal mechanism that exists in facilitating or promoting local civic action (Hu and Chan, 2012; Fu and Lin, 2014; Ward *et al.,* 2014; Leggett, 2017).

The research tried to identify from the petition documents what the critical factors were with regards developing the individual petitions and, using correlation analysis, attempts were made to see which, if any, factors might be significant in affecting homeowners' civic behaviour to petition. With regards to the typology across two dimensions, the petition type concludes those local civic actors' behaviours in individual targeted to petitions, according to those civic actors' specific concerns in petitions (Sampson *et al*., 2005). As another dimension, the type of petition opponents also concludes the local civic actors' concerns and behaviours, which might further have different reflections of local civic capacity (Read, 2003; Tang and Zhan, 2008; Son and Lin, 2008; Wang *et al*., 2017). Furthermore, territorial factors pertaining to individual CCHEs with targeted petitions, such as the age of CCHEs and their size, may be significant reflectors of local social capital and civic capacity (He and Wu, 2007; He, 2015a; Cheng *et al*., 2015). Household involvement in targeted petitions directly indicated the local civic participation of individual families in the targeted petitions. It followed that a correlation and logistic regression analysis could be deployed to try and better

understand whether there were/are specific internal mechanisms shaping the targeted petitions. Within this statistical analysis, the petition type was regarded as the dependent variable, because of its subjective attributes. In contrast, the petition opponents and other neighbourhood contexts, as well as the number of households involved were all regarded as independent variables due to their objective attributes and potential influence on local civic capacity.

6.3.1. Correlation Analysis

Table 6.4 Correlation among dependent and independent variables.

		Ages of CCHEs[1]	Petition Opponent	Housing Size	Households Involved
		Nanjing City			
Petitio n type	Pearson Correlation	0.240 **	0.346 **	0.020	0.299 **
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	0.000	0.787	0.000
		Huai'an City			
Petitio n type	Pearson Correlation	0.237 *	0.164	0.155	0.353 **
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.042	0.164	0.189	0.002

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
[1] Age of urban neighbourhoods is the categorical variable explaining the built dates of individual neighbourhoods, including pre-1998, 1999–2008, and after 2009 (Wu, 2015).
Source: Nanjing Municipal Bureau of People's Letter and Visit, 2014, 2015, 2016; Huai'an Municipal Bureau of People's Letter and Visit, 2014, 2015, 2016; Author

Table 6.4 indicates the comparative correlation analysis among dependent and independent variables in all the targeted petitions within the two cities between 2013 and 2015. Regarding the petition type, the correlation model confirmed the existence of some correlations where there existed a range of similarities between the two cities. Among all the independent variables, the ages of individual CCHEs and households involved were all significantly correlated to the dependent variable, while the housing size of individual urban neighbourhoods was not significantly correlated to it. The correlations that existed with regard to the age of individual CCHEs and households involved indicated the importance of local social capital upon local civic capacity and individual civic behaviour. In contrast, the petition opponents were significantly correlated to the petition type in Nanjing City, but not in Huai'an City. To a certain extent, this difference may indicate local homeowners' different levels of civic behaviour when confronting different opponents. This may suggest civic actors' more rationale in the targeted petitions in Nanjing City. Moreover, these correlations enabled a further, more detailed, application of a

logistic regression model. This was done in order to define these independent variables' negative or positive correlation and their significant or insignificant correlation to the petition type. Such an application of logistic regression may also enable the rational selection of multiple cases which reflect the internal differences that exist in the local civic capacity of the individual targeted petitions.

6.3.2. Logistic Regression

Table 6.5 Logistic regression on the correlated variables to petition types.

Petition Type [1]			Beta	Standard Error	Sig. [2]
Nanjing City					
Protest	Ages of urban neighbourhoods	Pre-1998	0.466	0.491	0.342
		1999–2008	0.033	0.521	0.949
		After 2009	−0.918	0.547	0.093
	Households Involved		0.021	0.009	0.015
Hybrid	Ages of urban neighbourhoods	Pre-1998	−1.960	0.638	0.002
		1999–2008	0.455	0.483	0.346
		After 2009	−1.266	0.563	0.025
	Households Involved		0.037	0.009	0.000
Huai'an City					
Protest	Ages of urban neighbourhoods	Pre-1998	0.031	0.687	0.964
		1999–2008	1.301	0.843	0.123
		After 2009	−0.886	0.867	0.307
	Households Involved		0.020	0.016	0.043
Hybrid	Ages of urban neighbourhoods	Pre-1998	−2.214	1.191	0.049
		1999–2008	1.567	0.847	0.065
		After 2009	−1.876	0.987	0.050
	Households Involved		0.040	0.018	0.027

[1] The reference category is the claim petition, and the results of correlation were same when the reference category is protest petition or hybrid petition.
[2] Regression is significant at the 0.05.
Source: Nanjing Municipal Bureau of People's Letter and Visit, 2014, 2015, 2016; Huai'an Municipal Bureau of People's Letter and Visit, 2014, 2015, 2016; Author

As indicated in Table 6.5, a series of similarities and differences between the internal mechanisms of the targeted petitions emerged from the logistic regression model. Initially, with reference to those correlations between the ages of CCHEs and petition type, the logistic analysis suggested that targeted petitions might be more processed as the hybrid petition in those CCHEs that were built between 1999 and 2008. This correlation was similar in both cities. It further implies the greater

application of local social capital as the local civic capacity in structuring those hybrid petitions, than those CCHEs that were built before 1998 and after 2009. Such a suggestion is in line with some existent empirical evidence about changes in Chinese urban neighbourhoods and the highly heterogeneous nature of older CCHEs (pre-1998) and new CCHEs (after 2009) (Zhou and Ma, 2000; Chen and Wu, 2012; Liu *et al*., 2017; Wang *et al*., 2017). However, there is no other significant correlation between the age of CCHEs and the other two types of petitions. In addition, the involved households present significant correlations to the protest and hybrid petitions in the two cities. These similar correlations confirm local civic participation as the local civic capacity which determines individual civic behaviours within the targeted petitions (Torney-Purta, 2002; Pattie *et al*., 2003; Paik, 2012; Wu, 2015).

6.4 Spatial distributions reflecting property-led civic development

As discussed in Chapters Two and Three, the rapid commodity housing developments in Chinese cities have restructured Chinese urban society and civil society (He, 2015b). Such impacts from urban commodity housing developments to the civil society have been confirmed by a series of empirical studies. The homeowners' rising civic actions mostly occurred to acquire CCHEs' localised social provisions, within the state's deficiencies in social provision within a rapid housing development (Li and Huang, 2006; He and Wu, 2007; Scott *et al*., 2007; Manturuk *et al*., 2012; He, 2015a; Wang et *al*., 2017). Additionally, some empirical studies have captured the spatial linkages between urban civic development and commodity housing development (Tang and Zhan, 2008; Fu and Lin, 2014; Wang, 2016). Corresponding to the above statistical analysis, those CCHEs which also possess a longer history certainly seem to present stronger local civic capacity than those that have been established for fewer years (Tavares and Carr, 2013; He, 2015a, 2015b; Wu, 2015). Moreover, there also appears to be on the basis of the spatial connections among CCHEs that are in relatively close proximity to each other, a spill-over effect among property-led civic actions in urban China (Shao *et al*., 2012; Cheng *et al*., 2015; Wang *et al*., 2017).

With regard to the spatial features which have emerged in Chinese urban property-led civic developments, a review of the spatial characteristics of those targeted petitions becomes meaningful when ascertaining whether similar patterns of rising

civic developments have occurred in the two cities. By reviewing urban historical developments since 2000s, the two cities present a pattern of significant urban change from their respective inner core areas to their inner fringe areas and thence to their outer areas (Nanjing Urban and Rural Planning Bureau, 2007, 2011, 2016; Huai'an Urban and Rural Planning Bureau, 2005, 2009, 2016). In both cities, urban commodity housing development has been concentrated in urban inner core areas and inner fringe areas. As indicated in latest city master plans of the two cities, residential areas within the built form are predominantly CCHEs in both cities' urban inner core areas and inner fringe areas. CHHEs provide residential accommodation for 42.1% and 38.7% of urban populations in Nanjing and Huai'an respectively (Nanjing Urban and Rural Planning Bureau, 2016; Huai'an Urban and Rural Planning Bureau, 2016; Tavares and Carr, 2013). This is in keeping with the Chinese urban planning practices that produced individual cities into the spatial structure as consisted of several spatial stratums (Cheshire, 1979; Gu and Xiong, 1989; Ning and Yan, 1995; Anas *et al*., 1998; Wu and Yeh, 1999). The urban spatial structure, which combined the inner core area, the inner fringe area, and the outer fringe area, reflected historical urban expansion patterns within the reform era. To a certain extent, these similar urban spatial structures and residential distributions enable a spatial mapping of where petitions originated and also enable one to observe any potential spatial patterns and potential spill-overs effects arising from property-led civic petitions. Moreover, with regard to the applied typology, such spatial mapping also enables the illustration of the detailed similarities and differences between those targeted petitions within the two cities. This is important in identifying the representative cases that reflect Chinese commodity housing development.

6.4.1. Spatial distribution within urban stratums

As indicated in Figures 6.3 and 6.4, the targeted petitions generally occurred within those CCHEs that located in urban inner core areas and inner fringe areas. In contrast, examples of targeted petitions were relative rare in those CCHEs located in urban outer fringe areas. Such spatial concentrations can be understood to be a consequence of the similar urban planning practices undertaken in these two cities since the 2000s (Diller, 2001; Wu, 2015). However, there also existed certain differences within the petition types, as presented in Figure 6.5. In Nanjing City, all

targeted petitions were located in inner fringe areas whereas in Huai'an City, those targeted petitions, typed as claim and hybrid, were more often located in the inner core area, whilst protest petitions tended to be located in the inner fringe area. These different spatial patterns may capture some detailed spatial characteristics of thee targeted petitions, and these characteristics may be further observed by cross-tabulating the petition type and petition opponents.

Figure 6.3 Location of collective civic petition in CCHEs in Nanjing City
Source: Nanjing Urban and Rural Planning Bureau, 2007, 2011, 2016; Author

Figure 6.4 Location of collective civic petition in CCHEs in Huai'an City
Source: Huai'an Urban and Rural Planning Bureau, 2005, 2009, 2016; Author
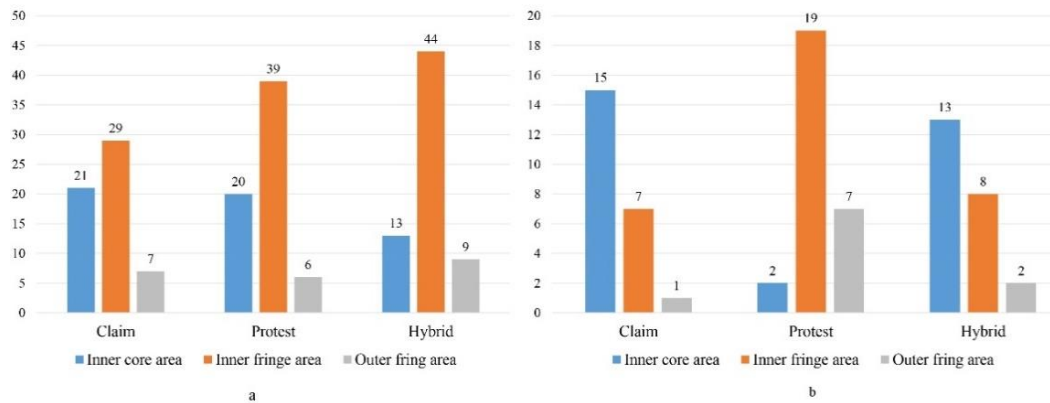
Figure 6.5 (a) Distributions of individual targeted petitions in urban stratums (Nanjing City); (b) Distributions of individual targeted petitions in urban stratums (Huai'an City)
Source: Nanjing Municipal Bureau of People's Letter and Visit, 2014, 2015, 2016; Huai'an Municipal Bureau of People's Letter and Visit, 2014, 2015, 2016; Author
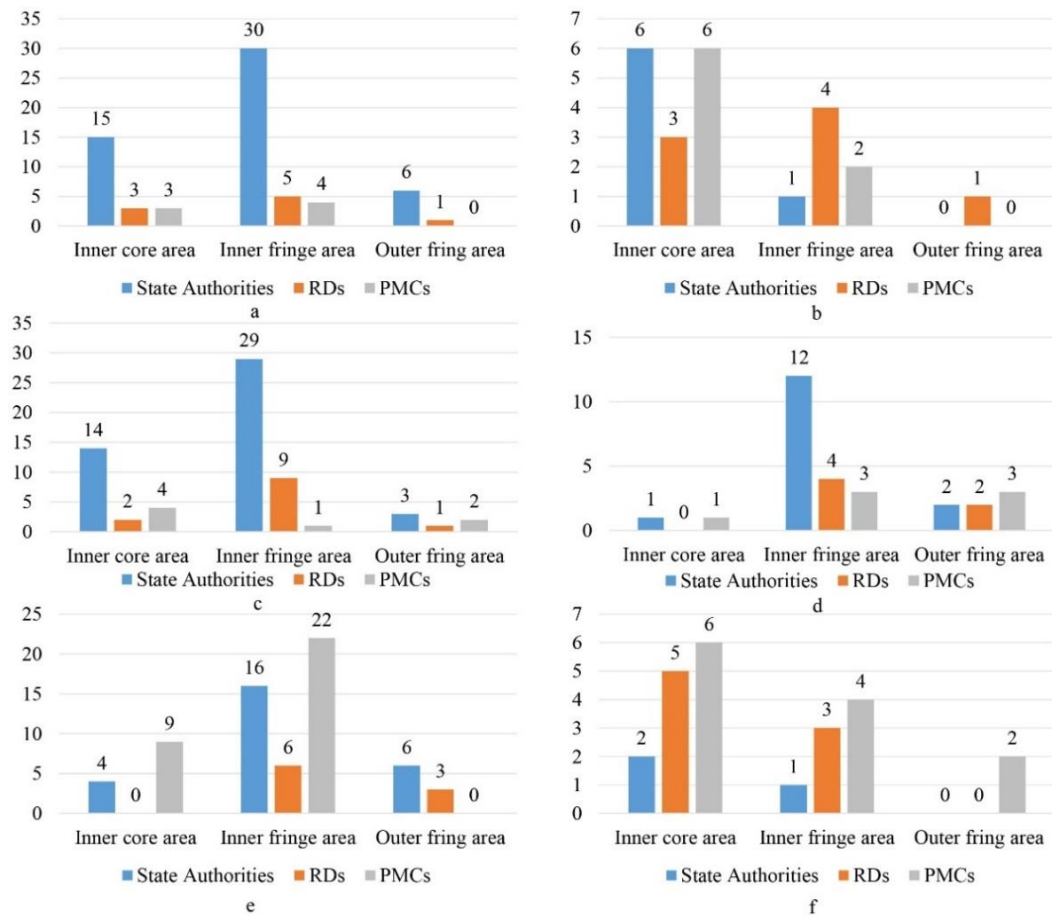
Figure 6.6 (a) Distributions of claim petitions in urban stratums, Nanjing City; (b) Distributions of claim petitions in urban stratums, Huai'an City; (c) Distributions of protest petitions in urban stratums, Nanjing City; (d) Distributions of protest petitions in urban stratums, Huai'an City; (e) Distributions of hybrid petitions in urban stratums, Nanjing City; (f) Distributions of hybrid petitions in urban stratums, Huai'an City
Source: Nanjing Municipal Bureau of People's Letter and Visit, 2014, 2015, 2016; Huai'an Municipal Bureau of People's Letter and Visit, 2014, 2015, 2016; Author

As indicated in Figure 6.6, the mapping results suggest the existence of further similarities and differences. For instance, with reference to claim and protest petitions, it can be noted that, in Nanjing City, most targeted petitions were raised against state authorities, with fewer being raised against RDs and PMCs. However, with regard to hybrid petitions, PMCs were the most frequent target of CHHE neighbourhood petitions that originated in the inner fringe areas. In Huai'an City, the claim and protest petitions were more raised against state authorities and PMCs. From such obviations, it can be concluded that the claim petitions against state authorities tended to occur more often in those CCHEs that are located in the urban inner core area of both cities; protest petitions against state authorities tended to occur more often in those CCHEs that are located in the urban inner fringe areas of both cities; and hybrid petitions against PMCs tended to occur more often in those CCHEs located in urban inner areas, including the inner core areas and the inner

fringe areas of both cities. Moreover, these similar spatial concentrations between the two cities suggest that the property-led civic developments within CCHEs' constructions were following the same path in urban China.

6.4.2. Spatial Agglomeration

With regards to spatial concentrations, the mapping results further suggested the existence of some spatial agglomerations among those targeted petitions as indicated in Figures 6.7 and 6.8. Similarly, there emerged a number of spatial agglomerations comprised of protest petitions against state authorities and hybrid petitions against PMCs in both cities. Regarding protest petitions against state authorities, there were three spatial agglomerations (including more than three individual petitions) in the urban inner fringe areas of Nanjing City; and two spatial agglomerations (including three individual petitions) in Huai'an City. Regarding the hybrid petitions against PMCs, there were three spatial agglomerations in Nanjing City, one agglomeration (including four petitions) located in the inner core area and two (both including more than three petitions) located in the inner fringe area. Two spatial agglomerations emerged in Huai'an City, one (including three petitions) was located in the inner core area, and another (including three petitions) was located in the inner fringe area. Contrastingly, there were two spatial agglomerations of claim petitions against state authorities in Nanjing City, but no such spatial agglomerations in Huai'an City. Generally, specific spatial agglomerations may capture, to some degree, the spill-over effects that exist in the property-led civic petitions of the two cities.
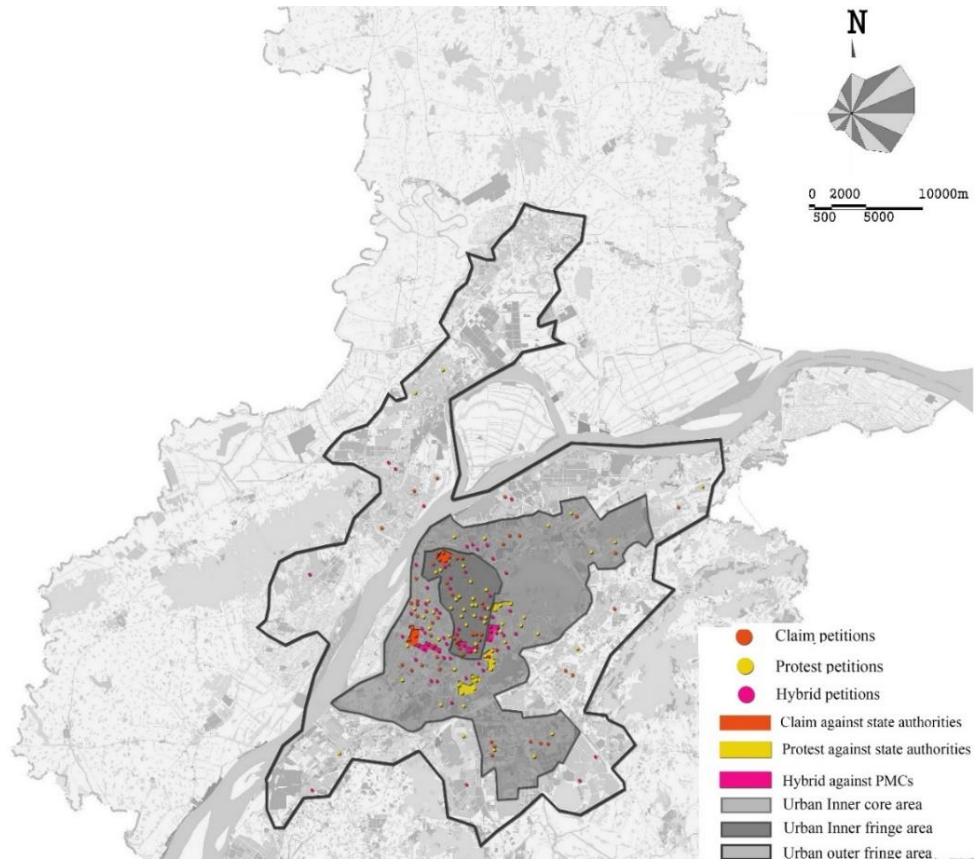
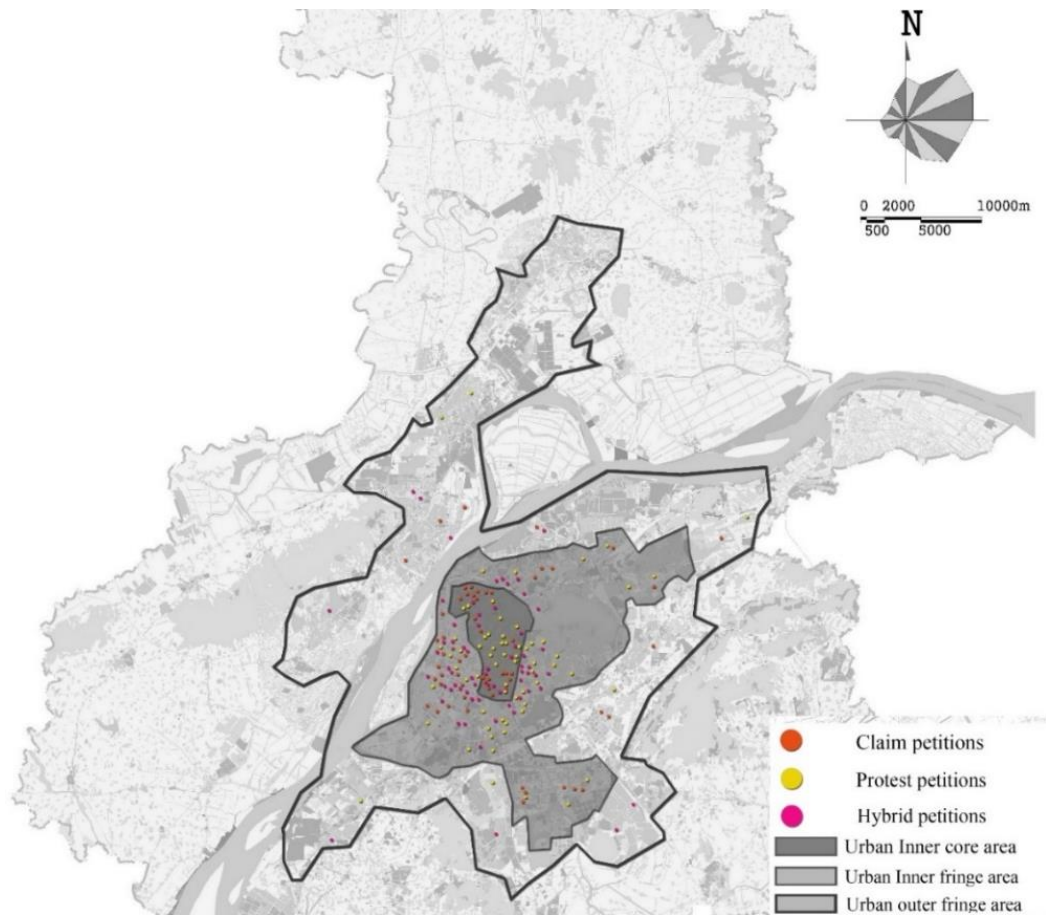Figure 6.7 Spatial agglomeration of collective civic petitions in CCHEs in Nanjing City
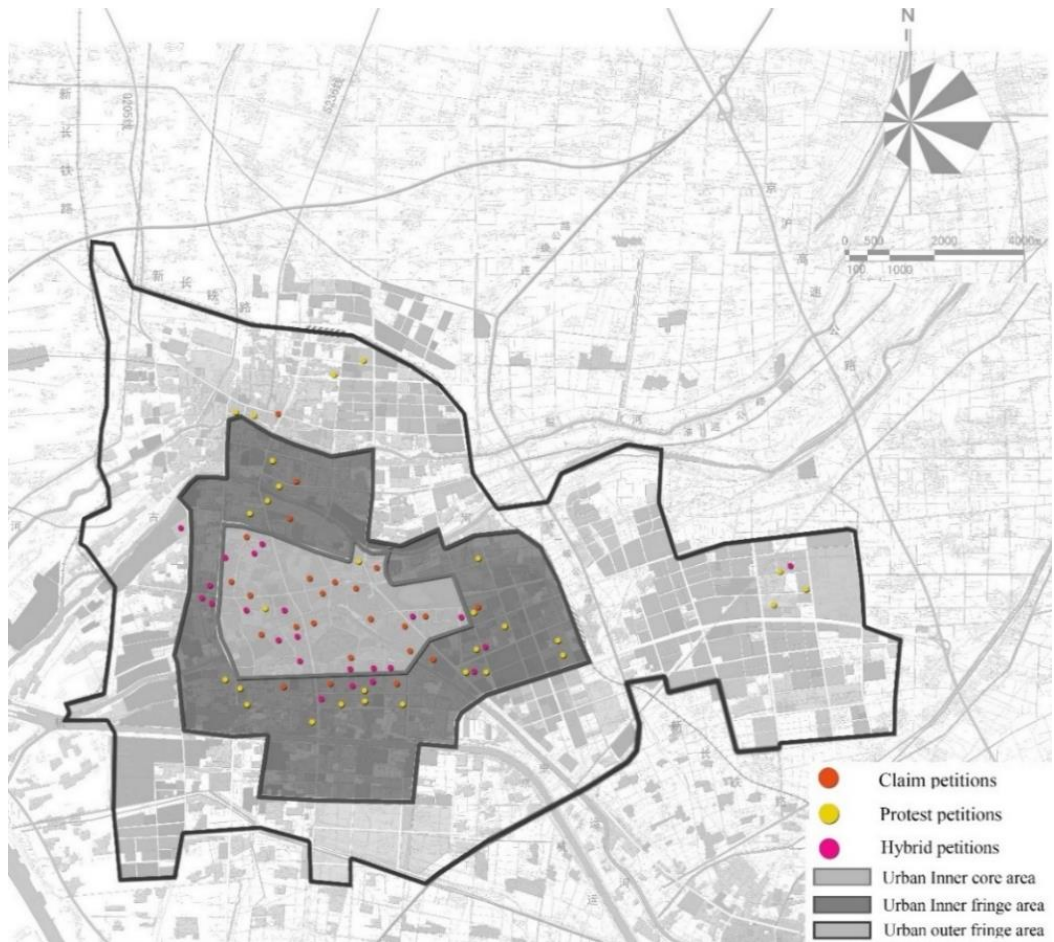*Source*: Nanjing Urban and Rural Planning Bureau, 2007, 2011, 2016; Author
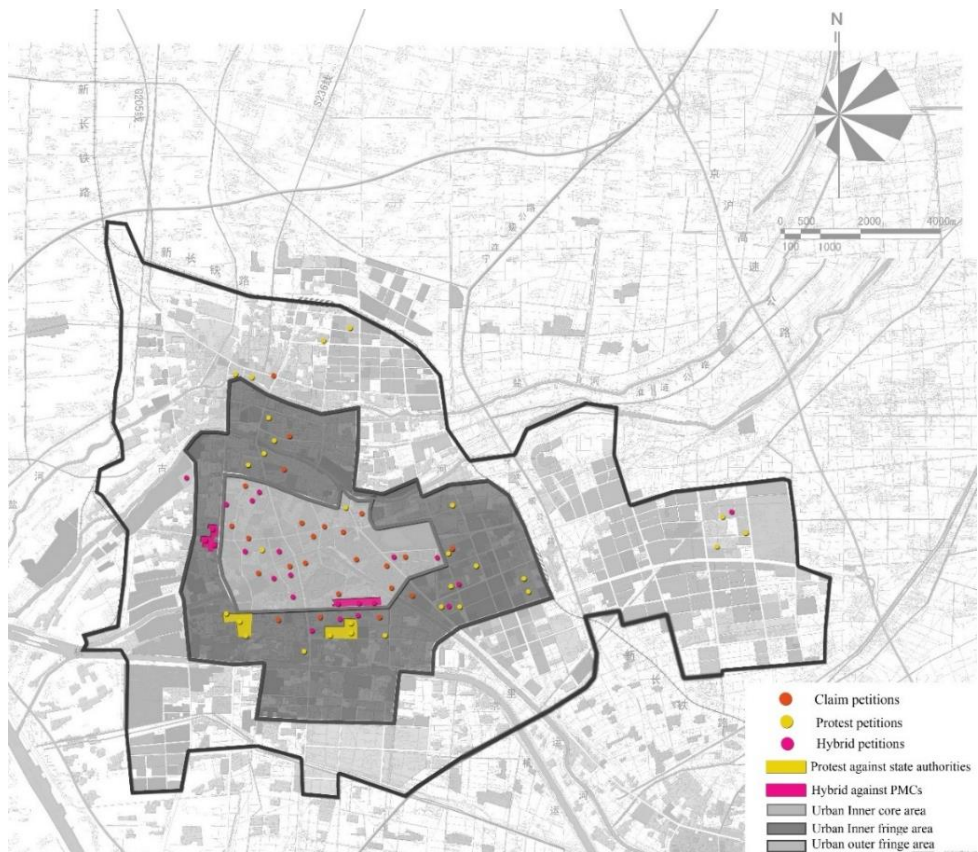
Figure 6.8 Spatial agglomeration of collective civic petitions in CCHEs in Huai'an City
*Source*: Huai'an Urban and Rural Planning Bureau, 2005, 2009, 2016; Author

6.5 Research findings from the broad survey

Based on the typology of all the targeted petitions in the two cities, series paralleling analysis presented several similarities and differences pertaining to the property-led civic petitions that emerged in the two cities' respective CCHEs. These similarities were qualified by reflecting upon homeowners' civic awareness and behaviour with regard to advancing property-led civic developments. The differences that were found through the analysis illustrate the existence of different levels of urban civic development between different-tier cities. This difference of urban civic development also possessed significantly socio-economic differences between two cities, as consequence from the on-going Chinese new urbanism (He and Lin, 2015; Zhou et al., 2019). Moreover, following the general research strategy and case study paradigm, the research findings from the broad survey can be criteria for selecting representative cases as the multiple cases. These multiple cases selected further perform as the ground for the selection of the embedded cases for the empirical evaluation.

6.5.1 Advancing property-led civic developments in both cities

As indicated through the numerical analysis, targeted petitions were the most numerous type of petition in the two cities. At the city scale, the increasing targeted petitions suggest that CCHEs have been the main civic territories for increasing civic engagement in the two cities. With regard to the urban contexts of the two cities, growing residential density has raised homeowners' civic resistances (He, 2015a, 2015b). This is certainly paralleling, to some extent, those western empirical studies which linked urban civic development to neighbourhood construction (Tavares and Carr, 2013). It also supports the rationality of probing local place-based community through civic actions occurred in CCHEs.

At the individual CCHEs scale, the growing trend of appealing civic petitions has witnessed a consistent decrease in 'single' and 'non-civic' petitions. However, the difference in the proportions of those targeted petitions suggest that there has been greater advancement in homeowners' civic engagement and civic actions in the first-tier city, Nanjing City, compared with the third-tier city, Huai'an City. Furthermore, the differences that emerged from the comparisons on the basis of applied typology further reflected a more advanced property-led civic development

in Nanjing City. These research findings indicate a common growing trend of property-led civic petitions in these two different-tiers cities, and different levels of urban civic engagement between cities with significant political and socio-economic differences.

6.5.2 Reflections of local civic capacity and social capital

The statistical analysis presented the existence of internal mechanisms among the petition type and various contexts involved in those targeted petitions. These internal mechanisms clearly link local civic actions to local civic capacity and local social capital. Using petition type as the dependent variable, the correlation analysis was broadly consistent for each city insofar as a positive relationship existed between two independent variables; the age of individual CCHEs and the number of households involved in individual petitions. As a territorial context, the age of individual CCHEs may capture, to some degree, the number of local neighbouring acquaintances and this is reflected in local social capital. From a petition context, the number of households involved reflected citizens' civic awareness, mutual trust, and reciprocity in making collective actions indicative of local civic capacity (Putnam, 2000; Son and Lin, 2008). These internal mechanisms and petition types point to the importance of strong local social capital as a driver which enables local civic capacity to deliver (Putnam, 2000; Adler and Goggin, 2005; Son and Lin, 2008; Hu and Chan, 2012). Furthermore, the logistic regression model suggests that the hybrid petitions occurred less frequently in CCHEs that are over 20 years old (pre-1998) or, more recently, less than 10 years old (after 2009). This correlation might indicate the existence of different conditions within place-based social networks, with high degrees of heterogeneity in those CCHEs that were built pre-1998 and after 2009 (He and Lin, 2015; Wu, 2015). Potentially, with regard to the Chinese urban housing market, the frequenter housing transactions in those long-history CCHEs (pre-1998) and more recent residences in those newer CCHEs (after 2009) may all result in lower levels of neighbouring acquaintances and negatively affect the formation of local social capital (Wu, 2015; Liu *et al.*, 2017; Wang *et al.*, 2017). There also existed a significant correlation within the typology for the two dimensions of the targeted petitions in Nanjing City, but no such correlation existed in Huai'an. Such a differentiation further suggests that there may be more advanced civic development in first-tier cities as homeowners are more oriented towards

having better civic awareness and adopting behaviours which confront a range of perceived infringements by state authorities, PMCs, and RDs.

6.5.3 Property-led civic development within commodity housing developments

As indicated in the spatial mapping, all targeted petitions were located in the urban inner core areas and the inner fringe areas of the two cities; both have similar urban spatial structure with three spatial stratums. In one regard, these spatial concentrations can be related to Chinese urban commodity housing developments as they tend to be common in inner core and inner fringe areas (Yeh and Wu, 1995; Li and Huang, 2006; Wu, 2007, 2015). Moreover, by cross-tabulating petition types and petition opponents, the mapping results suggest that certain spatial agglomerations exist in the urban inner core areas and the inner fringe areas of the two cities. Similarly, there are spatial agglomerations with protest petitions against state authorities and hybrid petitions against PMCs in both cities. To a certain extent, these spatial agglomerations may imply that the spill-over effects among local property-led civic actions are paralleling some empirical studies (Tang and Zhan, 2008; Shao *et al.*, 2012; Leggett, 2017). However, with regard to these spatial agglomerations, there were differences in their number and composition between the two cities; there were significantly more in Nanjing City. In addition, there was only evidence of spatial agglomerations of claim petitions against state authorities in Nanjing City.

6.6 Justification for the multiple cases and the embedded cases

Following the research findings from the broad survey, the representative cases were selected using three criteria. With regard to the first selecting criteria, the representative case should reflect the rising trend of property-led civic developments in both cities. Specifically, on the basis of applied typology, the case should be selected as the claim petition against state authorities, protest petition against state authority, and the hybrid petition against PMC. With regard to the second selecting criteria, the representative cases should reflect local civic capacity and local social capital. Specifically, the case should be selected as protest petition with local majorities' participation, or it should be selected as the hybrid petition with local majorities' participation and a territorial context as the CCHEs was built between 1999 and 2008. With the third selecting criteria, the representative cases

should have occurred in association with CCHEs' construction in the two cities. Specifically, the case should be selected as the protest petition that occurred in the CCHEs located in the urban inner core area, or it should be selected as the hybrid petition that occurred in the CCHEs located the urban inner core area or inner fringe area.

With regard to these selection criteria, two kinds of petitions were identified for the representative cases. The first representative case was protest petitions against state authorities with its occurrence in CCHE located in urban inner fringe area, and local participation in the petition involved local most households. The second representative case is the hybrid petition against PMCs with its occurrence in a CCHE located in the urban inner core area or inner fringe area, with local most households' involvements. Besides that, the second representative case occurring in the CCHE was built between 1999 and 2008.

These two selected representative cases will be the selecting grounds of embedded cases in the following empirical evaluations. Within each ground, there are two embedded cases selected separately from the two cities. As discussed in Chapter Five, the methodology design, such purposes in selecting two embedded cases are determined by the accessibilities to those multiple data resources, including the key actors in multiple stakeholders and local households. By reviewing the petition documents of all targeted petitions in both cities, there were four potential cases in Nanjing City and two cases in Huai'an City within the ground of the first representative case. Among these potential cases, Lilian Estate in Nanjing City and Greenland Estate in Huai'an City were selected largely on the basis of having access to local state authorities who acted as the petition opponents. Other options were excluded because of a lack of access. Within the second representative case, there were three potential cases in Nanjing City and two cases in Huai'an City. Among these potential cases, No. 20 Estate in Nanjing City and the Pudong Estate in Huai'an City were selected. This selection was based on permission to investigate the residential population in these estates, as delivering questionnaires directly to individual local households. Therefore, the multiple cases studies embedded within the two cities were selected for further empirical evaluation, as presented in Figure 6.9.
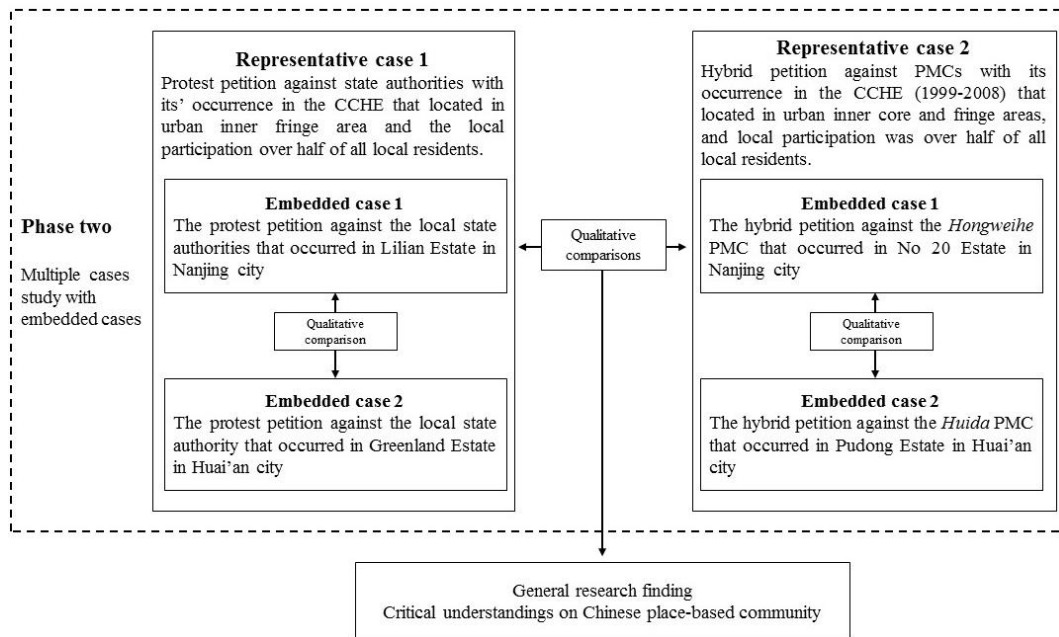
Figure 6.9 Structure and justification of multiple cases study with embedded cases
Source: Author

6.7 Conclusion

Civic petitions have been increasingly, and widely applied, by homeowners as a form of resistance against infringements from various stakeholders, including state authorities, RDs, and PMCs. As suggested by the broad survey, CCHEs have been the main civic territory in which there has been growth in urban civic petitions. Certain internal mechanisms within those targeted petitions suggest that local civic capacity and the application of social capital in structuring grassroots civic action is critical for something to occur (Putnam, 2000; Hu and Chan, 2012; Read, 2003). Similar spatial concentrations and agglomerations emerged in urban inner core areas and inner fringe areas. In both cities these were focused around commodity housing development patterns. Some identified differences exist between the two cities. To a certain extent, the first-tier city, Nanjing City, presents a more advanced form of civic development compared to the third-tier city, Huai'an City. These differences were consistent with some existent empirical research findings about the differences between civic engagements and how these are related to differentiated urban socio-economic contexts (Torney-Purta, 2002; Pattie *et al*., 2003; Read, 2003; Zhang, 2004; Andrews, 2007, 2009).

The research findings from the broad survey also enable the identification of two representative cases in both cities, on the basis of the similarities that existed between the two cities. With regard to these two representative case types, four

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cases were selected as embedded cases for further critical evaluation. The following two chapters study the impact of local civic petitions on local neighbourliness, guided by the conceptual model and key themes of urban community presented in Chapter Four. Chapter Seven focuses on two protest petitions against local state authorities. Chapter Eight focuses on two hybrid petitions against local PMCs.

Chapter Seven

Case studies on protest petitions against the state authority: Lilian Estate in Nanjing City and Greenland Estate in Huai'an City

7.1 Introduction

This chapter evaluates the protest petitions against state authorities that have occurred in Chinese Commodity Housing Estates (CCHEs). The two embedded cases selected are the Lilian Estate in Nanjing City and the Greenland Estate in Huai'an city. The empirical evaluations explore the changes that have occurred in local social networks because of these protest petitions. The empirical evaluations included interviews with key actors and questionnaires completed by local residents. Initially, some contextual information regarding the Chinese urban hierarchical administration is given to specify the petition opponents in these petitions. Subsequently, the two embedded case studies are separately evaluated in association with key actors' interviewing transcripts. Then, local residents' reflections as collected through the aforementioned questionnaire survey are comparatively explored. Finally, a synthesis from the two case studies indicates whether an urban community is emerging.

7.2 The Case of Lilian Estate, Nanjing City

7.2.1 Review of the petition

The petition that occurred in Lilian Estate happened in April 2015. Local residents protested against the local Residents' Committee. Lilian Estate is a gated neighbourhood located in Qinhuai District, which is in the urban inner core area of Nanjing city (see Figure 7.1). The estate was constructed in 2003. It comprises two high rise residential buildings and 320 apartments, on a large-sized bystreet building (see Figure 7.4). Part of this by-street building (which faces the street) had been sold out to private agencies by 2009, and the left part of it was collectively owned and managed by the local homeowners. Employees from a state-owned enterprise purchased the 320 apartments in 2003. In the past 15 years, the local neighbourhood has experienced great changes because of housing transfers. By 2015, according to

local HOA registration data, 112 apartments had been transferred to new families, and 35 apartments had been subcontracted to individual tenants.
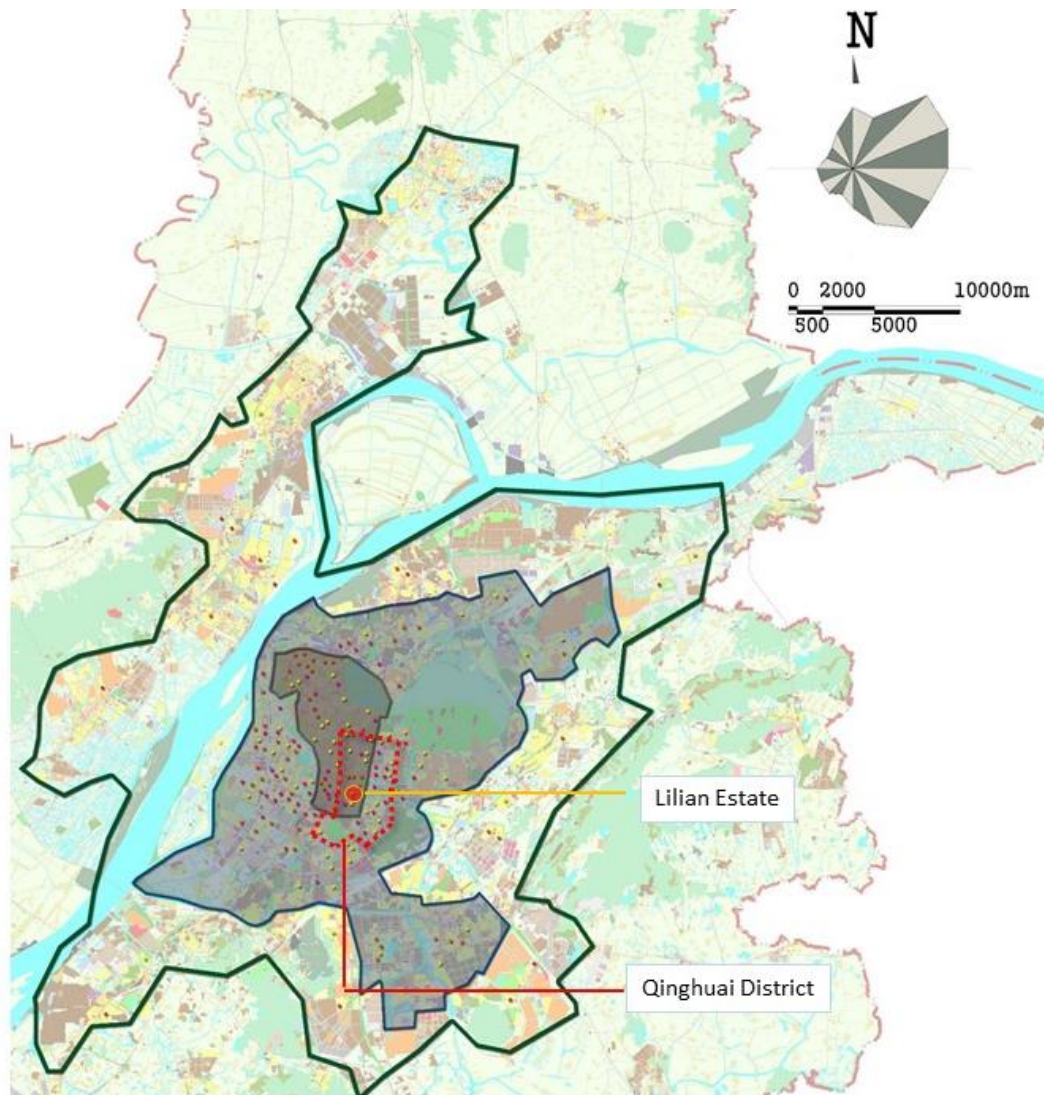
Figure 7.1 The Lilian Estate's location in Nanjing city
Source: Author

The local residents' concern in their petition related to their opposition to the Residents' Committee's free occupation of a local collective property. This collective property was located on the third floor of the base of the building (see Figure 7.2). Before the 2015 Spring Festival, the local Residents' Committee announced that they intended to occupy this collective property and freely use it as space for providing cheap buffet meals to elderly residents in its jurisdictional area. Following this announcement, a contract was signed, endorsing this free occupation, with the agreement of both the local HOA and Residents' Committee. Once this announcement was delivered into the Lilian Estate, the local residents soon raised their opposition and protests, because of three common concerns. First, the desired

use of this collective property could affect the local residents' collective funding. Second, local residents had processed no collective discussion or vote on the contract that was signed. Third, with regard to the buffet meals for elderly individuals, many local residents presented concerns about non-residents entering the gated community.
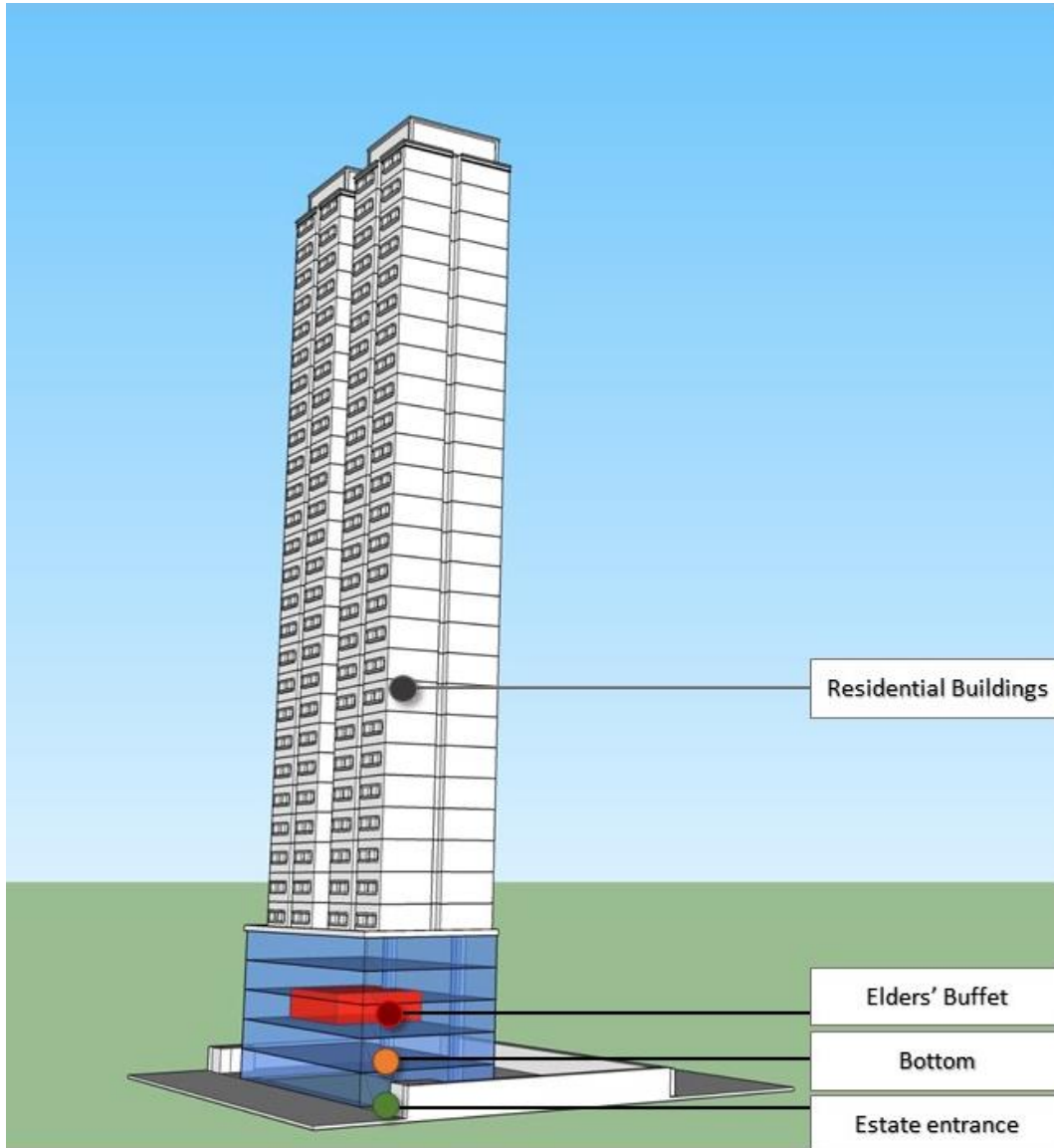
Figure 7.2 The collective property inside Lilian Estate
Source: Author

Before submitting their petition, local residents raised collective protests against this local state authority's intentions; for instance, they prevented the decoration of the elders' dining space. However, the local residents failed to achieve any positive outcome. As a consequence, they then sent a petition to Qinhuai District Government in April 2015. With authorisation from the District Government, the Qinhuai District Bureau of People's Letter and Visit received and arbitrated this

petition. From April to June, a series of meetings and public hearings were hold and a draft programme was arrived at in May 2015. This was subsequently changed before being finally endorsed through a local residents' vote in July 2015. Within that vote, after discussions among multiple stakeholders, the local residents collectively agreed this contract having received a series of compensations and promises from the District Government. In September, the elders' buffet area was decorated, and it opened to the public in December 2015. The petition procedures are outlined in Table 7.1, with some key issues worthy of highlighting.

Table 7.1 Timeline of the residents' civic petition occurred in Lilian Estate, Nanjing city

Petition stages	Periods	Key issues occurring with timing
Origins	February, 2015-April, 2015	(1) The announcement about the elders' buffet meal in the collective property, in February 2015; (2) The state's intended decoration of the collective property, but stopped by local residents' protests, in March 2015; (3) Election of local HOA members, in February 2015; (4) Some violent clashes with the local state authorities, in March and April 2015;
Processes	April, 2015-July, 2015	(1) Local collective meeting on appealing petition, in April 2015; (2) Trade-offs among multiple stakeholders, in May and June 2015; (3) The production of draft programme among multiple stakeholders, in June 2015; (4) The local vote denied the draft programme, and discussion among local residents and District Bureau in making final arbitration, in July 2015;
End	July, 2015-December, 2016	(1) District Government's compensation to Lilian Estate and the local Residents' Committee's decoration of the elders' buffet, in July and August 2015; (2) Decoration of the elders' buffet area, in September and October 2015; (3) The opening of the elders' buffet area, December 2015.

Source: Author

In reviewing this petition document, several key actors can be identified. First, as representatives of the local residents, three local HOA members who were newly elected through local collective action were selected as the key petition initiators. Secondly, two local civil servants, who served in the local Residents' Committee, were identified as key petition opponents. Third, two civil servants who served on

the District Bureau were selected as key arbitrators. These key actors are listed in Table 7.2, according to their specific roles and involvements.

Table 7.2 Key actors in the petition that occurred in Lilian Estate

Key petition initiators	
Resident one (N-L-R1)	The chairman of local HOA (newly elected)
Resident two (N-L-R2)	Vice chairman of local HOA (newly elected)
Resident three (N-L-R3)	Vice chairman of local HOA (newly elected)
Key petition opponents	
Local civil servant one (N-L-C1)	The party-secretary of the local Residents' Committee
Local civil servant two (N-L-C2)	The chairman of the local Residents' Committee
Key arbitrators	
Arbitrator one (N-L-A1)	The civil servant who arbitrated that petition
Arbitrator two (N-L-A2)	The civil servant who was clerk in arbitration

Source: Author

7.2.2 Petition origin: collective fury and protests

Lilian Estate has been collectively managed by self-governance since 2009, with supports from homeowners' democratic institution. Within this local democracy, all neighbourhood issues are processed through local collective discussions and votes. As the maintainers of this local democracy, the local HOA and the elected HOA members are authorized to manage the local collective properties, property management, and the collective fund. The local residents' self-management of the estate was supported by their collective fund raising, which was largely achieved by subcontracting the local collective properties for private use. As a result of these collective funds, the local neighbourhood never acquired, nor needed, any support from state authorities,

> 'The money from renting out these properties was very important to support our self-management. With it, we did not need ask the state for any help to maintain our estate…This collective funding was owned and managed by all neighbours. Without it, we could not maintain our estate, nor maintain our democracy'.

(N-L-R1)

With regard to the petition, it is important to understand local residents' objection to the local Residents' Committee's freely using this local collective property. It was seen as an act which went against the needs of the local neighbourhood. As N-L-R2 stated, 'without any agreement from our neighbours, this was totally in

defiance tof us, and none of our neighbours could tolerate this'. Initially, the local residents changed those HOA members who had 'secretly' signed that contract with the local state authorities, and processed the newly election of local HOA members. They were perceived as 'traitors' and 'failing' the local neighbourhood. The local neighbourhood also elected new HOA members; 'I cannot trust these old HOA members, and they were traitors to our neighbourhood. They failed us…I decided to run as a new HOA member, and the residents voted for me, because I promised to lead the protests against that elders' buffet in our estate ' (N-L-R3). Then, those newly elected HOA members, led the local residents' protests against the local Residents Committee.

'Neighbours all thought that contract was illegal, without our agreement…So, we visited the Residents' Committee's office, and occupied their office for the whole day. We also had some brawls with those local civil servants…I need to say, at that time, we just want to have an equal discussion with them, to find a solution to this illegal contract'.

(N-L-R1)

With regard to the protests, such as obstructing the decoration of the buffet area, local residents were warned by local civil servants that their protests were threatening urban social stability. As a result, the petition initiators decided to submit a civic petition to the district government. As N-L-R2 stated, 'We gained nothing from the protest but know that these local civil servants were very stubborn, to insist on that contract…so, we wanted to send a petition to the District Government, because it could force the local Residents' Committee to dismiss their illegal contract'. However, this proposal on submitting petition was 'unexpectedly' rejected by a majority, mainly from new families. These newer families worried about irritating the District Government, because that elders' buffet was a policy from the District Government. However, within the petition initiators' perceptions, these new families' rejections were more about their disconnection with the local neighbourhood and less faith in local democracy.

'Long-standing neighbours said yes because they had faith in our democracy…But, the new neighbours had no similar faith, as they rarely attended any local events…In my mind, they did not have too many acquaintances in this estate'.

(N-L-R1)

In order to initiate the petition, the petition initiators paid visits to some long-

standing and new families with whom they were individually familiar. 143 long-standing families and 39 new families voted to support the petition. As N-L-R3 stated, 'I told these new neighbours to trust me and the neighbourhood, because our collective voices could win the petition and protect our interests…Some of them changed their mind, and signed the petition document'.

In confronting the protest and challenges from the Lilian Estate, the local Residents' Committee consistently presented their view that their intended use on that collective property as an elders' buffet area was a 'rational' decision that was made based on a comprehensive survey of needs. As N-L-C2 stated, 'before we made that decision, we investigated every estate in our area, as we need a qualified place…but we only found this property, because it was not in any subcontract on that time, and it could be freely used as those HOA members promised'. In addition, these local civil servants also insisted that this 'rational' decision could 'benefit' the social masses, and that this 'social charity' should not be challenged by the local residents' feeling for their 'locality'. 'This elders' buffet would benefit the social masses, as a social charity servicing those elders in our Residents' Committee's jurisdictional area…so, these residents' protest was unreasonable, and only showed their parochialism' (N-L-C1). One of the local civil servants also noted that

> 'That elders' buffet was to deliver convenience to social masses, including those elders who lived in Lilian Estate…So, it should be freely used, as benefiting social masses. As I know, this kind of service was very common in other cities…But, these local residents only had narrow minds. They did not care about the social masses'.

> (N-L-C2)

This quotation suggests that the local civil servants had an antipathy to the local residents' protests. They apologised for their ignorance of the local residents' opinions of that elders' buffet, as a 'right reaction'. It was undenible that those residents' collective actions puted certain pressure on this grassroots state authority. As N-L-C2 stated, 'we made a right reaction to these residents' protest, as making apologies…because their protests did put some pressure on us, and threat our daily work'. However, the local state's reaction made no change to the local residents' oppositions to that contract but made their contacts going to a 'deadlock'. In addition, the local civil servants also agreed to the petition initiators' decision on submitting a petition to the District Government:

'When I knew they wanted to send a petition, I thought that might be a good method, as our contacts were going to the deadlock…By that time, I did not think these residents could win the petition. The elders' buffet was a policy from the District Government, and we also reported everything to it. It was definitely that, the District Government would make that elders' buffet in that estate…But these residents should accept it, to the District Government's authorized arbitration with the higher state's authority'.

(N-L-C1)

The local residents presented their strong civic capacity in producing their collective protests. These protests were structured by the local organisational social networks, which seemed to be formed on the basis of long-term acquaintances among long-standing residents and their faith in local democracy. Nevertheless, it can also be noted that, within these organisational social networks, there was a clear exclusion of new residents and this, it is suggested, was because of their disconnection with the local 'established' neighbourhood. To achieve a local consensus on submitting the petition, the petition initiators used their individual social networks in bridging local groups and, within these, there were clear overlaps between individual social networks and organisational networks.

7.2.3 Petition processes: collective bargaining in trade-offs

As written in the petition document, the local residents suggested that the District Government should re-think the contract, as it was a property infringement for the local neighbourhood. As N-L-R3 stated, 'We wanted the District Government to know why we were protesting against this illegal contract, because we had support from the national code…We also wanted the higher state authority to know that we protested to protect our community, using guidance from the policy on community building'. This, it can be noted, was achieved by the petition quoting and using national codes and policies, such as Chinese Property Right Law (Chinese National People's Congress, 2007) and the policy of 'Community Building' (Ministry of Civil Affairs of People's Republic of China, 2000). It is also worth noting that the local residents presented their willingness to have further discussions on the elders' buffet with higher state authorities. This concession was the result of internal coordination between different local groups,

'We could not accept that contract. This was not changed in the petition…We knew, that elders' buffet was a policy from the district government. So, the new neighbours' worries were reasonable. If we insist on saying no to the elders' buffet, we might end up in deadlock…So, we

agreed, to have a discussion with the district government about this. In the petition document, we showed a willingness to accept the elders' buffet, but we need further discussion about this.

<div align="right">(N-L-R1)</div>

As a consequence of this proactive change, the petition initiators soon arrived at a level of consensus with the District Bureau. As the arbitrators promised, some District Government financial compensation would be delivered to the estate in exchange for the estate providing the location for the elders' buffet. However, in the subsequent local meeting, this 'agreement' that had been reached through the building of a consensus by the petition initiators and arbitrators was 'seriously' challenged by the local residents. This challenge was mainly from local new families, as they were not satisfied with the financial compensation. With regards to this challenge, local long-standing families claimed to have an immediate vote to accept that 'agreement', because of their majorities' numbers that can make such a collective agreement. However, these petition initiators rejected those long-standing families' claim, as it was not a 'right use' of local democracy. As one petition initiator noted:

> 'When we build the local democracy, our mind was to protect the common good, not for any groups…Even I was very familiar with these long-standing neighbours, I cannot accept their request, because it would exclude the different voices and risk our democracy…Actually, I agreed with these new neighbours. The state's compensations might be good by that time, but not good enough for our neighbourhood in future development...We needed to have more discussion to get more benefits for all residents' good'.

<div align="right">(N-L-R1)</div>

Despite such objections, a draft programme was arrived at whereby the District Government made more promises and this was agreed by multiple stakeholders. This draft programme included the higher state authority's annual financial compensation to the local neighbourhood, repair works to improve the estate's security and condition, and individual price subsidies to the local elders consuming the elders' buffet. This draft programme was then agreed by local residents within a final vote. As N-L-R3 stated, 'as we insisted in the meetings and public hearings, our neighbours' different minds were mostly accepted by the District Bureau and written into this final arbitration'. It is worth noting that there were more attendees for final vote than for the previous votes. This increased participation witnessed new emergent cooperation amongst local residents;

'I thought the final arbitration was quite good for our neighbourhood. We gained more promises and compensations from the District Government…That was a result from our neighbours' cooperation, as those different groups more trust in others'.

<div align="right">(N-L-R1)</div>

In the petition process, the local civil servants attended all trade-offs among multiple stakeholders. However, their involvements was mostly 'meaningless' in producing any achievements within the arbitrating procedures. As N-L-C2 stated, 'actually, we had nothing to do, but there…all discussion occurred among those petition initiators and arbitrators, and we were bystanders in there'. This self-definition as a 'bystander' was a result of the top-down political influence of the District Government on the local Residents' Committee. In those trade-offs, this local state authority did not have enough capacity to deal with local residents' collective concerns.

'In this petition, we attended all meetings and public hearings, as those arbitrators required… All trade-offs proceeded among these petition initiators and arbitrators. Nobody wanted to hear a word from me…Of course, we had no capacity in dealing with this petition, but the District Government could handle it, because of its greater authority and abundant resources'.

<div align="right">(N-L-C1)</div>

Commenting on the petition, the local civil servant N-L-C2 stated, 'these residents had great enthusiasm in this petition, and a lot of them participated in the meetings and public hearings…they were bargaining with arbitrators together, as showing their great collectivism to influence the arbitrators'. It can be seen from such comments that the local state authority felt that it was reasonable to see the District Government's series compensations made to the local neighbourhood,

'During the petition, the District Bureau once offered a draft programme. As I said, that was not bad. But, it was rejected by the local residents, with their greater requirements…Then, the District Government made more promises and compensations to them, more than I can image, because of the pressure from these residents…Personally, this residents' collectivism was very impressive, and the different views among the local groups seemed to disappear, as they cooperated with others'.

<div align="right">(N-L-C1)</div>

Having received the petition, the arbitrators visited the Lilian Estate. Between this visit and their interactions with various stakeholders, the arbitrators came to realise that the local residents were willing to engage with the District Government to

acquire compensations for providing a location for the elders' buffet. As N-L-A2 stated, 'they said they could accept that elders' buffet, but they wanted to get compensation from the District Government, in exchange…but they did not want any promise or compensation from that Residents' Committee, because they more trusted the District Government'. After series trade-offs, these arbitrators provided a draft programme as providing financial compensation to the estate. The draft programme was rejected by local residents because different opinions existed between long-standing residents and new residents. This was the first time these arbitrators had realised this, as one of them noted,

'I thought that draft programme could be accepted. But, those residents said no in their local meeting, because of groups' different views…That was the first time, I know, there was a differentiation in this estate, among those long-standing families and new families. They did not have any consensus to our compensation…That scene was quite different from before, as they were very united in protest'.

(N-L-A1)

The local residents' rejection of the draft programme brought more trade-offs with the arbitrators being conscious that more compensation was required if the elders' buffet was to be located in the Lilian estate. As N-L-A1 stated, 'I know that elders' buffet should be located in Lilian estate, as there was no more choice, so, we were willing to make concessions at any expense…but, when we were facing more and more residents in meetings and public hearings, we finally made the greatest concessions to them, in my career'. With reference to the final arbitration it was noted that

'Local residents became more and more active in the following meetings and public hearings, and they cooperated together to request more in the compensations…Those long-standing families and new families seemed to have no more differentiation among them, and they worked together in bargaining with us. As I saw, they already had the consensus and trust among them'.

(N-L-A2)

According to the key actors, the local neighbourhood was collectively and actively involved in these trade-offs. This suggests that there was greater application and development of local organisational social networks. Within these positive changes occurring in the petition process, there was also an increased integration of new families into the local neighbourhood, as the extension of local organisational social networks. The local collectivism reflected by this increased integration was capable

of influencing the District Bureau's arbitration. Meanwhile, within such an increased integration, there were the applications of petition initiators' individual social network.

7.2.4 Petition end: enhanced local social capital

After the final arbitration, several compensation programmes were, as promised by the District Government, delivered to the Lilian Estate including, amongst others, repairing the ruptures in surrounding fences and the broken bicycle shed. In addition, despite the decoration of the elders' buffet, the local Residents' Committee also undertook a programme of improvement including, fixing of items including interior lighting, overhauling the elevators, and providing a range of equipment required for enhancing disabled-persons access. These local state authority's works were extra compensation, which were not included in the petition final arbitration. These extra compensations that were received highlighted how local residents 'won' through local collectivism and cooperation, and was also seen as an example of the effectiveness of local democracy:

> 'All these changes in our estate were from the petition. It proved our winning, with all neighbours' collectivism and cooperation…That was also a winning of our democracy. It proved our democracy was useful in defending our estate…In my mind, I thought more neighbours had their increased faith to the local democracy, especially those new neighbours'.

> (N-L-R2)

Moreover, after the success of the petition, local social networks seemed to be more densely-knitte and there was enhanced participation from local residents. For example, as N-L-R3 stated, 'neighbours became more active in neighbourhood events, especially those new neighbours…in our meetings and discussions, they were willing to exchange their ideas with others, because they had more acquaintances'. Such improvements in local social networks can also be evidenced by the increase in the number of contacts made between local residents through social media. As N-L-R2 stated, 'those new neighbours became more willing to present their views and share something new with others, through the social media…some of them also got nicknames from those long-standing neighbours'. Such enhanced feelings of community also resulted in enhanced mutual trust amongst residents:

> 'Neighbours seemed to have more trust in others. This image was never seen before the petition,

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as most contacts occurred among those long-standing neighbours…Obviously, this petition helped the neighbourhood to be united, to have consensus on developing our estate'.

<div align="right">(N-L-R1)</div>

Meanwhile, within the increased local participation, there also witnessed more residents' faith in the local collective norm. As N-L-R2 stated, 'the local democracy proved its effectiveness in this petition, as we gaine those compensation from the District Government through it…clearly, neighbours had sensed its' importance, with their greater participation in local meetings and votes than before'. To a certain extent, some degree of urban community was captured through the improved neighbouring connection, and empowered local collective norms, and increased civic participation that occurred as a consequence of this event. Moreover, and after the petition, the petition initiators also acquired new acquaintances with the state authorities, including the District Government, District Bureau and local Residents' Committee. These new acquaintances also suggested that the process had enhanced individual social networks and that this had benefitted the local neighbourhood,

> 'Within those state's compensative works, I provided a lot suggestions to those civil servants, as I was very familiar with them…Those local civil servants also invited me to provide advice. That was very good for our estate, as I can transmit our neighbours' collective views to the states, to benefit our neighbourhood'.

<div align="right">(N-L-R2)</div>

Such perceived positive changes were also confirmed by the local civil servants. As N-L-C1 stated, 'this petition was a sort of lecture to us, teaching us to be humble in facing local grassroots, who could be very powerful with their collectivism'. The local civil servants also opined that, through this petition, local democracy had become more 'powerful' and 'impressive' with more reflections of local collectivism.

> 'Before the petition, I thought their democracy was used for the property management, just as a tool. That was wrong, as it brought protest and petition to us…After the petition, local residents became more active, and had more participation in this institution…Their local democracy also became more powerful, with these residents' value on it. That scene was very impressive, as this was something that could be central in these residents' collective life'.

<div align="right">(N-L-C2)</div>

These comments strongly emphasized the development and enhancement that happened in the local organisational social capital. For example, as N-L-C1 stated,

'those residents became familiar with others, as there was no boundary among those long-standing residents and new residents, when I saw them cooperated with each other in supporting the estate development'. The local civil servants also highlighted the changing roles of the petition initiators who, in their opinion had 'united the local residents to protect their estate, and they were continually performing this role after the petition…they were also important in maintaining the local order, as I saw, they had great influence to their neighbours' (N-L-C2). No matter whether these associated observations were fully accurate it may be concluded from the statements noted that, through their actions, the local petition initiators gained more acquaintances and trusts from the local residents. Specifically, within these local civil servants' perceptions, those petition initiators had become the local leaders, and those residents have gained enough civic capacity in leading the local collectives.

> 'It was definitely, these petition initiators became more influential in that estate. They acted as the local leaders…I believe, once there was another conflict against us or other state authorities, these petition initiators could unite residents and raise the protests again…By that time, we might have no capacity in dealing with their protests, especially as the local neighbourhood has become more united than before'.

(N-L-C1)

The District Bureau also presented its views on the positive changes that occurred in the Lilian estate after the petition. They noted that residents' participation had increased and stated, for instance; 'Residents paid a lot of attention to our repairing works, as watching us and giving suggestions to us…apparently, they had more awareness on what was happening in their estate, and this awareness seemed to be very common' (N-L-A1). Moreover, the arbitrators also emphasized the new emergent neighbouring acquaintances among long-standing families and new families; 'as part of our return visit, we noticed the cooperation among those long-standing residents and new residents…they seemed to be familiar with others, and trusted others' (N-L-A2). In addition, they also emphasized the petition initiators' capacity in helping the District Government. For example, as N-L-A1 stated, 'we could not successfully deliver all those compensations into the estate without these petition initiators, because they acted as a bridge between us and the local residents, to explain our works'. These statements reflect the petition initiators' bridging function with their applications of individual social networks, which experienced

the significant developments within the petition procedures.

These arbitrators sensed that there had been an extension in local social networks and development of local social capital. However, different to the local state authority, these arbitrators mostly presented their optimistic attitude with regard to the neighbourhood's increased civic capacity. This optimistic attitude could be related to the higher state authority's confidence in dealing with the residents' civic action, with its greater authority and more abundant resources than the grassroots state authorities. As N-L-A1 stated, 'through this petition, local residents had become more united, as they got to know more local people in this estate…I know the local Residents' Committee seemed to worry about it, but it meant nothing to us, as we can handle any possible actions from this estate in our administration'. To a certain extent, this optimistic attitude also reflected the higher state authorities' greater openness to the civic development that occurred in the Lilian Estate. An openness that was, nevertheless, dependent upon the fact that there was 'no political desire' from these residents:

> 'In this petition, residents mostly focused on their common interest, about that collective property. They did not have any political desire, as challenging the party-state's governance. So, it was not a big issue…Actually, I was very happy to see the development occurring in there. That was good for these residents and also good for the city…But, I need to emphasize again, we hoped there was no political desire from those residents, or the things could be totally different'.

> (N-L-A1)

A series of shared views can be seen to have arisen from these key actors' observations and perceptions: first, that new emergent social networks among local long-standing families and new families arose and that these were a positive outcome from the petition; second, that the petition initiators experienced personal empowerments through their extended social networks with local residents and multiple state authorities. Indeed, these improved individual social networks acted as bridging capital within the local neighbourhood and those state authorities. In sum, at the end of this petition, local social capital had been significantly enhanced.

7.2.5 Synthesis: a place-based community almost formed

As illustrated in the previous statements and discussions, there were the co-existing applications of local organisational and individual social networks in structuring

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this petition occurred in Lilian Estate. These applications of local social networks also produced enhancements and improvements of local social capital. With reference to the conceptual model, some changes in promoting community formation were explicitly presented in this case, while some other changes were potentially or ambitiously presented. All these changes are presented in Figure 7.3 along with some influential factors.
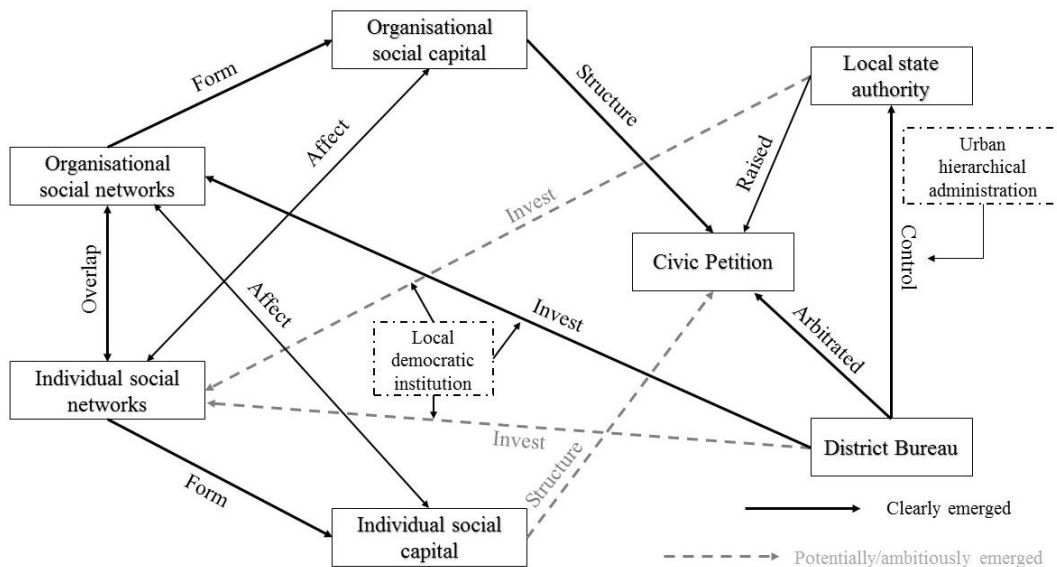
Figure 7.3 Synthesis of changes in local social capital through the petition in Lilian Estate
Source: Son and Lin, 2008; Author

By reviewing the petition's origin, in structuring local collective actions and the civic petition, the application of local organisational social networks was mainly undertaken by the long-standing families as the local social capital. These local most residents had their good networks, common faith in local democracy, and common civic awareness. Additionally, this local organisational social capital also facilitated the re-election of new HOA members who then performed as petition initiators. Within the petition process, there emerged more cooperation among local residents, with emergent participation from new families. This increased cooperation gave rise to improved neighbouring acquaintances and an extension of local organisational social networks. This reflected strong local collectivism in the trade-offs among the multiple stakeholders. At the end of the petition, there emerged increased civic participation and enhanced mutual trust from local residents. Through this petition, local democracy consistently performed as a local collective norm; uniting the local residents and controlling the local social order. Moreover, the petition initiators as the newly elected HOA members also experienced

empowerment through this petition. Progressively, they got the local leadership with significant improvements occurring in their individual social networks. Finally, it can be seen that local social capital experienced significant improvement and enhancement through this petition. The local neighbourhood in Lilian Estate became more cohesive through the process with place-based community life seemingly formed in the Lilian estate through the process of the property-led civic petition.

With regard to these changes through the petition, local social capital was deemed to be significantly improveed and enhanced, and local neighbouring relationships were also seen to be more cohesive than before.

7.3 Case of Greenland Estate, Huai'an city

7.3.1 Review of petition
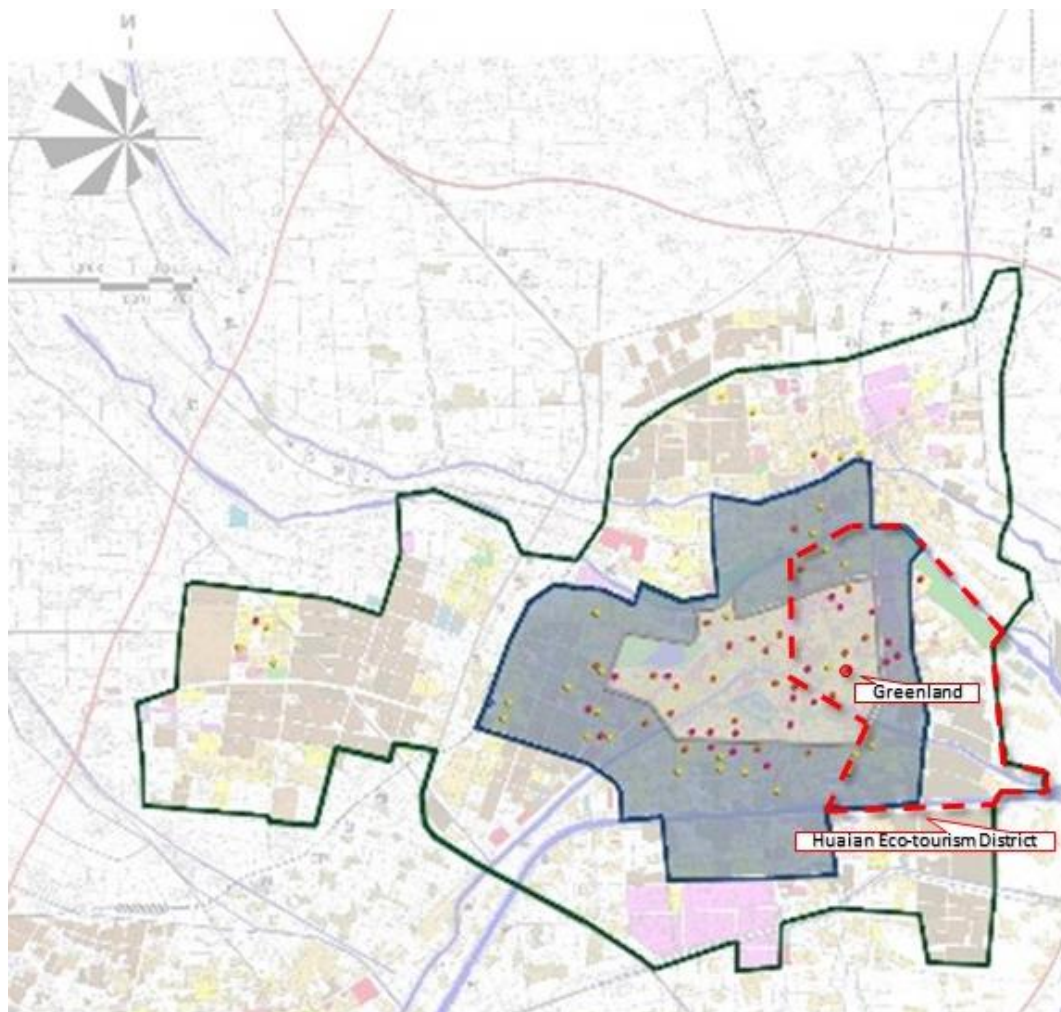
Figure 7.4 Location of Greenland Estate in Huai'an Eco-tourism District
Source: Author

The second case occurred in Greenland Estate, in Huai'an City, (see Figure 7.4). This estate is in the Huai'an Eco-tourism District, which was recently established at the end in 2014. The Greenland Estate was constructed in 2011 with units being fully sold by 2013. This gated CCHE consists of 14 high-rising residential buildings and some commercial buildings which surround the estate. Totally, there are 420 apartments within this CCHE.
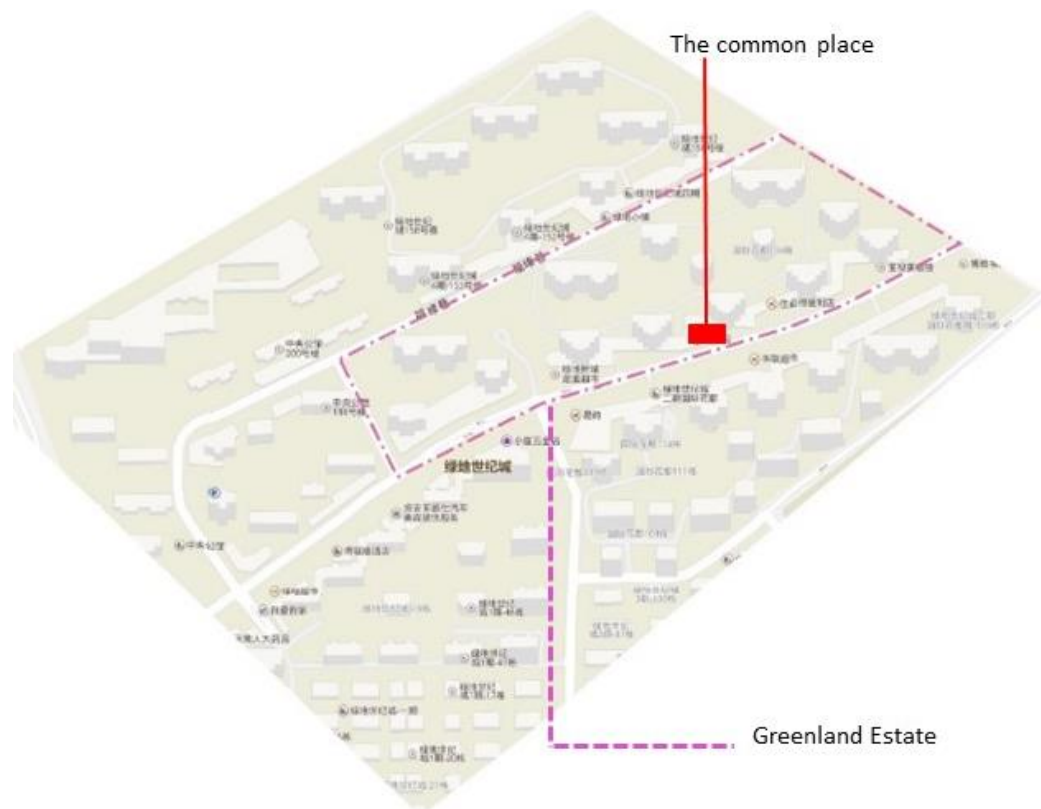
Figure 7.5 Layout of Greenland Estate and the common room's location
Source: Author

The petition occurred in April 2015, and garnered 215 signatures from local householders. The local residents' collective concern was against the local Street Office and Residents' Committee's occupation of a local public space. This public space was located in the bystreet buildings of the estate, and its location directly faced the street (see Figure 7.5). Within registered documentation from the Huai'an Municipal Bureau of Housing and Urban-rural construction, this indoor public space is stated as being a donation from the real developer to the local residents. However, there was also no specific identification of ownership of this property. Since 2013, this public place had been used by some local residents for social activities. After 2014, there emerged spontaneous management and maintenance of the public space by some local volunteer residents. After that, the public space was

commonly used by local retired residents and some middle-aged residents for social activities. In addition, a series of informative lectures for local teenagers were organised with support from some Non-government Organisations (NGOs).

In December 2014, soon after the establishment of the Huai'an Eco-tourism District Government (District Government), a local Street Office and its' attached Greenland Residents' Committee were authorised to implement the party-state's administration of the Greenland Estate and four other adjacent CCHEs. In March 2015, these local state authorities posted an announcement about their intended occupation of this public space; it was to be used as the permanent office of Greenland Residents' Committee. In addition, local residents were informed that they needed to desist, with immediate effect, from their social activities in order that decoration work might be undertaken. Those residents who frequently used this public space raised a collective protest against these local state authorities. They prevented the state's decorators from carrying out their tasks and there were violent clashes in the Street Office. With no positive results arising from these protests, the local residents sent a petition to the District Government in April 2015.
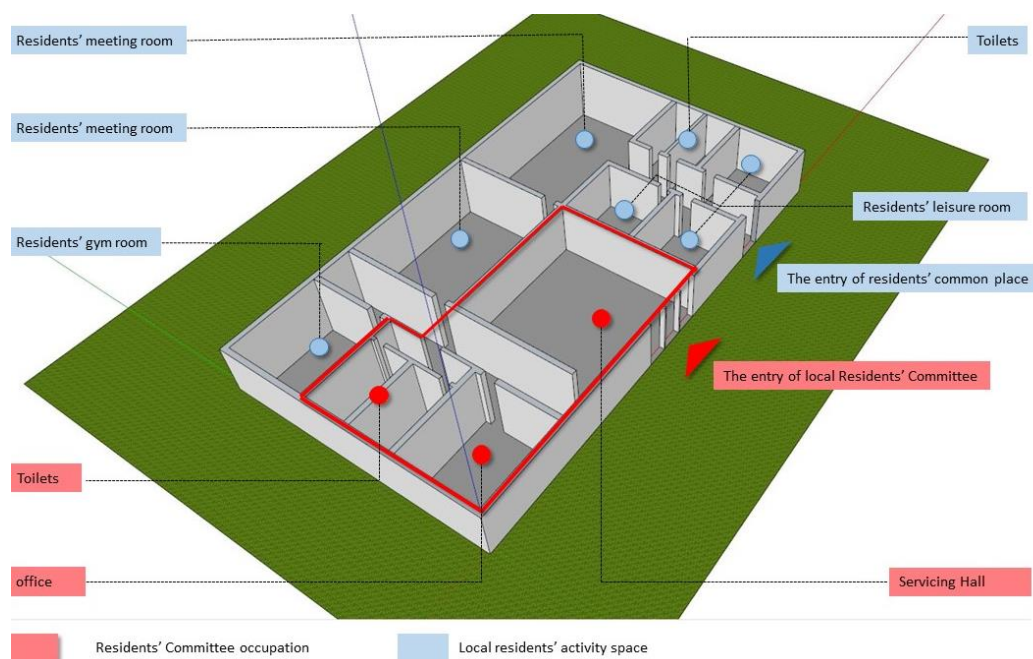
Figure 7.6 Layout of the new public space
Source: Author

The arbitration of this petition was processed by the Huai'an Eco-tourism District Bureau of the People's Letter and Visit (District Bureau), with authorisation from the District Government. A series of trade-offs, including meetings, discussions, and public hearings, were held between multiple stakeholders. In June 2015, a final

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petition arbitration was produced with consensus achieved between local residents and the local state authorities with regard to sharing the public space. Within this final arbitration, the public space was redefined as a local community centre which would accommodate both local residents' social activities and the Residents' Committee's daily administration. Symbolically, in the District Government's opinion, the new public space was given an official title; the 'Greenland Living Centre' (*Lǜdi Shenghuohui*). As indicated in Figure 7.6, within the partition of this new public space, several large-sized rooms were appointed for local residents and the local Residents' Committee only occupied a small portion (30%) of this new public space. In November 2015, this new public space was re-opened after its decoration. The petition procedures, including the petition origin, process, and end, are outlined in Table 7.3 along with some key issues.

Table 7.3 Timeline of the residents' civic petition occurred in Greenland Estate, Huai'an city

Petition stages	Periods	Key issues occurred with timing
Origins	March, 2015-April, 2015	(1) The announcement of the Residents' Committee's occupation of the public space, March 2015; (2) Local residents' protests and clashes in the Street Office, March 2015;
Processes	April, 2015-June, 2015	(1) Residents' submission of petition, April 2015; (2) Meetings and public hearings among multiple stakeholders, in May 2015; (3) The production of final arbitration, June 2015;
End	July, 2015-November, 2015	(1) Local Residents' Committee's decoration of the new public space, July and August 2015; (2) Re-opening of the new public space, November 2015;

Source: Author

By reviewing the petition document, several key actors emerged (as indicated in Table 7.4). Three local residents were selected as key petition initiators, because of their initiating efforts in structuring the local collective protests and the civic petition. In addition, the selected petition initiators were also the volunteer managers of this public space before the petition, and then they became the official managers of the new public space after the petition. As the local residents' petition opponents, two civil servants who separately served in the Street Office and Greenland Residents' Committee were selected as being the key petition opponents. They not only made the decision to occupy this public space, they also represented the local state authorities in attending the trade-offs that took place among multiple

stakeholders. In addition, two civil servants who served in the District Bureau were selected as the key arbitrators; they processed all trade-offs and produced the final arbitration.

Table 7.4 Key actors in the petition that occurred in Greenland Estate

Key petition initiators	
Resident one (H-G-R1)	The manager of the new public space
Resident two (H-G-R2)	The manager of the new public space
Resident three (H-G-R3)	The manager of the new public space
Key petition opponents	
Local civil servant one (H-G-C1)	The party secretary in Street Office
Local civil servant two (H-G-C2)	The chairman in local Residents' Committee
Key arbitrators	
Arbitrator one (H-G-A1)	The civil servant who arbitrated this petition
Arbitrator two (H-G-A2)	The clerk who arbitrated this petition

Source: Author

7.3.2 Petition origin: certain groups' civic participation

In 2013, this public space was 'occasionally' used by some local retired residents for daily social activities. As H-G-R1 stated, 'we found this place occasionally, as it was empty at that time…so, we just settled down and organised our activities here'. Then, with more participation from local retired residents and middle-aged residents, this public space became a permanent place for holding local social activities. By 2014, the place became known as a 'common place' which was shared by all local residents. 'As there were growing social activities, some chaos emerged…we started to have self-management on this space, and we gave this place a name as a common place, as shared by the local neighbourhood' (H-G-R2). With such usage, the public space was informally managed and maintained. The petition initiators made a specific schedule for organising various social activities, and they also used their personal social networks to invite some NGOs to deliver free lectures to local teenagers. Thus the public space reflected these petition initiators capacities in place-making (Friedmann, 2010). As was noted of the public space:

'At that time, our activities became very prosperous. A lot of retired neighbours and mid-aged neighbours came to join us. Sometimes, we also invited some NGOs here to provide lectures to children…This place had been a part of our life, as we had nothing else to do in this rapidly changing society…We were sort of marginalised population in this city, and we could not fit ourselves into those youngers' activities. So, although this common place was very simple, it made us feel very comfortable, as a mental garden for us'.

This place-making in the Greenland Estate also reflected the new District Government's deficiency in delivering social goods to urban grassroots residents. Such a deficiency being a common state of affairs in Chinese cities as a consequence of the state authorities' being more focused on producing Chinese new urbanism (He and Lin, 2015; Law, 2016). These retired and mid-aged urban populations have been 'marginalised' within the transitional urban society, and settled down in this public space as their 'mental garden' for connecting each other.

When the local state authorities made their announcements, the petition initiators and others presented a common opposition to the plan, decrying it as a form of robbery. As H-G-R1 stated, 'we were never told anything before that announcement, the local state suddenly robbed it from us…that was totally unacceptable, and none of our fellows could tolerate it'. In addition, the local residents were also angry about the local state authorities' statement that the land would still be public in the sense that it would be used to accommodate the state office. They were annoyed about this because it denied them their use of the space. As H-G-R1 stated, 'the local states said that their use of it as office space was public use…but, why was our use not public use as we already shared this place with a lot of fellows from other estates'? When the petition initiators clashed in the Street Office, they even quoted the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Constitution to support their use of the site:

> 'Our public use on it was a fait accompli, and it could not be denied by anyone…So, I thought this local state was totally wrong. As the CCP Constitution said, all rights belong to masses. This place was public use by the masses, as we shared it with residents from other estates'.

However, within that violent clash, such local residents' opposition was directly denied by the local state authorities, and their protest were seriously warned. By that time, these petition initiators and other protestors had a feeling that these local state authorities' authority was 'unchallengeable'. 'I kept calm down in these clashes, and tried to have an equal communication with those local civil servants…but, they only showed their rude attitudes to us, as their authority was unchallengeable, and they kept warning us about our protests' (H-G-R1). The initiators also had to face concern from local residents as a consequence of the

warnings that they had received. As H-G-R3 stated, 'some of our fellows had their fears over the possible troubles in our protests, as those local civil servants warned…then, fewer fellows joined in our protests and discussions'. Mindful that the protests had achieved nothing, some proposed at a meeting of the petition initiators that they should submit a civic petition for a 'final struggle' to stop that 'inevitable' occupation on their public space,

> 'At that moment, our protests seemed to be meaningless. We cannot stop this local state, and we also had little support from our neighbours. The loss of that public space seemed to be inevitable…But, we were not resigned to that, and wanted to have a final struggle. So, we decided to send a petition'.

> (H-G-R1)

In preparing this petition, the petition initiators met several problems. The first problem was finding a 'consensus'. Some petition initiators wanted the local residents to have full ownership of the public space, while others suggested sharing it with the local state authorities. As H-G-R2 stated, 'our fellows seemed to have different views and we could not have a consensus that could be written on that petition document'. The petition initiators also met difficulties in gathering local residents' support. They defined most signatures on the petition document as crucial in structuring this petition, with a reflection of local collectivism. This perception captured the collectivist ideology that had been commonly reflected by Chinese property-led civic actions (Chen *et al.*, 1997; Cai, 2008a; Yang, 2012; Steele and Lynch, 2013; Teets, 2014). In order to get most local households' support, these petition initiators paid visits to individual households, using their individual social networks. However, in the final petition document, there were signatures from a small most, as just over the half of all local households. These petition initiators linked this scene to their limited neighbouring acquaintances and local young families' lack of awareness of that public space, and even of the lack of the no local HOA in the estate. As noted of this procedure:

> 'We thought we could have majorities' supports and signatures, at least 70% of all local households…However, when we visited those neighbours, half of them directly rejected, because they were not familiar with us. Some young families rejected, with their worries about troubles from the local state. In fact, they kept anonymous in daily life…Besides these, no HOA in our estate was also a reason for these difficulties, as we had no organisational supports us to motivate local residents…Finally, we only got signatures from 210 households, a small

of this estate'.

By confronting the local residents' oppositionsand protest, to the local state authorities' intended occupation, the local civil servants insisted on their unyielding attitude for their rational decision to bring public goods to local residents, whereas, the local residents' reasons in their opposition were seriously challenged by the local state authorities. In their minds, the residents' social activities in that public space were a 'waste' of the public resource. As H-G-C1 stated, 'we selected this public space with a rational mind, to deliver our services directly into local neighbourhoods, as being close to the local residents…these residents' protests and challenges were totally wrong, because their use on that public space was a waste of the resource, as they only made chaos there'. Despite the challenge from the local residents' protests, these local civil servants explicated that their intended occupation as administrative office was for the party-state's social control. This control of the grassroots was also important to these local state authorities because the District Government was newly established. 'We should be involved in the grassroots development, and have our control over them…our District Government was newly established, this control at the grassroots level became very important in our work' (H-G-C2). Within these local civil servants' minds, the intended use of this public space as the Greenland Residents' Committee's office was inevitable;

'If we take the place as the office, we could better deliver the social control of those CCHEs, as we were close to them…Of course, we also had our own problem. As there was not enough offices for locating the Greenland Residents' Committee. At that time, we definitely need that public space, and these residents could not stop us'.

(H-G-C1)

These local civil servants also presented their strong antipathy to the local residents' opposition. As H-G-C1 stated, 'these residents were totally irrational, as they clashed in our office…They did not have the right reason in their protests, and they had no respect to the state authorities'. The local civil servants also opined that there was no 'trust' or 'consensuses' amongst the protestors, as the protest had no threat to these local state authorities. As noted of those residents' collective protests:

'Those protests could not threaten us, because there was no organisation. These retired residents had no consensus among themselves, and they even did not know what they really wanted in the protest, except stopping our decoration. Also, there was no mutual trust among

them…At that time, I believed those protests could not last too long, and would disappeare in the following several weeks'.

<div align="right">(H-G-C2)</div>

The ownership of the public space stayed as the central issue in the dispute. With reference to key actors' perceptions, there was limited application of local organisational social networks in structuring the local civic actions and the petition. The density of local neighbourhood networks was quite low, and there was no local collective norm or organisation in the Greenland Estate. Moreover, the social networks of the petition initiators seemed to be loosely-knitted and the residents' protests can be viewed as having been primarily structured by the application of the petition initiators' individual social networks.

7.3.3 Petition processes: rising civic participation

After sending the petition to the District Bureau, the petition initiators made a change to their demands and conceded that they would be willing to share the public space with the Greenland Residents' Committee. As H-G-R2 stated, 'once we had written this petition document, we became uncertain to claim the full ownership or the partial ownership, because we were afraid to lose this petition…so, we made a change from our consensus, to share this space with the local state, but we required the District Bureau to protect our interest'. Making this concession captured the state's authoritarian influence on these petition initiators, from the District Bureau. It also suggested the emergence of new cooperation between the petition initiators. Their denser networks also indicated the formation of local organisational social networks in the petition process.

The concession brought support from the District Bureau; 'Those arbitrators were very nice to us, and willing to listen to our views…however, they were not patient to ward those local civil servants' (H-G-R1). Then a local meeting was organised by the petition initiators to report on their achievements thus far to the local residents. The meeting was held to 'motivate' the local residents, to produce more participation in the following trade-offs and present more local collectivism so as to 'maximise' the local residents' sharing of this public space,

'I believed we had a chance to get more from the petition. So, I suggested to have a local meeting, to report our achievements to our neighbours and make them join in us, to show our collectivism to the District Bureau, to maximise our partition of that public space…So, we

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used our acquaintance to gather each local families. Fortunately, we gathered majorities in this meeting, and they all seemed to be motivated by us'.

<div align="right">(H-G-R2)</div>

This local meeting successfully stimulated local residents' greater participation and, thereafter, a final public hearing was held in the District Governmental hall with 247 local households in attendance. Within this public event, the draft programme proposed by the District Bureau sought to divide the public space half and half, to the local neighbourhood and the Residents' Committee. The local residents challenged this and, as noted, the result was that the local residents acquired most of this public space. This level of collective action had not been expected by the petition initiators. As H-G-R 2 stated, 'we did not have too much discussion before that public hearing, but our neighbours seemed to have great enthusiasm for it, even if some of them never used this public space…they continually presented their challenges to that draft programme, and finally brought more partition of this public space to our neighbourhood'. Undoubtedly, this spontaneous participation significantly influenced the final arbitration and the final arbitration was totally a 'collective' win, which belonged to the whole estate,

> 'The final arbitration was definitely a collective victory for the whole neighbourhood, because we achieved more than what we can expect...Without these neighbours' participation, we could not make that. Clearly, the local collectivism was vital in the petition, and it could be powerful in moving the higher state authorities'.

<div align="right">(H-G-R1)</div>

In addition, the local civil servants were 'confused' to be the residents' opponent in this petition when they received the information from the District Bureau. The local state authorities believed they had handled the dispute with those local residents, as the protests were mostly stopped. 'After April, there was no more protest, as those residents gave up…so, I was confused by these residents' submission of this petition' (H-G-C2). Initially, the local civil servants had confidence in winning this petition, as H-G-C1 stated, 'we made a rational and conventional decision to that public space, and we also had not enough office space to locate the Residents' Committee…those higher levels know, and I believed those arbitrators would support us in this petition, at that time'. However, within the trade-offs, these local state authorities' 'rational' and 'conventional' decisions were totally denied by the arbitrators. Moreover, the local state authorities were blamed by these arbitraotrs,

<div align="center">161</div>

with 'reproachful' tones and attitudes. As H-G-C1 stated, 'within those meetings, the arbitrators denied our decision, and they were reproachful to us…These arbitrators' words to us sounded very harsh, as blaming us for making faults'. The local civil servants were also seriously criticised by the District Government, for their 'stupid' decision that resulted in damages to the new District Government's image. However, within this criticism, these local civil servants also received the higher level's message to be 'patient' for the final arbitration. As H-G-C1 stated, 'the higher level criticised us a lot…but, it also made its promise to us and required us to be patient, as there would be an arbitration to share that public space between our agency and the local residents'. Following this, the local civil servants' involvement in the trade-offs became different, and they did not have any argument with, or opposition to the petition initiators and arbitrators. Once the District Bureau proposed its draft programme, the local civil servants immediately presented their confirmation and support for it. When this draft was objected to by the residents, these local civil servants did not present much resistance to the residents' claims on the sharing. As H-G-C2 stated, 'there emerged more local residents in that final public hearing, and they kept presenting their challenges to the arbitrators' draft programme…I thought the higher levels were pressured by those tremendous residents, and I know I could not do anything in that circumstance'.

When receiving the petition from the Greenland Estate, the District Bureau defined it as 'trouble' because of the dispute over the definition of the public use. With regard to this 'trouble', these arbitrators reported this petition to and discussed it with the District Government. By following the higher level's view, 'shunting the dispute' to the definition of public use became the main theme within the arbitrators' coordination in the trade-offs. 'District Government required us to shunt the dispute about the public use on this place, but to make coordination among both sides, as sharing this place…Fortunately, this view was consistent with those residents' concern'. Within the subsequent trade-offs, the arbitrators adopted a strategy of 'comforting' the petition initiators and 'repressing' the local civil servants, to achieve a quick arbitration,

> 'We showed respect to those petition initiators, and comforted them a lot…But, we pretended
> to be very fierce to those local civil servants, as repressing them. Not really, we just wanted to
> show some scenes to those petition initiators, as we were making arbitration by considering
> their interest…Our different attitudes to them proved to be very useful, making these petition

initiators feel satisfied'.

With mutual agreement on the arbitrators' proposal, the draft programme was sent to the final public hearing for an official announcement, as a formalised procedure at the end of the petition arbitration. However, by confronting the 'unexpected' participation from Greenland Estate, with the challenge to the draft programme, these arbitrators felt great pressure from the residents' 'great collectivism'. They had to make changes in the programme to avoid irritating the protestors. As noted of these arbitrators' feeling in that final public hearing:

'We did not expect so much participation in that public hearing. I expected, that just a formalised procedure to make the final arbitration, as we already had consensus...However, there suddenly emerged many local residents, and they seriously challenged that draft programme…Honestly, these residents became a pressure to us at that time. I was afraid to make them protest again. So, we changed the programme as they wished'.

Within the petition process, the key actors' statements and perceptions all emphasized the importance of the increased participation of the local residents in directing the final public hearing. Those residents' participation witnessed new emergent application and development of organisational social networks in the local neighbourhood, as the enhancement of the local social capital. This new emergent application and development could be related to the petition initiators' leadership, which seemed to be developed in the petition process. Meanwhile, certain overlapping emerged between petition initiators' individual social networks and new emergent organisational social networks.

7.3.4 Petition end: positive changes occurred in the new public space

After that public hearing, these petition initiators immediately organised a local meeting to discuss the decoration of the new public space. Those who attended the final public hearing mostly emerged in this discussion, and some new faces also showed up. Within this local discussion, a 'big picture' for developing this new public space was commonly agreed by residents. As H-G-R3 stated, 'those neighbours had various views on this new place, mostly about how to develop it for the whole neighbourhood's good…Finally, we had a big picture as a consensus, to make this new place suitable for everyone's activities and enjoyment'. This 'big

picture' was mostly realised within the following decoration on the public space. In addition, in this meeting, the petition initiators also proposed a 'formal management' of the new public space, to maintain 'order' in it. 'The place would be new after the decoration, not the same as before, only with our volunteers' management and maintenance…It should have some orders, to manage it well, and somebody should stand out to be the managers' (H-G-R1). This proposal was commonly agreed; as H-G-R2 stated, 'those neighbours agreed to have an order to regulate participators, in the form of norms not rules with punishment…all those norms were designed by them, with their hope that every neighbour could follow it'.

In November, this new public space with its new title 'Greenland Living Collectre' was re-opened to the public. It was immediately used by local residents, and there was greater usage than had hitherto been the case. This positive was brought about by the increasing acquaintances among these residents, as they continually brought their friends and neighbours into this new public space. Moreover, a local organisation also emerged within these residents' spontaneous place-making process, as the institutionalisation of the local meeting emerged from the formal management of the new public space. Initially, as a part of the space management, some collective meetings were randomly held to collect participators' 'constructive' opinions for organising social activities. Then, as requested by some participants, a local meeting among local residents was held to discuss the estate and neighbouring topics. Within these local meetings, some 'new faces' joined in, including some local young families,

> 'Originally, our meeting was held among our participators, to discuss the organisation of our activities, the NGOs' lectures for kids, and maintenances for this place…Then, as some participators requested, we also discussed something about the estate and something else about our neighbourhood…So, more neighbours joined in these meetings, even some young couples, as they never joined in any social activities here…Since that time, this meeting became a local meeting among all local residents, and we also had a consensus to it, as holding a meeting once every two weeks. If there was anything very urgent, we might have a temporal one'.

> (H-G-R2)

On the basis of increasing acquaintances and new emergent local collective norms, the local social capital seemed to be more enhanced with these residents' belonging to the new public space. 'More neighbours joined in our activities, and made friends with others, and even became couples in those activities…Clearly, most of them

had a sense of belonging to this place, as they could not live without their friends and activities in here' (H-G-R3). However, such enhanced local social capital did not mean the general development of local organisational social networks. As H-G-R2 stated, 'some neighbours never showed up in our activities or meetings, as they were disconnected to us…Maybe, our social activities and local meeting meant nothing to them, or, they just wanted to be anonymous'. Otherwise, the petition initiators linked those 'disconnects' to the 'limitation' of their personal influences. For example, as H-G-R1 stated, 'after the petition, I had more acquaintances in this neighbourhood, not only with my neighbours, but also the Residents' Committee…even as the manager of this new public space and the convener of the local meeting, I did not think I had enough capacity to gather more neighbours here, with my limited influence over them'.

As the executor of the petition arbitration from the higher state authorities, the local state authorities cooperated with the petition initiators in the decoration of the new public space, and accepted most of the requirements of the local residents to reform the relationship that existed between the local state authority and the local neighbourhood. 'It was better to have a good relationship with these residents, to avoid any more troubles from them, as we share this public space…so, in that decoration, we accepted most of their requirements, to satisfy their needs ' (H-G-C2). With this stance, as cooperating with local residents, these local civil servants also gained their observations to the spontaneous place-making in the new public space. These observations also raised their challenges to the party-state's grassroots administration, which insisted the party-state's role in leading grassroots development. To a certain extent, their challenge reflected a common dilemma in contemporary Chinese urban grassroots administration; it was difficult for the local state authorities' to be involved in the grassroots social development (Horesh and Lim, 2017). Apparently, with regard to the situation in Greenland Estate, the local civil servants were facing the dilemma of becoming marginalised within the local residents' social and civic developments. By confronting this dilemma, the local civil servants presented their administration as being more 'ambitious';

> 'We had to follow the higher state authorities' policy, mostly the central states, to control and lead these grassroots development…However, these residents did not need our control or administration, as they were taking good care of themselves… So, as to what we can do, we had no clue at all, except cooperate with those residents. In fact, our works had been ambitious.

Except for delivering those public goods, most of the time, we performed as those residents' helpers'.

<div align="right">(H-G-C1)</div>

Because of their challenges, these local civil servants proactively adopted changes in their administration, as providing cooperation to the local residents. These proactive changes brought new acquaintaces from the local neighbourhood to this Residents' Committee. As H-G-C2 stated, 'as we were closer to them, I can meet different local residents who come to those social activities, and had some talks to discuss something about our works…in other times, these participators also came to us with their inquiries and help, as they were very familiar with us'. With these acquaintances in the local neighbourhood, the local civil servants concluded that a 'cohesive' neighbouring image had emerged. 'In the new public space, those residents clearly had more acquaintances within their activities and meetings, and they were getting along as very cohesive…To a certain extent, there was a primary formation of local organisation, but not a neighbourhood cohesive development, as there were a lot of local residents excluded from these developments ' (H-G-C2). With regard to these positive developments the local civil servants highlighted the petition initiators' fundamental functions in promoting the development and were portrayed as being a reliable asset in helping to achieve cooperation between local state authorities and a local neighbourhood;

> 'In my mind, these petition initiators had their influence on the neighbourhood. At least, those participators in social activities all know them and trust them…These petition initiators meant a lot to the Residents' Committee, with their capacities in handling those neighbourhood problems. I mean, they were not only influential in this public space, but in the neighbourhood…We always invited them to help us, to handle something that we had no idea about. As I said, these persons had been the state's reliable asset, to benefit our works'.

<div align="right">(H-G-C1)</div>

The changes that occurred in the Greenland Estate were also highlighted by the arbitrators, especially the prosperity of the local social activities. However, these arbitrators mostly defined these positive changes as outcomes from their arbitration; 'We made those stakeholders cooperate in developing that public space and make a good plan for it…Those neighbourhood changes, as making a cohesive neighbourhood, was definitely the result of our arbitration' (H-G-A1).

The arbitrators also presented their perceptions as to the positive changes that

<div align="center">166</div>

occurred in local social networks, such as increasing acquaintances, increasing participation in local activities and meetings, and the furtherance of cohesive neighbouring relationships. All these positive changes were believed to be useful for the state's maintenance of local social order. As H-G-A1 stated, 'a lot of local residents became familiar with others, as they came to this new public space to have fun with their neighbours…their improved relationships were very good for the social stability, to help the state to keep the local order and avoid future conflict'. Furthermore, the petition arbitrators strongly presented their admiration for the institutionalisation of local meetings, and even defined it as an 'astonishing' achievement from the petition. However, within this admiration, they also presented worries about those petition initiators' increased 'leadership', which was defined as potential trouble in leading future civic actions;

> 'It was an astonishing event, as those residents had their local meeting, as an institution. That was very good for their estate, as they did not have an HOA at that time. As I know, their meeting solved a lot of local problems…But, I had worries about it. Those petition initiators were using the meeting to gather local residents, under their leadership. It was undoubtedly the case that those residents became more united than before. If they had another dispute with those local state authorities in future, it would not be difficult for them to organise protest again'.

> (H-G-A 2)

By reviewing the petition end, it can be seen that all the key actors' statements and perceptions suggested that there had been positive changes in the neighbourhood, including increased neighbouring acquaintances, new emergence of local collective norms, and increasing civic participation. However, the improvements seemed to have mostly occurred for those local participators who proactively joined in local social activities and local meetings. In addition, local organisational social networks seemed to have extended and become more densely knitted. However, these improvements were far from forming an urban community in the Greenland Estate, with some local families' being proactively excluded from the changing local life. In addition, the petition initiators had gained more personal empowerments at the end of the petition, with their extended individual social networks used in bridging the local residents and local state authorities.

7.3.5 Synthesis: the first-step in forming local community life

With regard to the conceptual model, some changes in local social networks were

clearly evident and these are presented in Figure 7.7 along with an indication of some of the key influences that emerged from the multiple stakeholders.
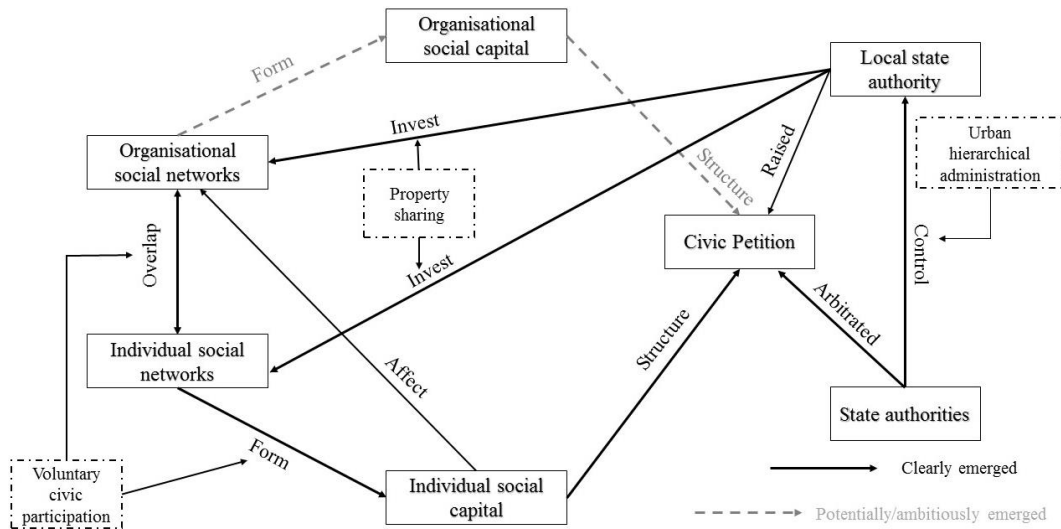
Figure 7.7 Synthesis of changes in local social capital through the petition in Greenland Estate
Source: Son and Lin, 2008; Author

In the origin of petition, there was limited application of local organisational social networks in structuring the civic petition. In the petition process, some local residents' civic awareness was motivated, and application and development of local organisational social networks emerged. These new emergent organisational social networks presented their positive influential mechanisms in the trade-offs. At the end of the petition, the prosperity of local social activities and institutionalisation of the local meeting proved these local residents' rising civic participation and cooperation. It further implied the extension of local organisational social networks with more local residents being involved in collectively managing their new public space. However, some young families were excluded from these positive neighbourhood developments because of their proactive isolation.

As vital in initiating this petition, the petition initiators' individual social networks consistently performed as the main social capital in structuring this petition. Their individual social networks also experienced extension within the interactions to multiple stakeholders through this petition. Their individual social capital also led the application and development of organisational social capital, and some overlaps emerged between individuals' social networks and local organisational social networks. In addition, at the end of the petition, their enhanced individual social capital also expressed the bridging function in connecting the local neighbourhood and local state authorities.

With regard to these positive changes occurring in the local organisational social networks, a general cohesive neighbourhood seemed to be initially formed in the new public space in the Greenland Estate. The prosperity of local social activities and the institutionalisation of local meetings were raising the local residents' collective involvement, as continually promoting the extension and knitting of local organisational social networks. Undoubtedly, these proactive applications could be positive in promoting better neighbourhood development, and forming an urban community in this estate.

7.4 Local residents' reflections on the impact of petitions on community formation in the two cases

A number of similarities and differences can be noted between the two case studies. As illustrated in the Lilian Estate, local social networks seemed to be significantly improved with extensions and enhancements, and the local neighbourhood became more cohesive. In the Greenland Estate, there emerged new local organisational social networks among some residents, and these new local social networks presented some images of community life inside the new public space. Comparing the two case studies it can be suggested that that the local organisational social networks were positively improved by the civic petition. To further cement this opinion questionnaires were delivered to households in the two CCHEs, with a devised response rate of 10%, Totally, 41 (45 questionnaires delivered) households answered the questionnaires in Lilian Estates, and 52 (59 questionnaires delivered) households answered the questionnaires in Greenland Estate.

7.4.1 Changes in individual civic participation

As indicated in Figure 7.8, 87.80% of all sampled households in the Lilian Estate presented their knowledge of the dispute with the local Residents' Committee about that elders' buffet. However, in Greenland Estate, fewer sampled households (59.60%) presented their knowledge about the dispute with the local state authorities. This difference was further reflected by individual participation in the local collective protests, as indicated in Figure 7.9. Within the Lilian Estate, 3.2% of all sampled households confirmed their participation. This figure was 36.5% with regard to the Greenland Estate. To a certain extent, the local residents in the Lilian Estate seemed to devote more energy and time to their organisational social

networks in structuring the local collective actions. These reflections, to an extent, parallel the comments already noted by the key actors with regard to the origins of the two petitions. The difference in individual civic participation was further confirmed by sampled households' signatures on the petition documents, as indicated in Figure 7.10. In the Greenland Estate, fewer households confirmed their signatures on the petition than was the case in the Lilian Estate
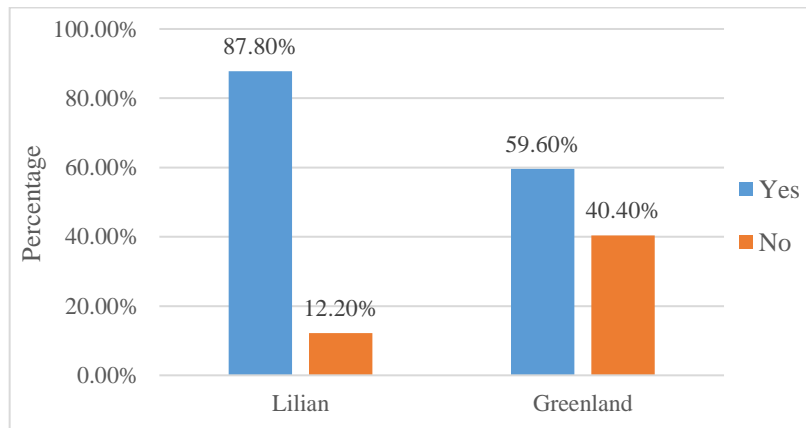
Figure 7.8 Sampled households' knowledge of the collective dispute
Source: Author
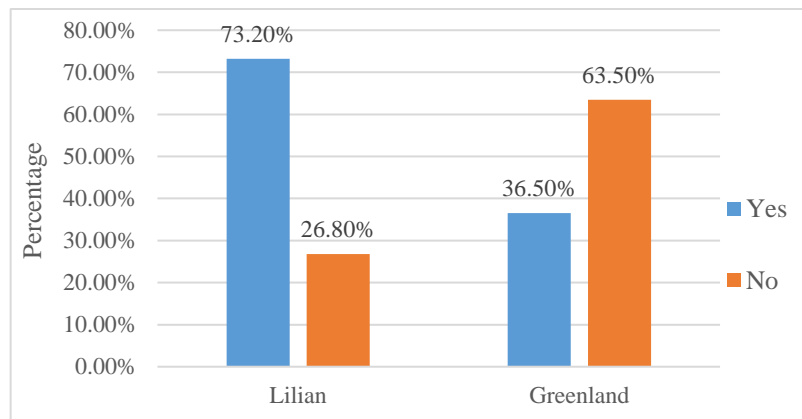
Figure 7.9 Sampled households' participation in the collective protests
Source: Author
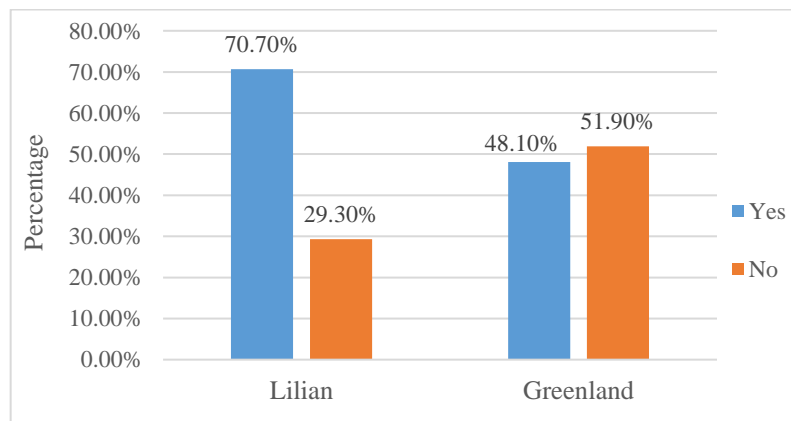
Figure 7.10 Sampled households' participation in appealing petition
Source: Author

In both cases, a majority of sampled households presented their intention to participate more in the future local civic actions (see Figure 7.11). Cleary, the individual civic awareness was raised through the two civic petitions. These reflections, to an extent, parallel the comments already noted by the key actors with regard to the increased civic participation emerged at the end of petitions.
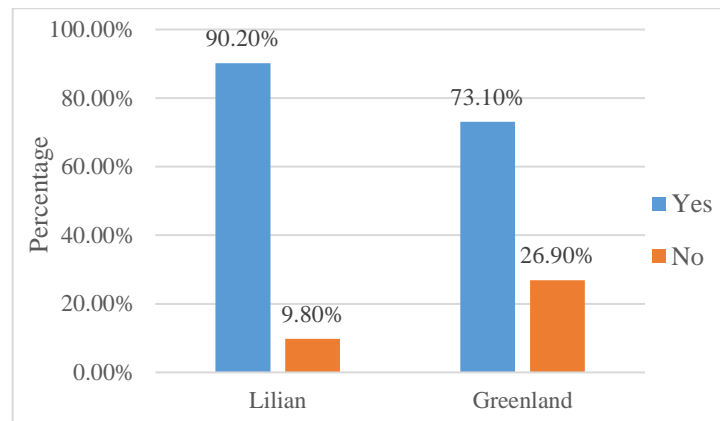
Figure 7.11 Sample households' participation in future civic actions
Source: Author

7.4.2 Changes in local neighbouring relationship

Local residents gave their reflections on the changes that occurred from the petitions, as shown in Figure 7.12. In the Lilian Estate it can be seen that a large majority thought that the changes had been positive. As can be seen in the figure, the feeling of positivity was not as strong in the Greenland Estate. Two reasons are suggested for this divergence. First, in the Lilian Estate, with local most households' participation in that petition, most local residents had a direct sense of outcomes of their collective actions. Second, in the Greenland Estate, the local beneficiaries of the petition were mostly those participants who joined in social activities and attended local meetings. Comparatively, this figure illustrated the different outcomes from the applications of local organisational social networks in the two cases.
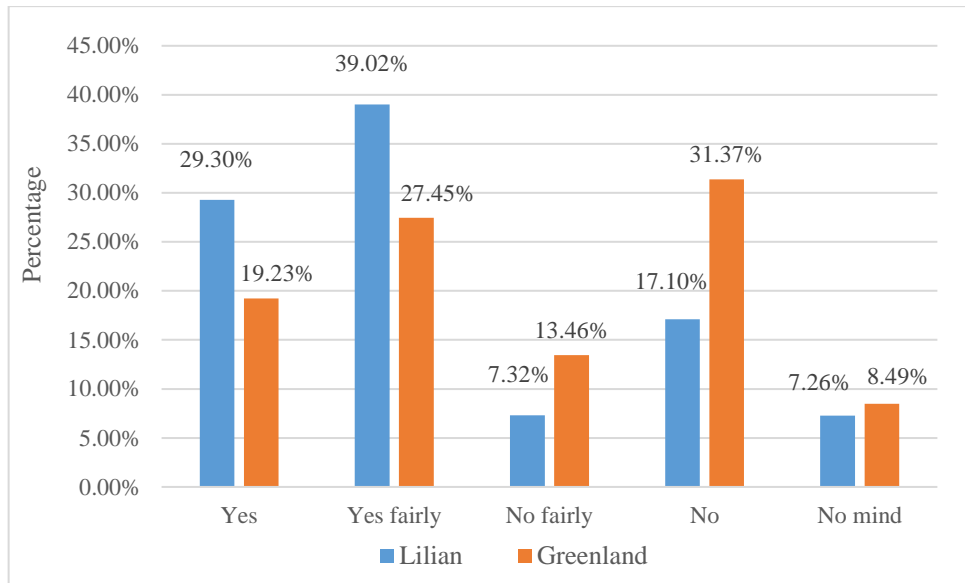
Figure 7.12 Perceptions of positive changes from the petition
Source: Author

A similar result can also be seen with regard to perceptions relating to relations with neighbours (see Figure 7.13). The result in this figure further indicated the different development of local organisational social capital in two cases. By paralleling the key actors' statements, with regard to the local organisational social networks more applications in the petition origin and process generated more developments at the end of the petition.
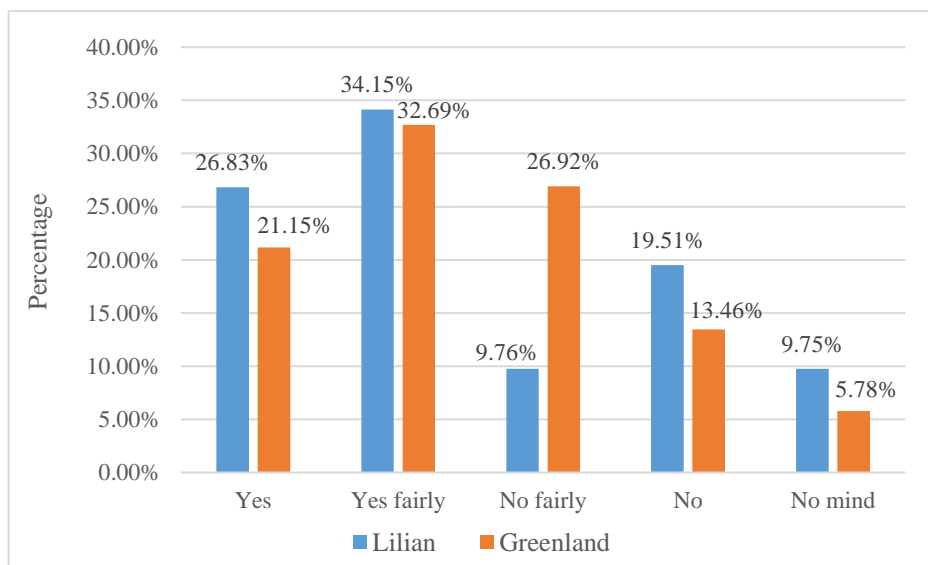
Figure 7.13 Perceptions of improved relationship with neighbours
Source: Author

7.4.3 Specific changes in local social capital and social cohesion

Figure 7.14 highlights those households' different reflections to the changes that have occurred on their neighbourhood attachment in two cases. The feeling of the

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changed neighbourhood attachment was regarded as the measure of local social capital (Forrest and Kearns, 2001). As can be seen in this figure, in Lilian Estate, most local residents thought they had more attachment to their neighbours and the neighbourhood. However, the feeling of positivity was not as strong in the Greenland Estate. These parallel the comments already noted by the key actors with regard to the improved local social capital emerged from two petitions.
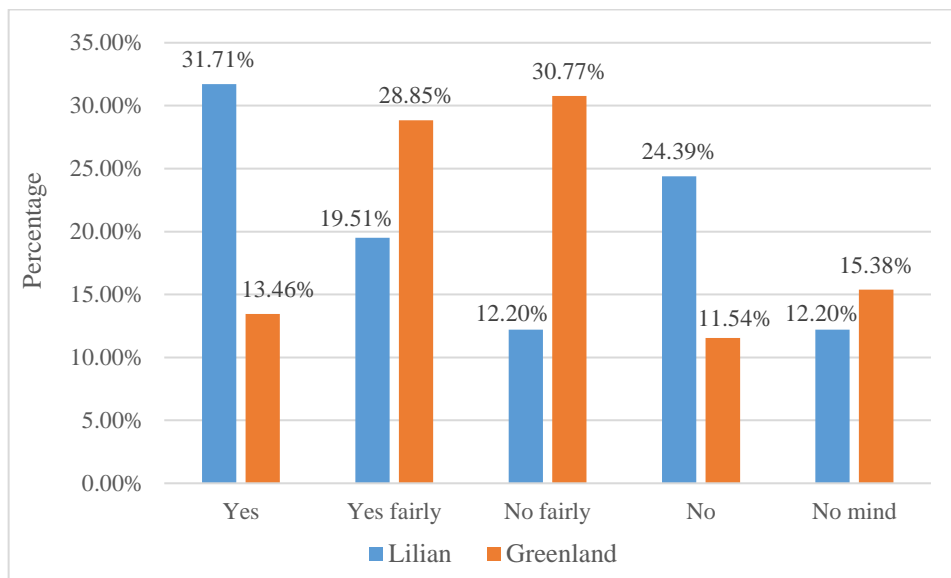
Figure 7.14 Perceptions of increased neighbourhood attachment
Source: Author
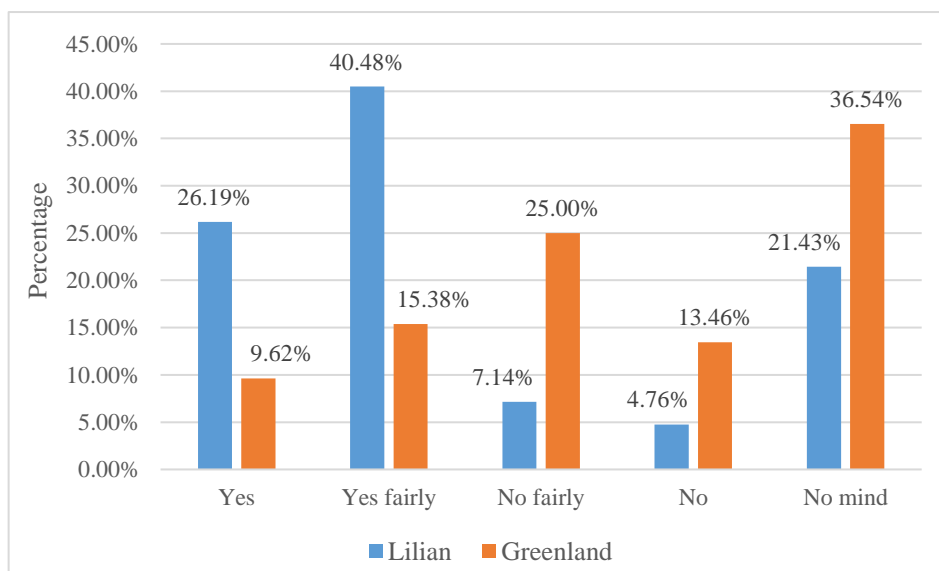
Figure 7.15 Perceptions of improved neighbourhood cohesion
Source: Author

On social cohesion, Figure 7.15 shows those sampled households' different reflections on the changes that have occurred on the neighbourhood cohesion in two cases. In the Lilian Estate, it can be seen that a large majority thought that

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neighbourhood cohesion had been positively improved. As can be seen in the figure, there were limited residents presented their feelings of positivity. These different reflections, between two cases, parallel the comments already noted by the key actors with regard to the improved local social cohesion emerged from two petitions. It is worth noting that there were certain households (36.54%) who were uncertain about the positive changes occurring in local social cohesion. This reflection is consistent with the key petition initiators' statement, as certain local residents were disconnected from the prosperous neighbourhood development after the petition.

7.5 Summary: different situation to form an urban community

Within the same research ground, as the protest petitions against state authorities, these two embedded case studies, on the basis of interviewing key actors and questionnaires to local residents have illustrated a series of changes that have occurred in the local social capital and social cohesion as a consequence of the two petitions. Comparatively, these changes shared some similarities, as both reflected local civic capacity in structuring civic petitions and some of the outcomes from the petition, such as increasing individual civic awareness and participation in neighbourhood activities could be seen as positive outcomes.

As illustrated in Table 7.5, with regards to the key themes about urban community development, change through two petitions, in local social capital and social cohesion, are compared. Those changes that have occurred through the petition discern significant impact on the formation of place-based community life in Lilian Estate. Significantly, local social capital and social cohesion experienced significant improvements and enhancements through this petition. In contrast, changes that have occurred in the Greenland Estate indicate some creation of place-based community life. It is undeniable that the prosperity of local social activities and the institutionalisation of local meeting had expressed the solid relationship of some local residents. To a certain extent, in the case of Lilian Estate the petition seemed more influential in enhancing a local neighbourhood-based urban community development compared with the case of Greenland Estate.

With reference to the conceptual model, these two cases also presented different mechanisms through which the local social networks were applied and developed, and further hinted at different process in advancing the community development in

these two CCHEs. Undoubtedly, the various neighbourhood contexts, such as lower density of neighbouring acquaintances, different attitudes to local collective norms, and no local voluntary organisation, were all important factors in influencing these mechanisms.

Table 7.5 Proceeding urban community in Lilian Estate and Greenland Estate

Concepts	Domains	Lilian Estate	Greenland Estate
Social Capital	Civic participation	Local increasing civic participations	Increasing civic participation in local social activities and new emergent meeting
	Supporting networks and reciprocity	New emergent networks between new families and long-standing families; Reciprocities and supports among neighbours	Mutual reciprocities among participators in social activities;
	Collective norms	Enhanced local democracy; Neighbourhood's common faith and value to it	Prosperity of local social activities in new public space Institutionalisation of local meetings;
	Trust	Improved mutual trusts among long-standing families and new families	Trust among petition initiators;
	Empowerment	Local residents' collective empowerment	petition initiators' empowerment
Social cohesion	Social order and social control	Enhanced social order in local neighbourhood; Fewer neighbourhood crisis;	New social orders emerged among some local residents; Petition initiators' influence in maintaining social order;
	Social networks	Densely-knitt social networks within the local collective norm	Densely-knit social networks emerged in the social activities
	Place attachment	Common neighbourhood attachment,	Limited neighbourhood attachment

Source: Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Robinson, 2005; Dempsey *et al.*, 2011; Author

Chapter Eight

Hybrid petitions against local Property Management Companies: The cases of the No. 20 Estate in Nanjing City and the Pudong Estate in Huai'an City

8.1 Introduction

This chapter focus on two hybrid petitions against local Property Management Companies (PMCs) that occurred in two Chinese Commodity Housing Estates (CCHEs). Using a similar evaluating framework to that in Chapter Seven, empirical evaluations of the No. 20 Estate in Nanjing City and the Pudong Estate in Huai'an City were explored to see what, if any, changes occurred in local neighbourliness were attributable to the local civic petition process. This Chapter initially presents a contextual explanation of PMCs in contemporary urban China. Then, the two embedded case studies are separately described. Following that, local residents' reflections from the questionnaires are compared to present a full picture of the formation of place-based community life in these two CCHEs. Finally, a synthesis concerning any changes in social capital and social cohesion from these two embedded cases is provided with regards to urban community formation.

8.2 Property Management Companies (PMCs) in two CCHEs

Within the two embedded cases, the *Hongweihe* PMC was the petition opponent in the No. 20 Estate; *Huida* PMC was the petition opponent in the Pudong Estate. The services provided by these two PMCs to local neighbourhoods included the management of collective spaces and facilities, private services to individual families, mandatory car parking controls, and other services (see Figure 8.1). Generally, these two PMCs provided a similar range of service provision. However, within these two embedded cases, these two PMCs were quite different with regard to the entrepreneurial character of the two organisations. Registered with the Nanjing Municipal Bureau of Urban-rural Construction, *Hongweihe* PMC had been appointed to serve twenty CCHEs in 2015 and was much a much bigger organisation. In contrast, the *Huida* PMC was registered with the Huai'an Municipal Bureau of Urban-rural Construction, and was appointed to serve two

CCHEs in the city in 2015. It located its headquarters inside the Pudong Estate.

The contents of property services in housing estates

Management on collective properties
(Payment by annual property management fee)

(1) Estate cleanings, including rubbish collective disposal, sweeping the public areas; sewer cleaning, and others;
(2) Estate security, including 24 hours patrol, CCTV supervision, and others;
(3) Mail and parcel collection;
(4) The maintenance of civil infrastructures;
(5) The maintenance of estates' tele-communicating system, including telephone lines and internet lines;
(6) The maintenance of Greenland and plants;

Property services to individual families
(Additional payment separately)

(1) Repairing of home electrical system;
(2) Repairing of home sewer system;
(3) Fixing of furniture;
(4) Others…

Mandatory parking management
(Payment by vehicle' owners separately)

(1) Renting individual parking spot annually;
(2) The permission of entries into estate

Individual households' services
(payment on per service)

Figure 8.1 The *Hongweihe* and *Huida* PMC's property services in CCHEs
Source: Author

8.3 The case of No. 20 Estate, Nanjing City

8.3.1 Review of this petition

The No. 20 Estate is a CCHE that is located in the urban inner core area of Nanjing City (see Figure 8.2). In 1999, it was planned, built and sold out to retired workers from a state-owned enterprise. This CCHE consists of ten residential buildings accommodating 220 households. Within the planning and construction, some units along the streets within the residential blocks were designed for commercial use, as commercial podiums, as indicated in Figure 8.3. It is worth noting that the local neighbourhood has recently experienced significant change with increasing heterogeneity with old families and new families living side by side. By 2015, nearly 50 apartments had been transferred to new families, and there were at least 30 apartments being subcontracted as rental units. Moreover, 32 apartments were now occupied by retired workers' relatives.
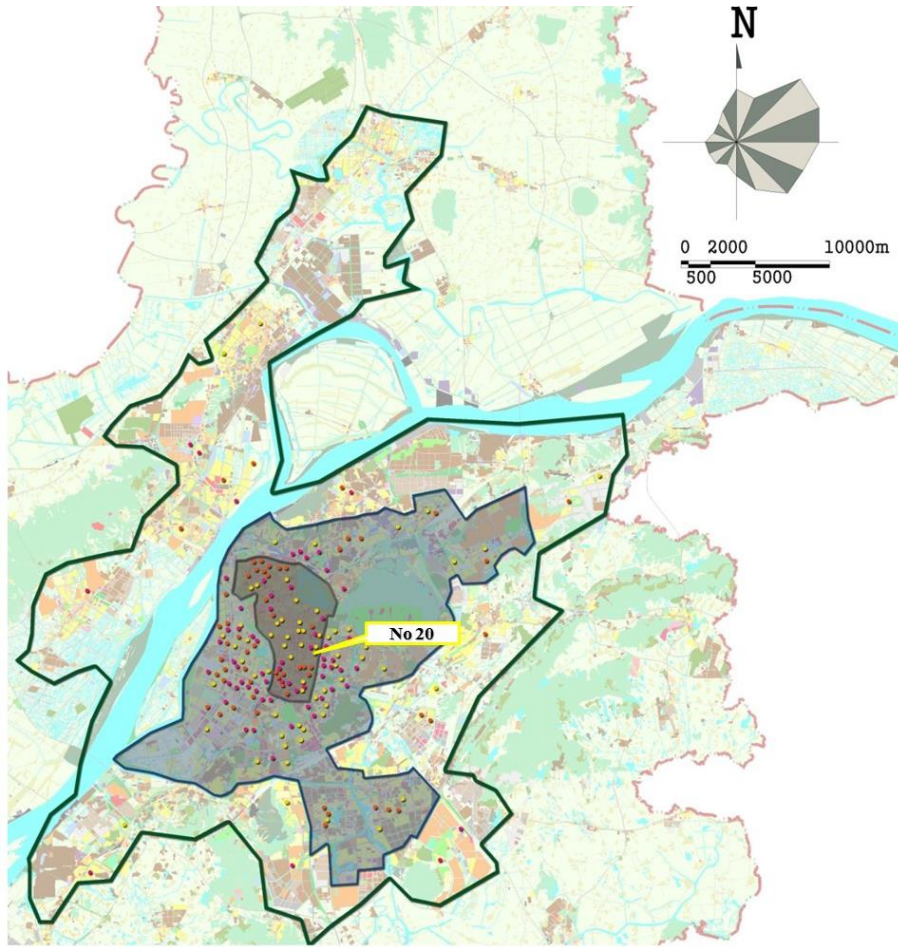
Figure 8.2 Location of No. 20 Estate in Nanjing City
Source: Author

Figure 8.3 Layout of No. 20 Estate
Source: Author

In this petition, the local residents raised a series of collective actions against two PMCs, of which *Hongweihe* PMC was the second PMC. After 2014, because of deteriorating living conditions, the local Residents' Committee recommended that the local neighbourhood should appoint a PMC to provide better property management. That recommendation was partially agreed through a local neighbourhood collective vote suggesting a 'test' contract to a PMC. The local Residents' Committee engaged in a tendering process and the first PMC was appointed in March 2015. Two weeks later, the first PMC cancelled its 'test' contract because of local residents' opposition to the PMC's individual property fee charges for their services. *Hongweihe* PMC was then appointed to the No. 20 Estate through a second tendering in June 2015. In October 2015, because of residents' protests against property fee charges, *Hongweihe* PMC decided to cancel the contract unilaterally. Then, a civic petition was created in an attempt to retain this PMC with signatures from 132 families. The arbitration of this petition was heard by the Qinhuai District Bureau of People's Letter and Visit (District Bureau). From October 2015, the District Bureau organised a series of meetings which produced trade-offs among the multiple stakeholders. Although there existed some opposition from local residents, the final arbitration outcome was produced in November 2015. *Hongweihe* PMC agreed to reduce the property fee, and the local neighbourhood agreed to provide a formal contract appointing this PMC. The series petition procedures, including its origins, processes, and outcomes, are outlined chronologically in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1 Timeline of the residents' civic petition in No. 20 Estate, Nanjing city

Petition stages	Periods	Key issues with timing
Origin	December, 2014-April, 2015	(1) Residents' collective meetings discussing estate's poor sanitation, in December 2014;
		(2) Local HOA committees' visits to local Residents' Committee on hiring property management, in January and February 2014;
		(3) Residents' collective meeting and votes on hiring one PMC, in February 2015;
		(4) Local Residents' Committee' tendering to the first PMC, in March 2015;
		(5) Local residents' protest the first PMC, and the cancellation of the first PMC, in April 2015.
	May, 2015-July, 2015	(1) Local state's second tendering of private property management as residents required, in May 2015;
		(2) *Hongweihe* PMC's location in No. 20 Estate, in June 2015;
	August, 2015-September, 2015	(1) Series protest against the charges, in September 2015;
Process	October, 2015-November, 2015	(1) Residents' collective meeting on discussing appealing petition, October, 2015;
		(2) The formal sending to District Bureau, October, 2015;
		(3) Two collective meetings among local residents and PMC, November, 2015;
		(4) The production of the final coordinative programme as arbitration, November, 2015;
End	December, 2015-January, 2016	(1) Some limited protests. December, 2015;
		(2) Residents' payments to property services in 2016, January, 2016
	February, 2016-June, 2016	(1) District Bureau's return visits, February and March, 2016;
		(2) Local Residents' Committee's return visits, from February to June, 2016.

Source: Author

By reviewing the petition documentation, several key actors emerged as shown in Table 8.2. With regard to the neighbourhood changes that occurred and in selecting the local key petition initiators, two residents were chosen who were acting as leaders of the local Homeowners' Association (HOA); they represented, through their own individual circumstances, both old and new families. As the local neighbourhood's petition opponents, two managers who represented the

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Hongweihe PMC in managing No. 20 Estate were selected due to their participation in the petition. Then, in selecting the key actors who produced the arbitration, one civil servant who served in the District Bureau was selected, and another civil servant who served in the local Residents' Committee was also selected. These two civil servants mainly provided their perceptions about multiple stakeholders' involvement in the petition process and commented on the outcomes.

Table 8.2 Key actors in the petition that occurred in No. 20 Estate

Key petition initiators	
Resident one (N-N-R1)	Chairman in local HOA (representing original residents)
Resident two (N-N-R2)	Vice chairman in local HOA (representing new residents)
Key petition opponents	
Manager one (N-N-M1)	The manager in local PMC (*Hongweihe*)
Manager two (N-N-M2)	The vice manager in local PMC (*Hongweihe*)
Key arbitrators	
Arbitrator one (N-N-A1)	The civil servant from District Bureau
Arbitrators two (N-N-A2)	The civil servant from local Residents' Committee

Source: Author

8.3.2 Petition origin: Contingent crisis in appointing the PMC

During the last two decades, the No. 20 Estate had experienced significant neighbourhood change with the high transactions of individual apartments. Within such neighbourhood change, there also emerged some neighbourhood conflicts between more established and newer households. Appointing a PMC to manage the CCHE was one of these conflicts. As stated by N-N-R2, 'since I moved here in 2005, the neighbourhood had never been managed, nor was there any regulation here'. With regards to these claims, there were six collective votes organised by the local HOA between 2010 to 2014, but 'no agreements' were reached. Some of the reasons for this lack of agreement were related to some old families' 'opposition' and a 'reliance' on subsidies from the state-owned enterprise (*Danwei*). As one resident noted:

'I wanted to have a PMC here. Some new neighbours had the same idea. That was why I proposed to have a vote on that…But, those old neighbours kept voting no. Because they believed their *Danwei*, should do the property management, even though it stopped in 2014…These old neighbours had a reliance on the *Danwei*'.

(N-N-R2)

In refusing to appoint a PMC, the older families wanted to keep connections to the

party-state, with its compensation or subsidy as the 'concern' and 'care' for retired workers. As N-N-R1 stated, 'we used to get support from our *Danwei*, and that would show that the party's was concerned and cared about us, and most of the old neighbours had same thoughts'. Such a view reflects the remaining socialist ideology in some Chinese urban elders' mind-set; they have, after all, had personal connections with the party state throughout their whole lives (Davis, 1989; Davis *et al*., 1995; Wang, 2004; Bray, 2005; Yan, 2010). Moreover, this common mind-set was the basis of their place-based ties and their local collectivism; the older families consistently voted 'no' to appointing a PMC.

> 'I used to be the chairman in our *Danwei*. That was why those old neighbours elected me, and believed me, to be the HOA chairman. They wanted me to represent them, and present their views…Personally, I had no clear view about PMC. But, my old neighbours wanted me to say no. So, I always voted 'no''.

> (N-N-R1)

With reference to the conflicts that arose relating to appointing a PMC it should be noted that the living conditions in the estate had deteriorating because of a lack of care and maintenance. For instance, sewage disposals, from those bystreet stores, directly leaked into the estate. As stated by N-N-R2, 'Things here became worse, and sewage leaked everywhere……More and more neighbours became worried, and there were voices demanding a PMC'. In December 2014, one local meeting was organised with a view to discussing the appointment of a PMC to overcome these problems. This proposal came from some of the new families. There existed a small local majority (53% of all attending families) which agreed to explore one 'test contract' in appointing a PMC, and authorized the local Residents' Committee to proceed with a public tendering process. Such a collective decision (the decision to seek a 'test contract') reflected the local neighbourhood's uncertainty, much of which stemmed from older residents.

> 'We discussed a lot at that meeting. Some old neighbours had their worries. They challenged, whether a PMC could truly solve these problems. They still had hope in their *Danwei*…So, we proposed a test contract. We gave the local Residents' Committee a right, to tender a PMC, as a test. If the PMC could solve our problems, we would provide a formal contract…Finally, some old neighbours voted yes, and we got an agreement, from just over half of all the households'.

> (N-N-R1)

Following this, one PMC was appointed to the No. 20 Estate in May 2015. However,

as already noted, this test contract only lasted two weeks. This PMC was forced to stop work because of protests from some old neighbours which centred upon regulations that were against their long-term lifestyles. For example, as stated by N-N-R1, 'those old neighbours did not like regulations, as regulating their bicycle parking and placing plants in public places…they saw these regulations as very rude, with no respect for them'. Furthermore, there was another reason for these protests; the PMC's announcement that it would be charging individual property fees. Local majorities objected to it, including the older families and new families. As N-N-R2 stated, 'that PMC directly required us to pay, unreasonable, as we only gave them a test contract, and we had no sense of their service provision by this time'. After the cancellation of the first PMC, there was, as already noted, another tendering process for a new PMC for the unsolved problems left by the first PMC. *Hongweihe* PMC, was appointed to the No. 20 Estate in June 2015. Within the tendering process for the second PMC, the local Residents' Committee 'pressured' a lot of members of the local HOA, especially those who were from old families. For example, as stated by N-N-R1, 'local civil servants required us to accept that PMC, forcing us, and urging us not to make any trouble again'. This party-state voice was also then brought to the older families.

> 'Some old families did not want to have a PMC. They wanted to visit *Danwei* again, for a solution. As they said, *Danwei* was more reliable…But, the local state insisted on appointing another one. The local civil servants visited me, and required us to accept this. To us, this was the party's voice we needed to follow…So, we accepted the second one. But, we still insisted that was a test. If they could not satisfy us, they should leave'.
>
> (N-N-R1)

Soon, after the appointment of *Hongweihe* PMC, the living environment in the estate improved; some old facilities were repaired or replaced. However, despite appointing this PMC, some old families' dissatisfaction with the situation continued to exist even with 'better services' and 'a more sincere attitude' from these new property managers. As stated by N-N-R1, 'the second PMC was better than the former one, with a sincere attitude and better services…but the old residents still had it in their minds not to accept this situation'. Then, in September 2015, the PMC announced that it intended to charge individual families. This immediately raised local residents' collective opposition. As noted by a resident; 'Both old and new neighbours shared the same opinion that the fees were too expensive…because the

facilities here were quite lagging, and the management of these should not cost so much' (N-N-R2). Following this, some older householders applied direct action to prevent the PMC from exercising its daily activities, by blocking the estate's gate and occupying the PMC's office. After several weeks of protests, the PMC announced the cancellation of the 'test' contract. However, some local families wanted to retain this PMC, but with a downgrading of the property fee charge, because of the 'good' job that the agency had done. 'In fact, many residents/households admired the PMC's services, quite good…they just wanted some downgrading of charges. That was why they protested (N-N-R2)'. Consequently, a local meeting was held, and old tensions about this topic re-emerged from the different views between older families and new families.

> 'We had no consensus in this meeting. But, a lot of neighbours wanted to retain that PMC, with the price downgraded…But, the property managers directly rejected this proposal. I suggested we submit a petition. Let the state help us, as those old neighbours always believed. That would be a better solution, request the state's authority to resolve the issue…The majority agreed on this'.

(N-N-R2)

As the second PMC appointed to No. 20 Estate, *Hongweihe* PMC had been informed about the previous events that had occurred. Nevertheless, those property managers believed that they can change the local residents' minds through their 'quality' services. 'We had confidence, with abundant experience in property management…If we provided a quality service; these old neighbours could be persuaded to accept us (N-N-M1)'. Soon after their appointment, the property managers immediately adopted a series of actions to address issues within the estate. They regulated the bystreet stores' daily operations and waste disposals, and repaired and removed some old facilities in each residential buildings. In addition, the property managers also visited some members of the local HOA to build private relationships. These actions proved to be quite 'effective', as stated by N-N-M 2, 'some neighbours gave good comments on our work. They said we were effective'. One month later, it was deemed that the local neighbourhood had accepted this PMC, for no protests against it had been recorded. Given this, the property managers believed they had earned the local residents' 'trust', and should have a formal contract and should proceed to charge realistic property fees. 'We believed, we had earned their trust, to have a formal contract…It was time to collect property

fees, to pay for our efforts (N-N-M1)'.

However, as noted, this PMC's decision angered the local residents and they refused to pay them stating that they were 'too expensive'. From the property managers' perspectives, this reason was unacceptable. 'Our charges were reasonable, and permitted by the state…but those residents claimed those were too expensive, and they cannot afford them (N-N-M2)'. Some negotiations were undertaken between the property managers and the local HOA members. Without mutual agreement, the property managers were forced to 'pause' their work because of the 'horrible' protests from older residents. 'We needed to deal with those older residents' protests…too busy to handle those property services in that condition (N-N-M1). Given such difficulties the property managers announced their cancellation of the test contract;

> 'We had no choice to those protests. Those protests destroyed our work, and our trust to these residents. So, we had to leave…There were some different voices, wanting to retain us, but they also wanted to have a downgrade on our fees…The price downgrades, as they wanted, could not happen. We are a business, not a charity'.
>
> (N-N-M1)

By reviewing the petition origins, it was indicated that local neighbourhood change was clearly connected to the disputes between local residents and the PMCs. In their protests, the older residents presented their densely place-based ties with strong social ideology. Some of the newer residents also presented, to a certain extent the place-based social ties in insisting on the appointment of a PMC. All these social ties proved the existence of local organisational social networks in this estate as well as the fact that there was a clear split between different groups. Some degree of local collectivism as in igniting local civic capacity were also captured within the vote to submit a civic petition. Furthermore, it was worth noting that the petition initiators were very significantly involved in those collective actions, with their roles in uniting those local residents, who had different views. Undoubtedly, there is the application of these petition initiators' individual social networks.

8.3.3 Petition process: mutual concessions and exchanges under state pressure

Submitting the petition confirmed the Chinese grassroots' belief in the party-state's petition system, with regards to gaining agreement from some of the older families (Zhang, 2004; Hurst *et al*., 2014). The older residents seemed to commonly believe

that the party-state could have a strong influence on the PMC. For example, as N-N-R1 stated, 'if the state stands by our side, it can force the PMC to make the changes, such as downgrading the charges'. However, this perspective only really reflected older residents' views. In contrast, the new residents mainly viewed submitting the petition as a proactive civic engagement for seeking 'coordination' between the local neighbourhood and the PMC. For example, as N-N-R2 stated, 'we wanted the state to help us, to help us to have an agreement between us and that PMC'. Immediately, within the petition submitting process, the petition initiators had a long-time contact with the arbitrators, about the local residents' concerns. Some petition initiators, who represented the older residents, described their feeling as being 'highly cared for' by the party-state' (N-N-R1). After the submission of the petition, one local meeting was held, which included the involvement of the arbitrators, in October 2015. One hundred and eighty local families attended, and 14 residents presented their statements. Some different voices emerged. 'Some older neighbours claimed a downgrade of 30% of the proposed charges as they could afford that…Some newer neighbours suggested a 10% reduction, with their reason being enabling PMC's service delivery (N-N-R2)'. Within such different voices, there further emerged accusations between the different groups,

> 'It was more than statements about the petition, but blames on others…As those new neighbours said, the older neighbours did not really want to retain that PMC…But, the older neighbours blamed the new neighbours as being selfish…Anyway, they just had accusations, but no discussion'.
>
> (N-N-R2)

Due to the fact that there was no consensus from the local neighbourhood, the District Bureau held another meeting between the multiple stakeholders, including the petition initiators and the property managers. The petition initiators insisted that the property managers should have a further re-evaluation of property fee charges: 'PMC should evaluate their charges, as managing our estate should not be so expensive…In addition, surely, those charges were unaffordable to older neighbours (N-N-R2)'. In the following meetings, with mutual recognition and coordination among those multiple stakeholders, the petition initiators agreed to sign memorandum with the property managers, with both sides agreeing to mutual concessions. However, these petition initiators had no confidence in the local common agreement on this memorandum, with 'foreseeable troubles made by older

residents.

> 'We thought the memorandum was good. That PMC agreed to stay, downgrade their charges, and we also agreed to provide a formal contract…But, it could be difficult to be passed in the vote. I bet, those older neighbours might have oppositions to it, and make it unpassable. This was foreseeable'.

> (N-N-R2)

With regard to the 'foreseeable troubles' noted in the quotation above, the petition initiators requested that the District Bureau and the local Residents' Committee offer some helps; visiting and persuading some older families to change their position before the vote. The rationale for this was that these arbitrators could influence these older families; as N-N-R1 stated, 'any civil servants could be influential to our older neighbours, because they represent the party-state…this could be useful to persuade them not to make trouble in the vote'. These arbitrators' visits to some of the older families in the estate proved to be successful. At the end of November 2015, the memorandum was passed with a small majority vote. This was to be the final arbitration of this petition.

> 'Those civil servants had great influence on those older residents…Even something happened in that vote, an opposition from some older neighbours, they did not change the other's views…Finally, the memorandum was collectively agreed, quite adventurous, with only 131 households' yes'.

> (N-N-R2)

On being informed that the PMC was the local residents' petition opponent, those property managers felt 'surprised' about such an involvement. Clearly, from these property managers' perspectives, by that time, there was no relationship between them and those local residents. 'I did not know those residents would submit a petition; all that they had done was kick us out' (N-N-M1). Furthermore, with regard to the residents' collective concerns, to retaining the PMC, the property managers expressed further confusion, with terms such as 'contradiction', 'complexity' and 'unrealistic',

> 'I had no clue about this petition. They cannot accept our charges. But, they still wanted to retain us. That was a contradiction…As I said, they had no common views among themselves. These residents were too complex to understand…Anyway, those charges were designed reasonably, and all were permitted by the state. So, making us downgrade those charges was unrealistic'.

> (N-N-M2)

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Despite their having 'no clue' as to the petition, the property managers joined in the petition process, including attending meetings and public hearings, with aim of preserving the PMC's 'reputation'. 'Anyway, we made no mistake on that estate, and I thought we were the victims…I needed to state everything clearly to the state and those residents' (N-N-M1). Given the trade-offs that were agreed it can be argued that the property managers were under some 'pressure' from the state authority. For instance, the PMC was 'forced' to have 'an understanding' of the local neighbourhood's conditions and should try and retain its' service to that estate. 'The arbitrators insisted to us that we should rethink and continue our service to those residents, to understand those residents' difficulties and claims, mostly those older residents…We did not want to do that, but the state forced us to. Clearly, they were pressuring us' (N-N-M1). It can be argued, all else being equal, that these 'pressures' on the property managers captured, to a certain degree, the state's authoritarian relationship with the private agency, and was, therefore, a reflection of the party-state's influence on the market (Lin, 2007a; He and Lin, 2015; Zhou *et al*., 2019). As a consequence of the state's pressure, the PMC drafted the memorandum with the intention of continuing their services to the No. 20 Estate;

> 'We made great concessions, going back to the estate and downgrading charges. These were the greatest concessions we can make…All were made to satisfy those residents and the state…Actually, we did not insist too much on our interests, but we just required a formal contract'.
>
> (N-N-M 2)

Once receiving this petition, these arbitrators thought it was a 'normal' case. For example, as N-N-A1 stated, 'most petitions we received about property were, like this one, quite normal…Their dispute was not hard to handle, but needed some strategies'. Specifically, these arbitrators' strategies were forcing both sides to make some concessions, with the District Government's authority. For example, as N-N-A1 stated, 'we could force both sides to make concessions, because we had authority to do so. To make them follow our mind. So that we could achieve a win-win between them. To produce an outcome good to them and our society'. These strategies were applied through the arbitrators' private contacts with the property managers and proactively pressurised the PMC to make concessions. Unfortunately, this petition was difficultly processed because there was no consensus among the local residents according to the arbitrators' views. As N-N-A2 stated, 'the older

families and new families had their own internal conflicts. Without a consensus as to the scale of charge downgrades… this made arbitration very difficult, even despite the great concessions from the PMC'. Despite presenting the state authority's influence through visiting some older residents, the state authoritarian influence on the local residents was further reflected by the arbitrators' attendance at the local vote which passed the memorandum. Their attendance was noted as that,

> 'Some older neighbours were very stubborn. They tried to destroy the vote. But, they were stopped by us, immediately, as they were afraid of us…As I said, without our supervision during the vote, there could be no end to the petition, no agreement to the memorandum'.

> (N-N-A 1)

With the passing of the vote it can be seen that, under the state's authority and pressures, there emerged through dialogue, mutual beneficial concessions to achieve a final agreement. It is worth noting that these exchanges were initially undertaken with the exclusion of local residents. In other words, in achieving the draft memorandum, only local individual social capital was applied by petition initiators. Then, during the local vote, there emerged the application of local organisational social networks, but this was shaped by the state's influence. The small majority that agreed to the final arbitration suggests that the neighbourhood split was still very significant.

8.3.4 Petition end: local social networks remain split

After the petition arbitration, the PMC brought back 'normal' life to the local neighbourhood. However, the petition initiators still had worries concerning some older residents who had retained their opposition to the final arbitration. Their fears were realised when some small-scale protests occurred in January 2016 when the PMC started to collect the annual property fees that it was allowed to collect according to the contract. These protests were limited; 'these protestors always had their reasons, but, most neighbours had confirmed the PMC's services…and they did not want to protest again, because of having such a good PMC here (N-N-R2)'. There was a lack of sympathy from new residents towards the older residents who were protesting; For example, as N-N-R2 stated, 'most new neighbours thought those protestors were weird and outdated…Even in my mind, I thought they needed to know something positive has happened in the estate, and the good service we already have'. Such opinions, and the protests themselves illustrate that there

remained a split between the older families and the new families living on the estate. It can be argued, therefore that despite the temporary co-operation that emerged during the petition process, local residents' collective protests and their petition seemed to generate, in the longer term, no changes to the local neighbouring ties occurred, particularly with regards to changed local organisational social networks. Indeed, from the petition initiators' perspectives, local neighbourhood connections meant nothing to these 'individualistic' new residents,

> 'New neighbours were very individualistic, with less care for the neighbourhood, compared with older residents. They protested for their own interests, not for the common good…Clearly, the HOA and the vote had not much meaning to them, either, if it was not related to their individual interest. That was why they had no connections to others, because they did not need them'.

(N-N-R2)

These new residents' 'individualistic' lifestyles further suggest the emergence of materialisation within contemporary Chinese urban life, with many new emergent secondary social ties replacing older place-based ties (Fu and Lin, 2014; He, 2015b). Nevertheless, these new residents proved to be important and reliable components of local civic capacity, because of their high civic consciousness with relation to their 'property rights' and 'rules'. As N-N-R2 stated, 'new neighbours were more focused on the PMC's services, than the old neighbours, but most on an individualistic basis…The fact was that they were more intelligent, and they had more knowledge about property rights and rules'. Their high civic consciousness might enable their proactive civic participation in future neighbourhood action, even if this is shaped by individualistic minds.

Despite the limited changes that occurred in local organisational social networks, the petition's initiators clearly sensed some significant changes have occurred with regard to their own individual social networks with multiple stakeholders. In the local neighbourhood, more acquaintances and respect from the local residents towards the petition initiators led to the extension of their local social networks, which had overlapped with local organisational social networks. As N-N-R1 stated, 'I used to represent the old neighbour residents, but now I also have a lot of contacts with the new neighbours…I am still the chairman of the HOA, but now not only representing the old neighbours, but all'. Additionally, the petition initiators also

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gained more connectivity with the PMC and the District Bureau; these new connections certainly benefited their life and that of the local neighbourhood. 'These new relationships with the property managers benefited my life, and it became easier for me to get some priority from the PMC's services…But, I did not only use these relationships just for myself, and I also used them to make our neighbourhood better, by making the property managers more careful about our estate' (N-N-R2). Moreover, this enhanced individual social capital was 'useful' in bridging the local neighbourhood, the PMC, and the local state, with these petition initiators' empowering local leadership;

> 'My voice became more influential, and neighbours were more willing to listen to me. So was the PMC, I can influence those property managers…I can moderate the crisis between families, and also help the PMC to collect property fees…More than that, I can make the local state do something for the neighbourhood because the state trusts me'.

> (N-N-R2)

The changes that occurred in the neighbourhood through the petition were also observed by the property managers. From their own perspective, the most significant change was the increasing 'focus' from local residents on their services. For example, as N-N-M1 stated, 'when we were deploying gate control, many residents came to us with their advice, as they were focusing on our works…These people showed their interest in our work, totally different to before'. This reflected the local residents' increased civic awareness and participation. It also reflected an improved relationship between the PMC and the local neighbourhood. With regards to the protests from some 'stubborn' old residents, the property managers claimed they had the support of the local majority.

> 'I know we could not have 100 percent satisfaction. So, we did not feel surprised about those protests. Those old residents were very stubborn. But their protests meant nothing to us… Because most local families supported us…We followed the petition's arbitration process, and also listened to local residents' advice, to improve our services. So, the majority paid us back, as they trusted and supported us'.

> (N-N-M 2)

Despite these positive points, the property managers insisted that there was no 'general' change among local residents' mutual connections, as the split between older residents and newer residents was the same as when the PMC was appointed into this estate. As N-N-M2 stated, 'some old neighbours often visited us, to give

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us some suggestions on services, and some of their friends joined in…but, newer families mostly visited us individually and occasionally'. These perceptions of local neighbourliness paralleled the petition initiators' descriptions, and further confirmed that the divide between new and old was deeply rooted in the neighbourhood. Nevertheless, one significant change can be noted. As N-N-M1 summarised, 'after the petition, we knew each other and had trust with in each other. They became our reliable friends on this estate'. Within this degree of 'mutual trust', the petition initiators' role was praised as being 'influential' in the local neighbourhood,

> 'After the petition, those petition initiators became more influential in their neighbourhood. As I observed, residents were willing to have discussions with them and listen to their ideas…Their influence meant a lot to us, as it supports us, as they can help us in explaining services we provide to the residents'.

> (N-N-M1)

Based upon the arbitrators' return visits to No. 20 Estate, their 'expected' results from petition arbitration 'immediately' emerged with the improving relationship between the local neighbourhood and the PMC. Although there still occurred some small protests, the general conditions of local neighbourhood life were defined as in the 'right order' within the arbitrators' definition. As N-N-A1 stated, 'as we expected, the residents engaged well with the PMC, and their relationships improved…The small protests cannot tell us anything, as the neighbourhood was in the right order, and most residents supported the PMC'. From the arbitrators' perspective, such a 'right order' in the neighbourhood was vital to the whole city, and was especially important in maintaining social stability. However, even with knowledge about a remaining neighbourhood split, the arbitrators did not regard this as a 'big issue' to the neighbourhood development.

> 'I had a duty to ensure everything was fine there. There cannot be any more problems…Totally no need to focus on their split. That meant nothing. New residents cannot get along with those old neighbours. Such a condition is quite popular, at this time, but it is not a big deal to the society'.

> (N-N-A2)

With regard to these key actors' perceptions of the end of the petition, all of them pointed to the emergence of rising civic awareness and participation in neighbourhood activities. However, the local split among old residents and new

residents remained. Mostly, local organisational social networks were more highlighted by those old residents, within their groups, whilst individualistic lifestyle was still the main theme of new families, with limited desire to form neighbouring connections. Again, perhaps this could be linked to cultural or ideological differences between generations. However, the experience of No. 20 Estate indicated the replacement of place-based ties in new family life, which tended to be individualistic and anonymous. The individual social capital owned by the petition initiators was significantly enhanced based on their extended connections with multiple stakeholders. With a certain reflection of local leadership, their new individual social capital had been used as bridging capital between the local neighbourhood and the PMC.

8.3.5 Synthesis of changes through the petition in No. 20 Estate

As presented in Figure 8.4, some changes within the estate and the local connections that existed therein emerged clearly. However, by reference to the conceptual model, some presumed changes potentially or ambitiously emerged; and, some of them did not emerged.
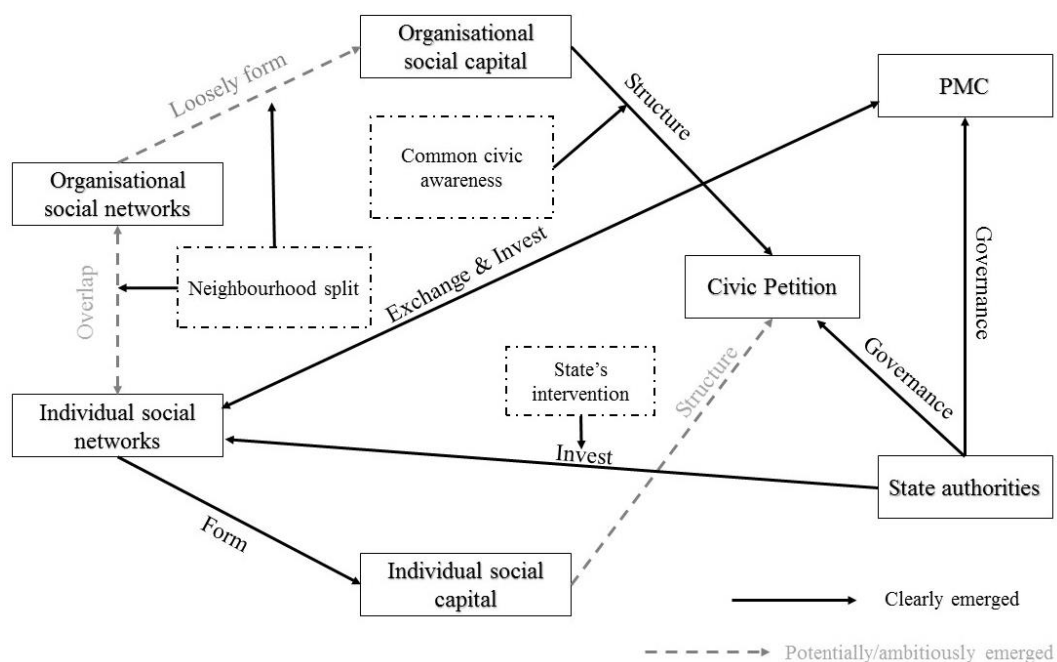
Figure 8.4 Changes in local neighbourliness in No. 20 Estate by interviews
Source: Son and Lin, 2008; Author

From the petition's origins onwards, the local residents utilised, to some degree, an application of their organisational social networks to structure their actions and the petition. Even though loosely knitted, the local organisational social capital was

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used as a local civic capacity to confront the PMC. There was, however, a split between old families and new families living on the estate. With regards to this split, the applications of loosely knitted organisational networks could be understood as being oriented by the local majorities' civic awareness to achieve their common good. Such a contingent formation of local organisational social capital continued its application during the petition process, with intergroup cooperation between the local residents. However, this intergroup cooperation did not have any essential impact on the resource exchange between the multiple stakeholders, because of the state's influence and interventions. To a certain extent, the trade-offs in producing the final arbitration were limited and only existed between these key actors. Having no investments from resource exchanges, the applications of organisational social capital had no impact on the development of local organisational social capital nor on the existing neighbourhood split. After arbitration, the split between old and new families continued to exist and further affected local social networks.

However, positive outcomes from this petition did emerge. The individual social networks, as used by those petition initiators, experienced an extension with their in-depth involvement throughout this petition. Since the origins of the petition, except in making the proposal, the application of individual social networks seemed to be limited in structuring the petition. Indeed, it was almost not used in those collective protests. Then, within the processing of the petition, these individual social networks were clearly used in the trade-offs between multiple stakeholders, especially those in contact with the state. The application of individual social networks in the trade-offs became investments into their personal social networks, and further raised their personal influence in the local neighbourhood. This enhanced individual social capital had proved to be effective in bridging the gap between local residents and the PMC.

8.4 The case of Pudong Estate, Huai'an city

8.4.1 Review of the petition

Pudong Estate is a CCHE that is located in the urban inner fringe area of Huai'an city, (see Figure 8.5). It was planned and built in 2001, and was all sold out in 2003. This estate was designed with 68 residential buildings including 820 apartments, and some bystreet stores were designed surrounding the estate. By 2016, as

documented by Huai'an Municipal Bureau of Urban-rural Construction, nearly 12% of all apartments in this estate had been transferred to new families, and over 20% of all apartments were being subcontracted to the renters. This highly mixed neighbourhood condition can be related to the municipality's school zoning policy, which located one junior high school and one high school located next to the Pudong Estate since 2003 (see Figure 8.6).
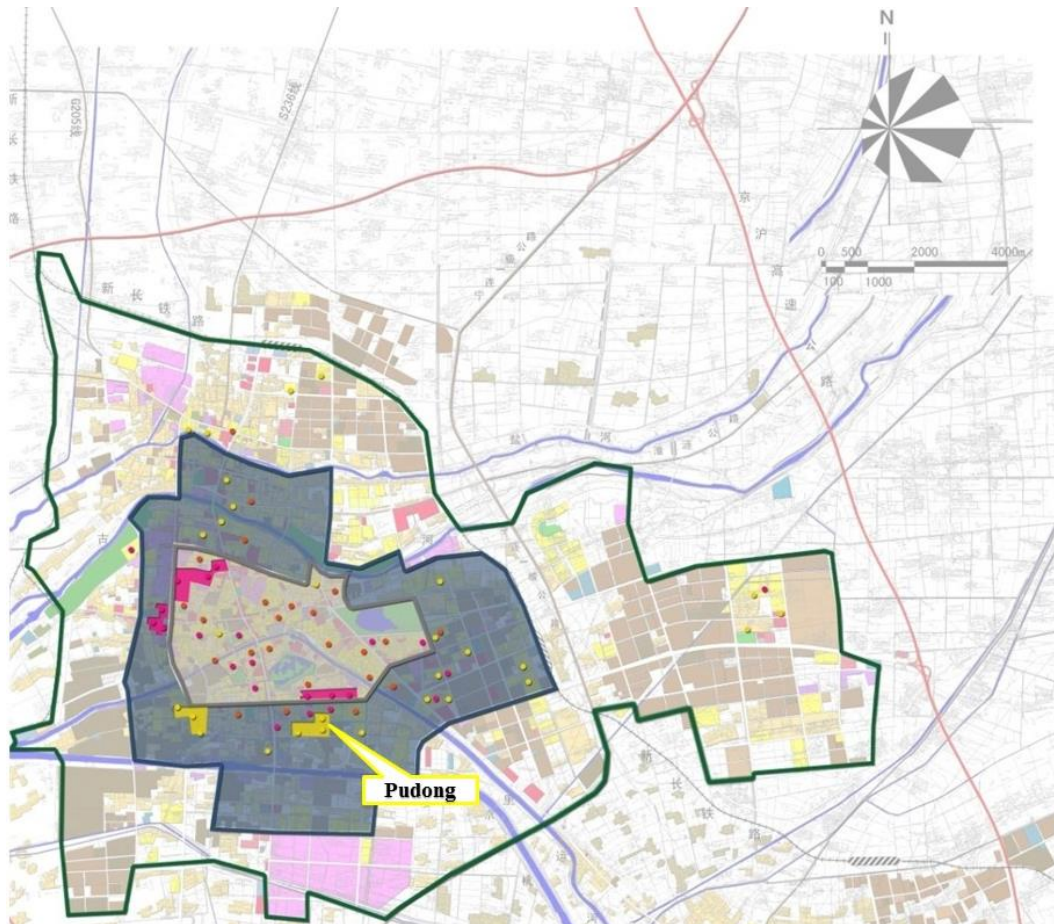
Figure 8.5 Location of Pudong Estate in Huai'an City
Source: Author

Figure 8.6 School zoning policy around the Pudong Estate
Source: Author

This petition was initially raised through local residents' collective actions against the PMC's intended decision to block the estate's western gate. In January 2015, the *Huida* PMC suddenly blocked the northern and eastern gates without any previous announcements to the residents (see Figure 8.6). Thereafter and one week after the Spring Festival, in the mid-February 2015, the PMC posted another announcement noting its intention to block the western gate to force the payment of property fee overdrafts that were owed by nearly 20% of all local households. This PMC's intended decision resulted in significant protests from local residents. In March 2015, the local HOA organised one collective meeting and there was a vote for a civic petition to dismiss the PMC. In April 2015, that petition was submitted to Huai'an Municipal Bureau of People's Letter and Visit (Municipal Bureau) with 532 local households' signatures on the document. Thereafter, the Municipal Bureau organised a series of meetings and public hearings between multiple stakeholders. In June 2015, an agreement was negotiated between the local neighbourhood and the PMC in the form of a final petition arbitration. The entire procedure of this petition, including its origins, processes, and outcomes, are outlined alongside several key issues in Table 8.3.

Table 8.3 Timeline of residents' collective civic petition in Pudong Estate

Steps	Period	Key issues with timing
Origin	January, 2015-February, 2015	(1) *Huida* PMC's actions on blocking two gates, January, 2015; (2) Residents' small-scale protests, January, 2015; (3) Residents' massive protests against the first announcement and rejection on paying the overdrafts, February, 2015;
	March, 2015-April, 2015	(1) Local residents' collective meeting on dismissing the *Huida* PMC, March, 2015; (2) PMC's rejection of residents' collective decisions with second announcement, March, 2015; (3) Local residents' protests against PMC, March and April, 2015
Process	April, 2015-May, 2015	(1) Residents' collective meeting on appealing petition, April, 2015; (2) Two meetings among civil servants from Municipal Bureau and petition initiators, April and May, 2015; (3) One meeting among civil servants from Municipal Bureau and managers from *Huida* PMC, May, 2015; (4) Two meetings among all stakeholders, and one neighbourhood collective meeting, May, 2015;
End	June, 2015-September, 2015	(1) Production of the coordinative programme among petition stakeholders, June, 2015; (2) The common agreements of the coordination programme in residents' collective meeting, June, 2015; (3) PMC changed decision on gating and majority residents' payment of relevant charges, July, 2015; (4) Three return visits by civil servants from Municipal Bureau, August and September, 2015.

Source: Author

By reviewing the petition document, several key actors were identified through a similar approach adopted in the case of No.20 Estate, as listed in Table 8.4. Three local HOA members were selected as key petition initiators, because of their important role in structuring local collective action and involvements in trade-offs among multiple stakeholders. As the local residents' petition opponent, the general manager and another assistant manager who served in *Huida* PMC were selected as key petition opponents, because of their decision-making that initially provoked the local residents' massive protests and their continual involvement in the petition

process. Additionally, two civil servants who served in Huai'an Municipal Bureau of People's Letter and Visit were selected as the key arbitrators, because of their roles in directing the administration of the petition process and producing the final arbitration.

Table 8.4 Key actors involved in the petition occurred in Pudong Estate

Petition initiators	
Resident one (H-P-R1)	Chairman in local HOA
Resident two (H-P-R2)	Vice chairman in local HOA
Resident three (H-P-R3)	Vice chairman of local HOA
Key petition opponents	
Property manager one (H-P-M1)	The general manager of *Huida* PMC
Property manager two (H-P-M2)	The assistant manager of *Huida* PMC
Key arbitrators	
Arbitrator one (H-P-A1)	The main arbitrator who processed this petition
Arbitrator two (H-P-A2)	The clerk who processed this petition

Source: Author

8.4.2 Petition origin: massive local civic participation in protests

With regard to the Municipal Government's school zoning policy in 2003, locating one junior high school and one high school next to Pudong Estate has attracted housing transfers from new residents and renters. This a typical urban phenomenon in Chinese cities, especially in the coastal cities, with the party-state's impacts on the housing market through the education system (Wu *et al*., 2016). Highly transfers and the subcontracting of apartments in Pudong Estate consequently resulted in rapid neighbourhood change, but this had limited impacts on local neighbouring ties. As described by the petition initiators, the Pudong Estate was a cohesive neighbourhood, on the basis of close social ties among most homeowners; whilst, there was 'not much' connection between local homeowners and renters. For example, as stated by H-P-R1, 'those renters did not have many contacts with our neighbours, and we also had no intention of having contact with them…because they did not stay here for a long time. Once their kids graduated, they moved out'. In fact, these renters never presented any intention of being a part of the local neighbourhood, which had been associated with the operations of local HOA and local democracy.

> 'Normally, we had our activities, organised by the HOA, such as elections, meetings, entertainment, and voting, mostly seeking democratic accountability to manage our estate…But

the renters did not care about this. They never tried to join us, to show they have any existence on this estate'.

<div align="right">(H-P-R2)</div>

In January 2015, once the northern and eastern gates were suddenly blocked by the PMC, some small protests occurred. These were mostly organised by those homeowners who frequently used these two gates. However, a majority of residents had little knowledge, and most did not react to this change. Indeed, some local residents even thought that blocking these two gates might 'improve security'. As H-P-R3 stated, 'most neighbours thought the blocking of these two gates could be good in avoiding crime, around the time of upcoming Spring Festival'.

Then, after the Spring Festival, the PMC's announcement about its decision to block the third gate, the western gate, raised common opposition from the local residents. This opposition was about the PMC's intention to lift such a blockage in exchange for repayment of overdue of annual property fees. This was clearly written in their announcement. This PMC's intention was defined as a 'threat' to the whole neighbourhood. 'The PMC wanted to make a trade-off, to exchange the payments of overdrafts with our common interest, through the blockage…Those debts were some residents' problem, not all the neighbourhood's. The intention could be definitely perceived as a threat to all residents' (H-P-R1). As a result of this, the local HOA held a local meeting. In this meeting, a consensus was reached to protest against the PMC's decision;

> 'In this meeting, most neighbours presented their oppositions to the PMC's further blockage, and exchanging our common interest for these debts…Neighbours demanded to take some action. But we thought it would be better to give the PMC a warning. That became our consensus…It was interesting, as some renters joined in, and gave their agreements...That had never happened before. Clearly, they were standing with the whole neighbourhood'.

<div align="right">(H-P-R 2)</div>

However, this warning from the local neighbourhood had no impact on the PMC. As a result, local residents organised massive protests against the PMC; 'Neighbours became very angry, as the PMC made no changes, they occupied the gate control and crashed into its office…They also wanted the whole city to know about our protests. So, some residents made live shows through social media' (H-P-R2). The petition initiators denied their involvement in these collective actions,

<div align="center">199</div>

and argued that these were 'spontaneous' occurrences. As H-P-R3 stated, 'we did not organise those protests, all happened spontaneously because of our neighbours' fury…But, we did make some suggestions to them, not to break the law, or there would be some legal risks to our neighbours'.

In fact, the petition initiators' worries were not only about the legal risks brought about by the protests, they were also concerned about the tremendous debts that were owed by a lot of local households. 'In 2014, only 72 families had not paied their annual property fees, and PMC did not react much to those debts…But, in 2015, there were about 230 families who owed money. So, it was not a small issue anymore. Furthermore, it was our collective problem and weak point for us as we were breaking the contract first' (H-P-R3). With regard to these worries, and because of the potential legal risks, the petition initiators organised an internal discussion amongst HOA members; they proposed the submission of a petition as a solution to their dispute with the PMC. This proposal was rooted in previous experiences of appeal petitions. In 2007, the local neighbourhood submitted a petition to resolve some problems with night noise from bystreet stores. As H-P-R1 stated, 'we knew how to submit a petition, and we trusted the process, as it benefited us in 2007…This could be a solution, with the state's arbitration, to reduce the risks for our neighbours'. Toward the petition concern, the petition initiators suggested to dismiss that PMC, unless the PMC made changes and the 'right reaction' to the local neighbourhood. This proposal was agreed by a vote;

> 'By this time, our HOA members had made careful considerations of the reasons for submitting a petition. Actually, we wanted a solution. So, we first started with our rejection of the blockage of the western gate…As some of our neighbours owed debts to the PMC, we also stated if the PMC made the right reaction to us, we would not dismiss it. Alternatively, we would dismiss our contract with them…Neighbours all agree with us, because their protests had generated nothing at all. They were also afraid of something else, as illegal issues in protests. Among the local residents, a lot of renters joined in that vote'.

> (H-P-R2)

From the PMC's perspective, its first blockage of the northern and eastern gates was 'reasonable', given its aim of protecting the neighbourhood; as H-P-M2 stated. The 'reasonable' blocking of these gates was in keeping with local residents' perceptions regarding the need to improve the estate's security. More generally, it may also be noted that gate blocking has become quite popular in contemporary

CCHEs' management (Huang, 2006; Douglass *et al*., 2012; Yip, 2013; He, 2015a). However, the evidence suggests that, even without these gate blockages, the crime rates occurring in the Pudong Estate were consistently under the urban average levels from 2008 to 2014, (Figure 8.7). To a certain extent, therefore, blocking the northern and eastern gates had no real effect on improving the security of the estate.

Figure 8.7 Criminal occurring rates in Pudong Estate and Huai'an city, 2008-2014
Source: Author

Before the Spring Festival in 2015, the *Huida* PMC started the collection of annual property fees from individual households. Typically, such debts are held by 10% of local households. However, level and amount of debt has increased, in 2015, as 20%. Such 'poor' collections brought a financial crisis to the PMC. As H-P-M1 stated, 'our agency's operation depended on those property fees, to pay staff salaries and the cost of maintenance…But, in 2015, the overdraft was a big issue to us, and brought great financial problem to our agency'. To deal with this situation, the PMC decided to take action. A 'strategy' was proposed by H-P-M1 to 'make a deal' with the local neighbourhood in exchange for these debts. As imaged, a deal could be made by announcing the blockage of the western gate, which would cause misery to most local residents with their daily commutes. Although some other property managers challenged this 'strategy', the proposal was finally agreed because of the 'serious' problems from those debts;

'We had our financial problems. They were very serious. So, this strategy could be a solution, and we did not really want to block the western gate. As local residents only had one gate for their daily commuting, they might pay their debts…But it was too radical. I knew it would

irritate residents. As I know, these residents were very united, they could make some unpredictable actions against our decision…But, at that time, we did not discuss this too much, but just announced the action, because we needed money.'

<div align="right">(H-P-M2)</div>

Regrettably, such a strategy' never brought down the debt, but resulted in 'unpredictable' protests organised by local residents. After the massive protests, the property managers contacted local HOA members, and received a 'warning' from local residents: 'The HOA members brought a warning to us, insisting on the removal of our decision and requiring an apology from us. Otherwise, they might adopt more aggressive actions…but they did not promise anything about the debt. So, how we could give up to them' (H-P-M1). This 'warning' from the local residents and the protests proved counterproductive and stimulated the PMC to insist on maintaining its intended blockage to protect their own interests. At the same time, however, the property managers did admit that they were in an 'awkward' situation as a consequence of their confronting the residents' massive protests. They even called for support from the local police, though state intervention achieved little:

'We had a mind not to make concessions, unless the residents paid their debts. The reason was it was supported by the contract…But, I needed to admit, we were in an awkward situation at that time. We could not stop the protests, nor did we want to yield to the residents…We called on the police for help, but nothing happened, because the residents seemed to be very insistent'.

<div align="right">(H-P-M2)</div>

By reviewing the petition's origins, the local neighbourhood in the Pudong Estate can be seen to have presented its strong civic capacity in confronting the *Huida* PMC's intention to block the western gate. There existed some densely-knit social ties among the local residents as organisational social networks within the local democratic structures was their collective norm. Furthermore, with the emergence of new participation from renters, this improved local organisational social networking acted as a means of bonding social capital in structuring the protests and the submission of the petition. Reflecting on local organisational social capital, some individual social networks, owned by those petition initiators, also seemed to be important in structuring these collective actions through the local democratic institutions. The application of individual social networks acted as bridging capital within these contacts among the local neighbourhood and the PMC. However, this

application of individual social networks was ambitious as there was no anticipated outcome from the petition initiators or the property managers.

8.4.3 Petition process: collective participation to produce resource exchange

Their past experiences in submitting a civic petition raised the confidence of the petition initiators with regard to the likelihood of their winning their campaign against the PMC. There was also a belief that the state authority would influence the PMC. As H-P-R2 stated, 'the state could affect the PMC, because of the state's authority…we believed that. That was why we believed in the petition'. In submitting this petition, the petition initiators had their first contacts with the arbitrators. They hoped that by being 'honest' with the Municipal Bureau they could avoid 'unexpected' results by not 'hiding' their faults, and also reflected their fears of the state's authority. 'We reported everything to those civil servants. Full images about our dispute with the PMC, even about those debts and the protests…We knew, we should be honest with the state, or it would be angry if we hid something' (H-P-R1). Later, following the Municipal Bureau's 'critical' investigations of their dispute, the petition initiators were requested to meet the arbitrators again. Within this meeting, the petition initiators sensed something different. As explained by H-P-R1, 'those arbitrators confirmed our statements, but were very critical…They talked a lot about our debts and protests, which all seemed to be unfavourable in their minds'. Typically, these local resident protests were labelled as 'threatening' public security and 'affecting' social stability, and the criticisms brought some pressure on the petition initiators. Moreover, the arbitrators used negative tones,

> 'Actually, the state gave us no more words about our concerns, but talked a lot about our faults, to that PMC. These civil servants defined our actions as very bad, as threatening security and affecting social stability. Their words sounded as criticism…I had a sense; they were pressuring us. One arbitrator said to me, 'why not consider a compromise, and get the whole thing resolved'. By this time, I realised, the state wanted us to make a compromise, by proactively paying off debts and stopping the protests. In fact, they were forcing us to follow their view'.
>
> (H-P-R2)

After this meeting, the petition initiators had an internal discussion. Most of them refused to follow the state's thinking directly, because of the high risks involved in irritating their fellow local residents. However, they also agreed to proceed with the petition in the hope of reaching a compromise. As H-P-R3 stated, 'we could not

make any proactive compromises, because that would be a disaster to us and result in a lot of complaints from our neighbours…However, we agreed to make some changes; at least, we could have a negotiation with the PMC'.

With this change of attitude on the part of the petition initiators, a meeting was held between all stakeholders which was organised in the Municipal Bureau. The hostility among the petition initiators and the property managers disappeared and was replaced a friendlier attitude on all sides. As a result, some misunderstandings were cleared up, and certain mutual understandings were also achieved. 'We knew that PMC had their financial problem, and that these problems were quite serious, but that cannot be the reason for making this stupid blockage…We also stated some of our difficulties, and insisted that the PMC should have some understanding of these. They presented their proposals' (H-P-R3). Apparently, this meeting between the multiple stakeholders orientated this petition in the 'right' direction, as the state expected. However, this 'right' process was almost ruined by the arbitrators' proposal to hold a subsequent meeting inside the Pudong Estate. The petition initiators' directly rejected this and presented their suspicions that this would amount to framing a 'faked relationship' between them and the PMC. From their perspective, this 'faked relationship' might 'break' the trust of the local residents towards them, the petition initiators.

> 'From that meeting, I believed we were heading in the right direction as the arbitrators expected. I thought we were not far from having a final compromise. Both sides had mild attitudes and shared a mutual understanding of each other's position...But, the arbitrators' suggestion almost ruined our discussions. They wanted to show a fake relationship between us and the PMC as very nice by having a meeting inside our estate. But, this picture could be false…If our neighbours saw this, how I could explain to them. They would not trust us anymore. So, we refused that suggestion, and insisted on having a meeting in the Municipal Bureau, or directly break up the negotiation and end in a lawsuit'.

> (H-P-R1)

Following the petition initiators' insistence, the follow-up meeting was held in the Municipal Bureau. At this meeting, an initial draft proposal emerged from the PMC; it contained concessions to the local neighbourhood. The petition initiators responded by declaring that the proposals were unacceptable. As H-P-R 1 stated, 'the PMC made some compromises, but they also insisted to us that we should collect all the remaining debts …We could not accept this, because we cannot

guarantee these payments. But the arbitrators suddenly became angry and said something as a warning to us'. In these circumstances, the petition initiators were 'forced' to have further discussions on the draft proposal and finally signed it as representing a draft programme. With their insistence, some changes were added to that draft arbitration, such as that the debts could be paid progressively with local HOA's helping the PMC gather the monies owed. Then, this draft arbitration was sent to the local neighbourhood for a local vote. To the draft programme from the arbitrators, the attending residents further specified that the future PMC's operation should form a cooperative framework with the local residents' involvement to avoid future disputes. This statement was finally added into the arbitration agreement. Then, this draft arbitration gained majority support (490 families of 637 attendant families endorsed the agreement). As a result, it became the final petition arbitration. With regards the cooperative framework required by the local residents, the petition initiators denied their direct involvement in planning or designing the statement. Nevertheless, they did confirm that they had made suggestions to the local residents about achieving 'more benefits' to the local neighbourhood through agreeing with the proposal that was voted upon.

> 'I was not satisfied with that draft arbitration. But, I could not say no, because the arbitrators pressurised us a lot…So, we insisted on having a local vote, making all the neighbours make the decision…Before that vote, I suggested the neighbours propose something, to get more benefits for the neighbourhood. But, I did not join in any discussions, and I did not know anything about the cooperative framework. Honestly, that proposal was very good. As the PMC also agreed to this, we finally agreed on that arbitration'.

(H-P-R1)

Three weeks after the submission of the petition, the PMC was invited to participate in a meeting between the multiple stakeholders in the Municipal Bureau. In this meeting, the property managers initially emphasized the challenges they faced with regards to the debts owed by some residents. In so doing they presented the PMC as the 'victim' in the petition. As H-P-M2 stated, 'we cannot deal with residents' protests and debts…So, this petition became our only chance to get what we had lost'. After this meeting, a private conversation between the property managers and the arbitrators occurred. It was suggested that the PMC should make some concessions to 'humour' the local residents, in exchange for the repayment of the debts. However, from the property managers' perspective, the state's suggestion

was also 'pressure' on them, even though there was a 'promise' of support from the state.

> 'The arbitrators suggested us to show some good intentions towards the petition initiators. They meant, we needed to make some concessions, proactively, to please the local residents…Actually, we did not want to do this. But, this was what the state wanted, and they insisted on pressuring us…In the meantime, the arbitrators also made their promises to us. They said they would help us to have a mutual compromise, and get back all the debts. So, we agreed, and we made a draft proposal'.

> (H-P-M1)

With regard to the petition initiators' direct rejection of the arbitrator's proposal to hold the second meeting inside the estate, the property managers raised their suspicions. As H-P-M 1 stated, 'it was disappointing to hear their rejections, as they were not willing to have some compromises with us…I cannot stop thinking like this, there was a sense of a breakdown in the negotiations in my mind'. Then, with regards to further 'bargains' extracted by local residents in the final vote, to the draft programme, the property managers also presented this agreement as having been confronted by state's authority. 'To achieve a final arbitration, the petition initiators changed a lot of details in our draft proposal, but we agreed because of the arbitrators' pressure…Then, the residents bargained a lot in the vote, putting themselves into our work. We agreed again because of the state pressure (H-P-M1)'.

Before receiving this petition, the Municipal Bureau had heard something about this petition through social media. The arbitrators' initial impressions towards the petition were 'not good'. For example, as H-P-A1 stated, 'the protests that happened in the Pudong Estate were widely spread through Weixin (Chinese social media), with a lot of pictures of their protests online…These were not good, and could even be seen as potential threats and risks to the Municipal Government'. However, even with such an initial antagonistic attitude towards this petition, the arbitrators insisted on maintaining their neutral roles in processing it. The arbitrators immediately had a meeting with the petition initiators, with their words on 'relieving' the residents' anger. 'Listening to the petitioners voice is a routine part of our arbitration process, and this work is always very important…Listening also means something else, as the state provides comfort to the residents, and provides a forum to release their fury and stop their protests' (H-P-A2).

Comparatively, from the arbitrators' perspective, the PMC were easier to 'manipulate' in processing the trade-offs, while the petition initiators and local residents were 'harder' because of their local 'collectivism'. Undoubtedly, within this state authority's discourse, such a comparison between local residents and the PMC captured some degrees of state authoritarianism in governing contemporary Chinese rising civil society.

> 'The Municipal Government required us to produce an arbitration outcome, to end this case as soon as possible. So, we pushed both sides, to achieve some compromise between them…In fact, it was quite easy to make the PMC follow our views…But, the petition initiators were quite difficult to handle, and these local residents were more difficult to confront, because they were very united. I saw a lot of local collectivism among them'.

> (H-P-A1)

With regards to the key actors' perceptions about the petition process, local organisational social networks seemed to be consistently and significantly used and developed. Even without direct involvement in some of the trade-offs, the local residents' social networks were used because of the high overlap between the petition initiators individual social networks and local organisational social networks. Furthermore, the strength of local democracy as a collective norm was also important to these applications of local organisational social capital, as was what the petition initiators and local residents did in directing the resource exchange among multiple stakeholders.

8.4.4 Petition end: enhancing local neighbourliness and increasing civic participation

After the arbitration of this petition, the cooperative framework for property management was facilitated by the participation of the petition initiators and some local residents. This cooperative framework had an immediate impact on the PMC's services. With regards to gate managements following a collective discussion, the residents concluded that they wanted to 'bringing convenience' to pedestrians and 'avoid' crimes committed by outsiders. Different types of access were allowed through each of the gates, as indicated in Figure 8.8. With regards to these changes in access points, the local residents felt they had a real say in how their estate was being managed. As stated by H-P-R2, 'our ideas were valued by the property managers, by bringing convenience to walkers and avoiding crimes from outsiders,

by monitoring access of outsiders cars…the management of the gates raised our neighbours' feeling that they were the real owners of our estate'. Significantly, the implementation of this cooperative framework between the local neighbourhood and the PMC released the mutual tension that had existed since February 2015.

Figure 8.8 New gate management after the petition
Source: Author

This cooperative framework also witnessed a rise in civic participation from local residents. As stated by H-P-R1, 'neighbours became more focused on the neighbourhood. This included both homeowners and renters…They all seemed to have a renewed sense of responsibility, in having a duty in helping to manage our estate'. As a consequence of residents' rising 'sense of responsibility', most of the property fees debts were proactively paid to the PMC. Furthermore, within this rising civic participation, neighbourhood connections also experienced growth, as indicated by the improving local acquaintances between residents. For example, as stated by H-P-R3, 'some renters joined in the discussion about the gate management, and presented their ideas. This is what they did in the petition…for example, opening the pedestrian routes through the eastern gate was renters' idea, and this was also supported by those long-standing homeowners'. Empirically, these new emergent neighbouring acquaintances and rising civic participation can be also evidenced by the increasing attendance at local meetings, which tended to be more significant after the petition and has subsequently remained quite high (see Figure 8.9). In addition, long-standing residents developed deeper connections with their neighbours and a greater degree of trust between them was established.

'The long-standing neighbours used to have close connections between themselves, and that was why we could unite with each other to protest….Now, the neighbourhood has become more united, and they have more trust in their neighbours, and are willing to help each other, because they fought together in this petition…These closer relationships means a lot to our neighbourhood, making our neighbourhood stronger than before'.

(H-P-R2)
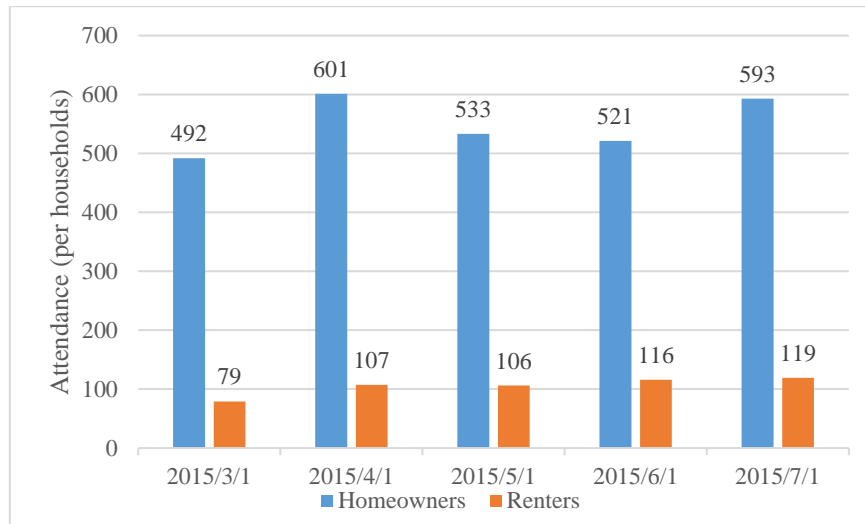
Figure 8.9 Attendance in local collective meeting, March-July, 2015
Source: Author

The improved local neighbourliness that through civic participation might indicate an enhancement of local organisational social capital and this, it is conjectured, may have been because of the petition. With regards to the emergence of a common 'sense of responsibility', local residents realised the 'power' they had from their collectivism in confronting the challenges, and this common perspective has become integrated into local democratic processes. As H-P-R1 stated, 'neighbours had a sense of their responsibility, to devote themselves to the common good…because they knew, our collectivism was powerful, and it could win any campaign'. In addition to these significant enhancements and improvements in local organisational social capital, it is also worth noting that the petition initiators also gained some personal empowerment in the local neighbourhood. Although highly overlapping with local organisational social networks, their personal social networks became extended. They also had more respect from local neighbours, property managers, and the arbitrators. Empirically, these extended individual social networks provided them with higher authority as local leaders, and could be used as an example of individual social capital that bridged the divide between multiple stakeholders within neighbourhood life,

'I had to admit that, I gained something from the petition, such as more acquaintances with long-standing homeowners and renters. I also became familiar with the PMC and the Municipal Bureau…Some neighbours said I had become a local leader, as I could moderate family conflict and bring neighbours together. Even in confronting the PMC I can moderate between the property managers and our neighbours working together…But, as local leader, it might mean too much'.

(H-P-R1)

With reference to the final arbitration, the PMC initially made apologies to the local neighbourhood within an official announcement. Then, as noted, it proceeded with the gate management scheme through the aforementioned cooperative framework. The results of this cooperation brought many benefits; as stated by H-P-M2, 'the residents provided a lot of suggestions, and most of these suggestions were quite constructive…Following these suggestions became our service, more smart and transparent, as local residents were clear of our decisions and actions, which they accepted without challenge'. Within the cooperative framework, the property managers also observed the rising civic participation of the local residents;

'The residents became more active in neighbourhood events. No matter who, long-standing homeowners and renters, all seemed to have great enthusiasm on these issues…From my perspective, these residents had more civic awareness than before, and this awareness had been a part of their neighbourhood culture. This was clearly a consequence of the petition'.

(H-P-M1)

Furthermore, the property managers also had a new impression of neighbouring connections and believed that the neighbourhood was becoming more cohesive; 'The residents seemed to have better relationships than before, because of their greater number of acquaintances…Their close relationship and cooperation during the petition continued into their daily life, through their common contacts and greater levels of cooperation' (H-P-M2). The property managers also highlighted their new 'friendships' with the petition initiators. These friendships were further regarded as 'reliable' resources for the delivery of the PMC's services, with the petition initiators being empowered to 'lead' the neighbourhood,

'Clearly, we had new friendships with the petition initiators. These new friendships meant a lot to the PMC, as they represented reliable resource for helping deliver our property services. Because these petition initiators have been the local leaders, the residents trusted them…Honestly, if we keep having a good relationship with them, there will be no more crisis between the PMC and the local neighbourhood'.

These positive outcomes from the petition for the local neighbourhood, were also observed by the arbitrators during their return visits to check the outcomes of the petition's arbitration. For example, as H-P-A2 stated, 'there was no fierce tension between the neighbourhood and the PMC. They were cooperating to make the estate better…As I said, they were moving in the right direction, with no more crises expected'. Although highlighting the positive achievements between the neighbourhood and the PMC, the arbitrators' perceptions of local neighbourhood integration were more focused on their concerns about social stability. This is what they consistently focused in producing the outcome through petition arbitration process. Despite their talk on 'community building', they had little knowledge of the changes that might have occurred in local residents' social networks,

> 'From my perspective, nothing was more important than social stability. This was the core issue in our work…As I said, the neighbourhood and the PMC were cooperating well, with no protest and no disputes. This was important in order to build a community there, and they have already achieved it…About other things, I just wanted to say, these residents were trying to build a peaceful community in this estate'.

<div align="right">(H-P-A2)</div>

Although they did not have many perceptions about local neighbourliness, the arbitrators emphasized their connections with the petition initiators. This may have been because these connections were used as a channel to 'supervise' the local neighbourhood. For example, as H-P-A1 stated, 'we became familiar with the petition initiators. A sort of close relationship developed between us…because we cannot know everything from several visits. So we contacted the petition initiators to know things about the neighbourhood, for supervising that neighbourhood'. From such comments it can be deduced that the petition initiators had become key resources for the state in maintaining local social stability in the Pudong Estate. The arbitrators also suggested that there had been some extensions in the petition initiators' social networks, and also confirmed that there had been an increase in their personal empowerment;

> 'These petition initiators became very powerful in keeping stability there. Because they had influences on their neighbours. Those influences certainly come from the petition…They were also the bridges between us and the local neighbourhood. So it was between the PMC and local neighbourhood. As I said, they became the local leaders'.

It can be seen, therefore, that with regard to the key actors' perceptions as to the outcome that arose from the petition's end, local social capital in the Pudong Estates was viewed to have significantly improved. Residents' increased intergroup cooperation within the petition improved their social networks. Furthermore, rising civic participation suggested the application of improved organisational social networks as bonding social capital in the local neighbourhood's normal life. In addition, it is worth noting that extensions of the petition initiators' individual social networks were confirmed, and this was associated with them being more empowered with leadership roles. The development of their individual social networks helped link the local neighbourhood with multiple stakeholders.

8.4.5 Synthesis of changes through the petition in Pudong Estate

Given the comments made in the previous section, the changes occurring through the petition can be clearly concluded, as indicated in Figure 8.10. With reference to the designed conceptual model, some changes in local social networks clearly emerged, while some ambitious or potential changes also emerged.
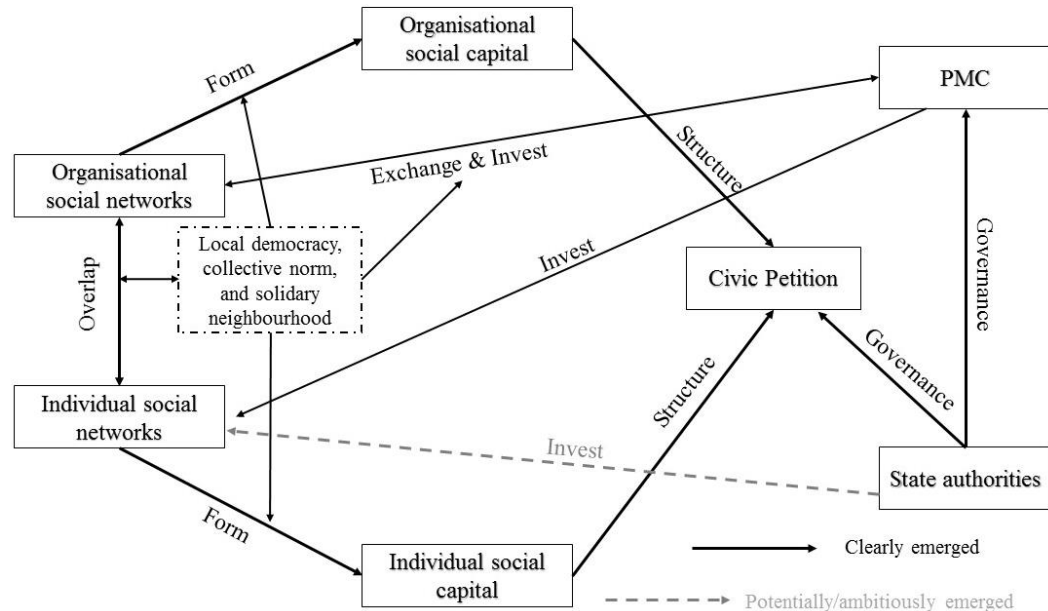
Figure 8.10 Changes in local neighbourliness in Pudong Estate by interviews
Source: Author; Son and Lin, 2008

Local organisational social networks proved to have great capacity in structuring the protests and the petition against the *Huida* PMC. Clearly, the application of these organisational social networks formed into bonding social capital as part of the petition's origins. This application was significantly linked to the homeowners'

acquaintances, common faith in local democracy, and common civic awareness of collective interest, which all seemed to be long-standing context in the local neighbourhood. Also, there emerged the renters' civic participation in local collective actions. These local organisational social networks were capable of influencing the petition, and this brought back benefits to the local neighbourhood. After the petition, these local organisational social networks became denser and more extended, and took the form of more enhanced local organisational social capital.

It is also the case that the individual social networks, as maintained by the petition initiators, were consistently used through this petition. The importance of these individual social networks emerged through the contacts between multiple stakeholders. In addition, the individual social networks highly overlapped with local organisational social networks. Such overlapping, to some extent, constrained the dominant applications of individual social networks in the trade-offs. However, these improved individual social networks had been used in bridging the local neighbourhood and the PMC, with reflections of personal empowerments.

Such changes may indicate some creation or re-formation of place-based community life in the Pudong Estate. Certainly, strong local democracy and solid neighbourliness among long-standing homeowners had already captured some degree of community life on this estate. Moreover, through this petition, local social capital was significantly enhanced and improved, especially with regards to new emergent civic participation and increased neighbourhood contacts from the renting householders. It is reasonable to conclude that this petition promoted a more integrated community-based neighbourhood.

8.5 Local residents' reflections on the impacts of the petitions on the community formation

In seeking confirmation of the conclusions noted above with regard to both case studies, the author delivered questionnaires to local households to further probe whether any changes had occurred in local neighbourhood cohesion because of the two petitions. 42 households (47 delivered) were interviewed in No. 20 Estates, and 87 households (96 delivered) were interviewed in the Pudong Estate.

8.5.1 Changes in local civic participation

As indicated in Figure 8.11, 80% of all the interviewees (over both cases) acknowledged their understanding of the causes of the petition. Despite this common knowledge, the active participation of the sampled households was lower in the No. 20 Estate compared than in the Pudong Estate (see Figure 8.12). This numerical difference in individual participation in the petition was mirrored by the interviewees' confirmation as to whether their signature appeared on the petition document. As indicated in Figure 8.13, 62.5% of sampled households confirmed their signature in the case of No. 20 Estate, whilst over 90% of respondents confirmed that they signed the petition in the case of the Pudong Estate. These different levels of civic participation rates paralleled the key actors' perceptions of the role of local organisational social networks in structuring the two petitions.
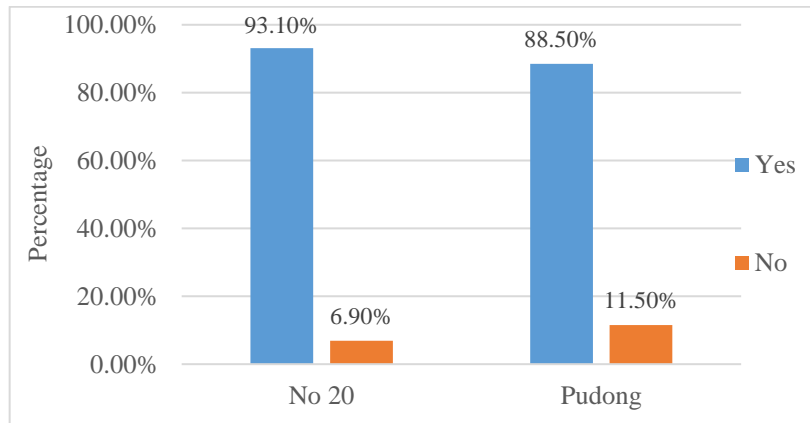
Figure 8.11 Sampled households' knowledge of the disputes between neighbourhood and PMCs
Source: Author
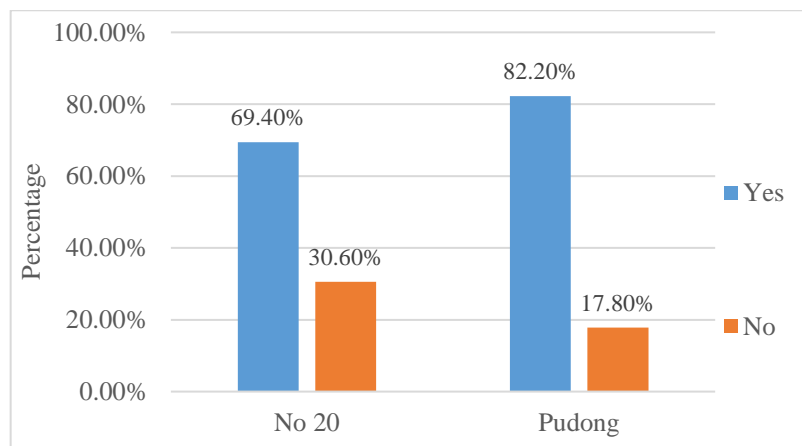
Figure 8.12 Sampled households' participation in the protests against PMCs
Source: Author
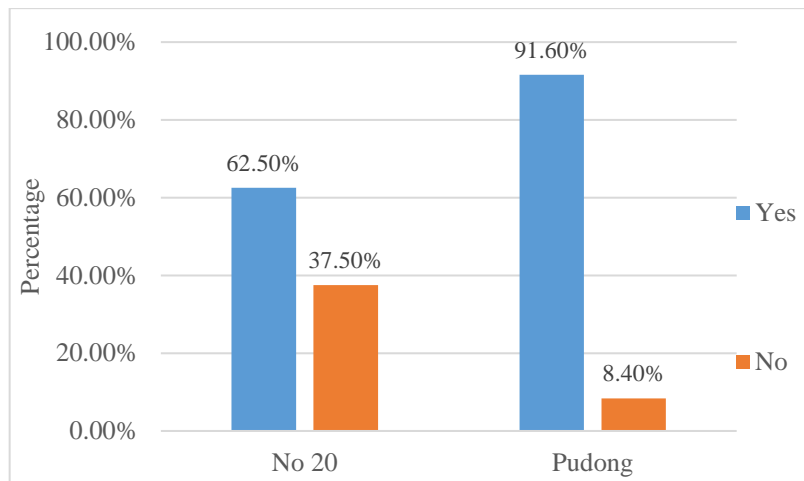
Figure 8.13 Sampled households' signatures on the petitions against PMCs
Source: Author

With regards to key actors' perceptions of the outcomes of the two petitions, it was argued that there was rising civic awareness and increased participation from local residents. Nevertheless, between the two cases, different perceptions emerged. With regards to the No. 20 Estate, it was felt that the rising civic participation was more oriented to realising individual rights. There seemed to be limited common value or collective norms between the older and newer residents in this local civic action. In contrast, in the case of the Pudong Estate, the common rise in civic participation was considered as being integral to the development of local democratic structures, and to have been facilitated by a collective norm concerning the neighbourhood development. These different perceptions from key actors were certainly confirmed by the resident interviewees and their intentions with regard to participating in any future civic actions. As presented in Figure 8.14, those sampled households who lived in Pudong Estate indicated a greater intention to potentially be engaged in future civic actions.
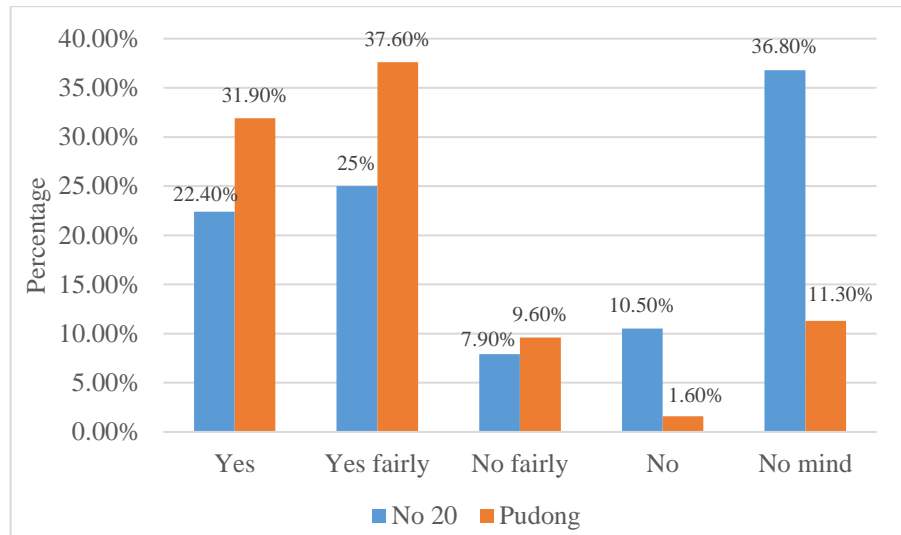
Figure 8.14 Sampled households' intentions to participate in future civic actions
Source: Author

8.5.2 Changes in the local neighbouring acquaintances

Despite these different reflections, it was felt that the petitions brought changes into the local neighbourhood, physically and socially, and these changes further affected the level of local neighbourhood acquaintance. For example, with regard to the case of the Pudong Estate, the arbitrators suggested that the changes were having far-reaching impacts on the local neighbourhood. Local residents also reflected on their perceptions (Figure 8.15). In the No. 20 Estate, half of all sampled households expressed a view that they were uncertain as to whether any changes in community cohesion could be attributed to the petition. However, in the Pudong Estate, over 70% of all sampled households felt that changes to the community were a direct result of the petition. Undoubtedly, these significant differences between the two cases illustrate local residents' different perspectives as to whether the civic actions resulted in any changes occurring in the local neighbourhood.

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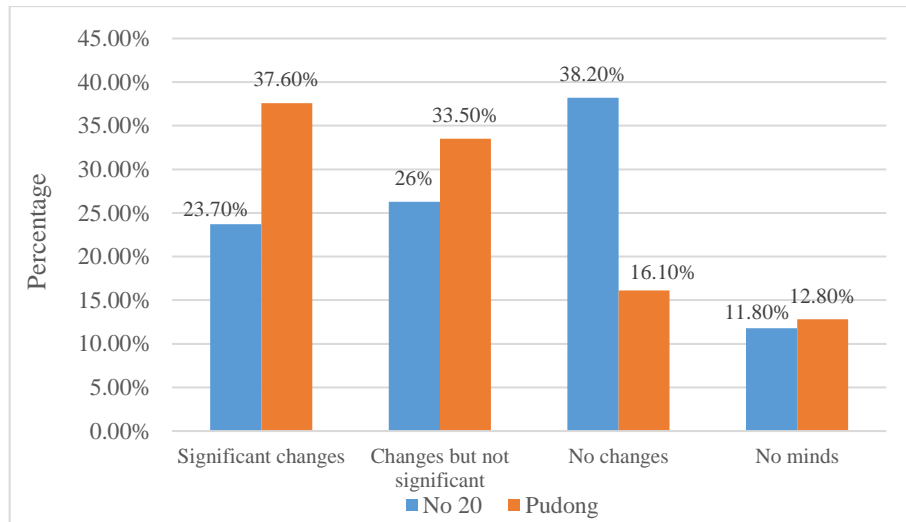
Figure 8.15 Perceptions of the changes from petitions in the local neighbourhood
Source: Author

That different perceptions existed can be further illustrated from the answers received from the sampled households with regards to the changed neighbouring relationships (see Figure 8.16). In the No. 20 Estate, nearly 70% of all sampled households were uncertain as to whether there had been any improvement in their neighbourhood relationships because of the petition; but only 31.2% of felt that there had been some improvement. In contrast, in the Pudong Estate, nearly 70% of all sampled households considered that neighbouring relationships had improved as a result of their civic participation in the petition.
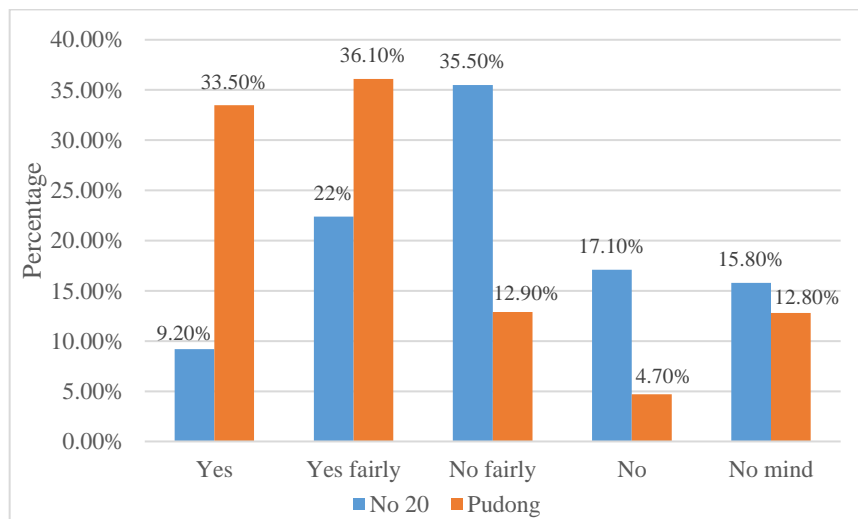
Figure 8.16 Perceptions of the petitions' impacts on improving neighbouring relationships
Source: Author

8.5.3 Specific changes in local social capital and social cohesion

The sampled households' different reflections on the extent to which improved neighbouring relationships were attributable to the petition process raised further

questions about the petitions' impacts on local social capital. Figure 8.17, highlights the differences between the two cases in relation to sampled households' reflections on the changes that occurred to their neighbourhood attachment because of the petitions. Over half of all sampled households presented their support for the concept that there had been increased neighbourhood attachment because of the two petitions, 51.2% in the case of No. 20 Estate and 61.7% in the case of the Pudong Estate. It is worth noting that, with regards to the No. 20 Estate, the small majority might be linked to the long-standing ties among many more established residents. With regards to the Pudong Estate, 61.7% felt that there was now greater social attachment to the neighbourhood. These reflections paralleled the key actors' perceptions concerning the petitions' impacts on enhancing and extending the local organisational social networks.
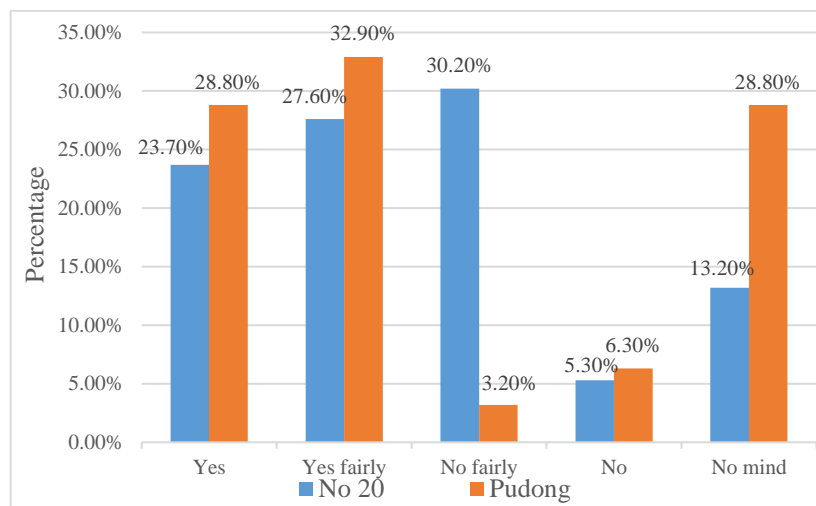
Figure 8.17 Perceptions of the petitions' impacts on promoting neighbourhood attachment
Source: Author

These positive developments in local social capital may also witness an improvement local social cohesion, as argued by Forrest and Kearns (2001). However, in the No. 20 Estate, less than 37% of all sampled households suggested that there had been any positive improvements in local cohesiveness as a result of the petition (see Figure 8.18). In Pudong Estate, over 75% of all sampled households confirmed their sense that a more cohesive neighbourhood had developed because of the petition. Apparently, the long-standing neighbourhood contexts, such as the neighbourhood split in the case of No. 20 Estate and local majorities' acquaintances in the case of Pudong Estate, both proved their significant roles in affecting the formation of a cohesive community through the civic petition.

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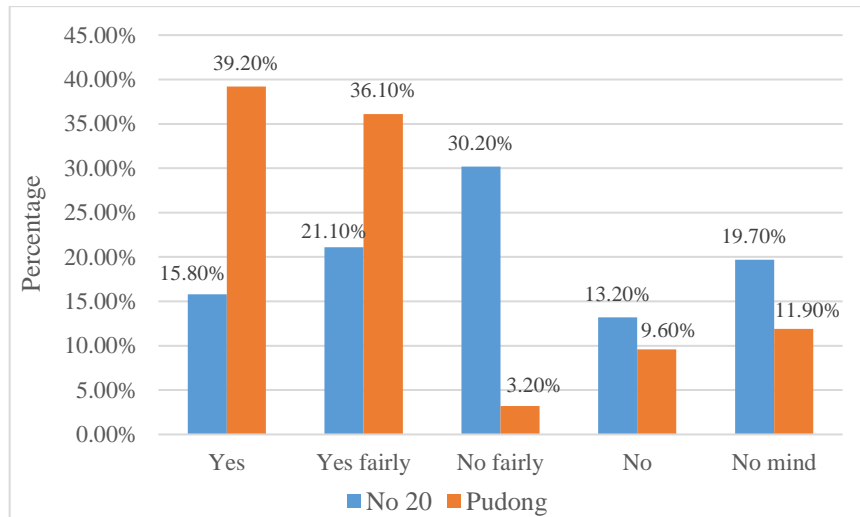
Figure 8.18 Perceptions of petitions' impacts on neighbourhood cohesion
Source: Author

8.6 Conclusion:

Within the same research ground, as the hybrid petition against PMC, these two embedded case studies, on the basis of interviewing key actors and questionnaires to local residents have illustrated a series of changes that have occurred in the local social capital and social cohesion, as the consequence of the two petitions. Comparatively, these changes shared some similarities, as both reflected local civic capacity in structuring civic petitions and some of the outcomes from the petition, such as increasing individual civic awareness and participation in neighbourhood activities could be seen as positive outcomes. In addition, the personal empowerment of the petition initiators might be considered positive in promoting neighbourhood connections.

As illustrated in Table 8.5, with regards to the key themes about urban community development, change through two petitions in local social capital and social cohesion are compared and contrasted. Those changes that have occurred through the petition might not have led to any significant impact on the formation/reformation of place-based community life in No. 20 Estate. Significantly, the split between old and new families continued to exist and further affected local social networks. In contrast, changes that have occurred in the Pudong Estate indicate some creation or re-formation of place-based community life. It is undeniable that strong faith in local democracy and solid relationships among long-standing homeowners had already helped engender some degree of community life on this estate. However, through this petition, local social capital has been

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significantly enhanced and improved, especially with regards to new emergent civic participation and increased neighbourhood contacts from the renting householders. To a certain extent, in the case of Pudong Estate the petition seemed more influential in enhancing local neighbourhood-based community development compared with the case of No. 20 Estate. Such different levels of community formation can be related to different mechanisms through which the local organisational social networks were affected and developed in these two petitions. Undoubtedly, the various long-standing neighbourhood contexts, such as residents' acquaintances, faith in local collective norms, individualistic consciousness, and mixtures of housing tenures, were all important factors in influencing these presumed mechanisms.

Table 8.5 Formation of urban community in No. 20 Estate and Pudong Estate

Concepts	Domains	No. 20 Estate	Pudong Estate
Social Capital	Civic participation	Increasing civic awareness on PMC's services, but more oriented by individual interest	Increasing civic awareness and participation, with collective focuses on neighbourhood
	Supporting networks and reciprocity	Limited supporting networks and reciprocity, as mostly remained as before;	Improved supporting networks and reciprocity, with cooperation among property owners and renters;
	Collective norms and values	No significant emergences of collective norms and values;	Consistent highlights on the local democratic institution;
	Trust	Limited mutual trust among neighbours;	New emergent trust among neighbours, especially among property owners and renters;
	Empowerment	Individual's unclear empowerment;	Individual's empowerment in local democratic institution and cooperative programme with local PMC;
Social cohesion	Common value	Limited emergence of local common value;	Common value on the neighbourhood collective interest;
	Social order and social control	No significant disputes among neighbours, but some different opinions remained;	No significant disputes among neighbours;
	Social networks	Loose social networks among neighbours, even those old families	Densely-knit social networks through intergroup cooperation
	Place attachment and identity	Improved neighbourhood attachment, but no clear signals of individual's place identity	Highly improved neighbourhood attachment, and certain sense of community

Source: Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Robinson, 2005; Dempsey *et al*., 2010; Author

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Chapter Nine

Research Findings and Policy Recommendations

9.1 Introduction

This chapter brings together the research findings from the multiple case studies. Initially, through the case studies, I critically discussed the impacts of property-led civic petitions on community formation in Chinese Commodity Housing Estates (CCHEs). Based on these comparative discussions, some internal and external factors are identified as having different influences on various mechanisms that contributed to the level of community formation achieved within the case studies. Then, based on these research findings and with a view to enabling further research, the conceptual model is revised so as to further explain the civic petitions' impact on local social capital. Finally, some policy recommendations are suggested for the further community development in CCHEs.

9.2 Research findings from multiple case studies with embedded cases

9.2.1 Critical definitions of the community formation within case studies

The four case studies comprised two protest petitions against state authorities and two hybrid petitions against property management companies (PMCs). The case studies exhibited, as noted in previous chapters, various changes to local social capital and social cohesion. As presented in Chapters Seven and Eight, based on the empirical evaluations, greater community-based local social capital and social cohesion emerged in those CCHEs through property-led civic petitions. The empirical results generally paralleled the theoretical presumptions associated with the conceptual model, that there was a mutual influential mechanism between local social capital and civic action. However, it is worth noting that there also emerged different levels of community formation in each of the cases.

Table 9.1 Comparative conclusion of community formation in case studies

Cases		General definition	Key issues through petitions
Protest petition against state authority	Case of Lilian Estate, Nanjing City	Reinforced social capital within local democracy; More cohesive neighbourhood;	1) Densely-knit social networks among long-standing families and new families; 2) Common perceptions of local democracy as collective norm; 3) Increased civic participation; 4) Individual increased sense of belonging and attachment;
	Case of Greenland Estate, Huai'an City	New emergent social capital within informal organisation; New emergent cohesion among some families;	1) Prosperity of local social activities in the new public space; 2) Institutionalisation of local meeting; 3) More acquaintances among local residents who participated in social activities and local meeting; 4) New emergent local leaders in local neighbourhood;
Hybrid petition against PMC	Case of No.20 Estate, Nanjing City	No clear changes in local social capital; Fewer families' conflicts;	1) Remaining split between old families and new families; 2) Rising civic participation; 3) Common trust developed between local residents, the PMC and local HOA;
	Case of Pudong Estate, Huai'an City	Reinforced local social capital with extended social networks; More cohesive neighbourhood;	1) Renters' new connections to the local residents; 2) More renters' participation in local associational life; 3) Residents' participation in the PMC's works;

Source: Author

Table 9.1 provides a synthesis of each of the case studies presented in the previous two chapters, and illustrates the critical dimensions of community formation through those property-led civic petitions. From the data it can be concluded that all the civic petitions possessed some similar promoting mechanisms for changing local social capital and social cohesion. Within these common mechanisms, local organisational social networks both experienced extension and became more densely knitted together. This provided the mechanism for forming and improving local social capital and bonding between local residents. In addition, the petition initiators' individual social networks also improved; they became more empowered in bridging the gap between different local groups and multiple stakeholders.

Furthermore, with regard to these common mechanisms, the local residents reflected traditional Chinese collectivist neighbourhood cultures – those, noted in Chapter Two, as having hitherto been used in the period before the Chinese reform era to form communities in traditional urban courtyards and socialist workers' villages (Ahlbrandt, 1984; Abramson, 2006; Huang, 2006).

There were also significant differences between the cases in terms of the changes that occurred in local social capital and social cohesion. The cases which were protest petitions against state authorities were more productive in promoting local community formation compared to those that involved hybrid petitions against PMCs. For example, in the case of the Lilian Estate, the protest against the local Residents' Committee ultimately resulted in new emergent trust, an increased sense of belonging, more faith from the residents in the local collective norm, and newer families' ties to the local neighbourhood being strengthened. In the same way, in the case of the Greenland Estate, there also emerged, through the petition, new local organisational social networks and local collective norms. In contrast, the hybrid petitions against PMCs exhibited less positive effects in promoting local social capital and social cohesion. Thus, for instance, in the case of the Pudong Estate, the petition's impacts mainly seemed to be that it helped to develop new social ties between renters and local long-standing families. However, in the case of the No. 20 Estate the petition had limited impact in promoting local social networks. Indeed, as noted in Chapter Eight, the split between old households and new households remained as before, and no new organisational social network emerged.

It is possible that the different outcomes might be a consequence of the differences in the petition opponents. This would make sense if one accepts, given the comments made by the key actors as noted in Chapters Seven and Eight, that winning a petition against a local state authority brought more positive psychological gains to the local residents and with it, greater investment in the development of local organisational social capital. However, the differences between the multiple cases cannot be simply explained by reference to the different petition opponents. Instead, and with reference to the conceptual model, the differences need to be further contextualised and linked to the different applications of local social networks within the multiple steps of the individual civic petitions. As illustrated in the case studies, the different application of local social networks

was mostly because of the continued influences from various internal and external factors. It is to these aspects to which this chapter now turns.

9.2.2 Internal factors within the local neighbourhood context

With reference to the key theme of the urban community, as presented in Chapter Four, a lot of neighbourhood contexts can be influential in affecting local community formation including: the level of local neighbourhood acquaintances, the degree of local social orders, intensities of belief in collective norms, levels of empowerment, intensity of civic participation, and so on (Forrest and Kearns, 2001). From these empirical case studies, only some of these contexts presented common and significant influence. There were the levels of local neighbourhood acquaintances, faith in local collective norms, and individual civic awareness; all were long-standing contexts of the individual CCHEs. In addition, contingent factors emerged, such as the petition initiators' local leadership. Once more, all were significant and continually influenced the petitions' processes and the development of local organisational networks.

(1) Internal factor 1: neighbourhood acquaintances

Theoretically, the density of neighbourhood acquaintances should provide the foundation for the application of local organisational social networks in a civic petition (Ahlbrandt, 1984; Nesbitt-Larking and Chan, 1997; Lin, 1999; Albrechts, 2002; Steele and Lynch, 2013). It not only determines the number of local residents involved in the petition from the outset, but also continually contributes to the development of enhancing local organisational social networks during the process of a given petition. Such mechanisms were positively reflected in the cases of the Lilian and Pudong estates. The original structures of these civic petitions were based on the local acquaintances of local most neighbours, and new acquaintances were continually made between residents because of increasing cooperation and participation in the petition process through to its end. In contrast, in the cases of the Greenland and the No.20 estates, limited local networking not only negatively affected the application of local organisational social networks in the petitions' origins, but also limited the generation of new acquaintances through the petitions' processes. The existence of more individualistic lifestyles, mostly reflected by most local newer families, was also deemed to be a negative influence with regard to

producing new acquaintances through the civic petitions. To a certain extent, the different influencing mechanisms of neighbouring acquaintances could be related to the polarisation of Chinese urban society, and a deterioration in place-based ties in citizens' urban life (Deng and O'Brien, 2013; Law, 2016). As suggested by all the case studies, the number and density of local neighbourhood acquaintances seemed to be a fundamental factor in developing local social capital and promoting social cohesion through the civic petitions.

(2) Internal factor 2: faith in local collective norms

Local collective norms should provide the foundation for the application of local organisational social networks in a civic petition (Ahlbrandt, 1984; Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Dempsey *et al.*, 2011). As a common value, they can bond local residents in local organisational structures if the local majority has faith in them. In a civic petition, they may continually contribute to the application and development of local organisational social networks, and result in an increasing and enhancing faith in the petition process. These influential mechanisms were strongly reflected in the cases of the Lilian and Pudong estates. The facilitation of these civic petitions was initially based on the local majority's faith in local democratic process. The petition process exhibited increasing faith with the expansion of local organisational social networks, as demonstrated by increased resident involvement in the petition process through to its conclusion. Even in the case of the Greenland Estate, where there was initially limited resident faith in the local collective norm with the petition origins, local residents' faith grew and was enhanced because of their growing participation in the petition process. However, with regards to the case of the No.20 Estate, the limited faith of residents in local collective norms not only negatively affected the bonding between local residents at the petition's origins, but also had little or no positive impact on the development of organisational social networks. As suggested by the case studies, the intensity of local residents' faith in local collective norms seems to be an influential factor in developing local social capital and social cohesion through local civic petitions.

(3) Internal factor 3: individual civic awareness

In an urban neighbourhood, individual civic awareness means that individual attendance and concern with local events occurs, and is directly influencing

individual civic participation (Putnam, 1993, 2000; Forrest and Kearns, 2001). This should provide the motivation for individual involvement in local collective action. Indeed, it is part of the application of local organisational social networks. The multiple steps of a civic petition can also contribute to the continual development of local organisational social networks with residents cooperating and participating to achieve a local common interest or goal. These influential mechanisms were strongly reflected in the cases of the Lilian and Pudong estates, and also progressively reflected in the case of the Greenland Estate. Individual civic awareness motivated local residents to become involved in the petitions' origins through their engagement with local organisational social networks. During the petitions' processes and their conclusion, there would be enhanced individual civic awareness from residents which increases their participation in local organisational social networks. However, individual civic awareness cannot simply be defined by the changing numbers of local residents involved in the petition procedures. As indicated in the case of the No.20 Estate, the local most homeowners' participation in this petition was more motivated by individualistic consciousness on private property rights and interests. To a certain extent, this individualistic consciousness negatively affected the application of local organisational social networks as there was limited bonding between local residents during the petition's process. It also negatively affected the development of local organisational social networks because of the multiple steps of this petition. A reason for this differentiated awareness in local neighbourhood interest could be related to the rising individualistic lifestyle in Chinese urban society, and this is more readily apparent with younger households living in CCHEs (Huang, 2006; Yan, 2010; Hu and Chan, 2012; Steele and Lynch, 2013). However, as suggested by the case studies, individual civic awareness towards a local neighbourhood was commonly reflected in whether a common ideology of collectivist neighbourhood culture was held by the majority. An individual's civic awareness seemed to be a bolstering factor in developing local social capital and social cohesion through the local civic petition process.

(4) Internal factor 4: petition initiators and local leadership

When confronting the local collective concern, a petition initiators' local leadership should immediately provide the leading or pushing function on the application of local organisational social networks, through their application of individual social

networks. Having accepted a degree of personal responsibility towards the local neighbourhood, the petition initiators often used their individual social networks to structure local collective action in the origins of petitions. They also contributed to the application and development of local organisational social networks by leading local residents in framing local collectivism through the civic petition process. This influential mechanism was evident in all of the case studies. Furthermore, because of the overlap between their individual social networks and organisational social networks, these petition initiators used their continually extending individual social networks to bring different local groups into the petition process. However, regarding the development of local organisational social networks, how much positive influence these petition initiators could have was strongly dependent on the extent of their individual social networks within the local neighbourhood. As suggested in the cases of the Lilian and Pudong estates, with highly overlapping networks between individual and neighbourhood social networks, the petition initiators' growing local leadership had a more positive influence on developing local neighbourhood social networks. This was because they brought more local residents into the local collective action. However, because of the limited overlapping networks, the petition initiators in the cases of the No.20 and Greenland estates had more limited local leadership and this inhibited the development of greater local social capital and social cohesion in the neighbourhood.

(5) Co-dependent mechanisms of internal factors

It can be suggested from all the case studies that the aforementioned internal factors influenced the application and development of local social capital activated through the local civic petitions. However, it is worth noting that these influential mechanisms should not be expressed as exclusively independent; they possessed co-dependency among these long-standing contexts. For example, in the cases of the Lilian and Pudong estates, the local most homeowners' acquaintances were consistent with their faith in the local collective norms and reflections of individual civic awareness. Conversely, in the Greenland and No.20 estates, limited acknowledgement of local residents' civic awareness was paralleled by the limited faith that residents had in local collective norms. However, the petition initiators' local leadership, as a contingent factor, emerged to have growing importance through the petition process. With their personal responsibility and overlapping

networks with local residents, their application of individual social capital could promote the development of local neighbouring connections. In summary, the impact of these common internal factors took effect in a combined manner to further develop local social capital and social cohesion (as noted in Figure 9.1). Some less frequent internal factors, as reflected by some case studies, are also identified because of their connections to the common long-standing internal factors, such as individual professional backgrounds, the high number of housing transfers, and so on.
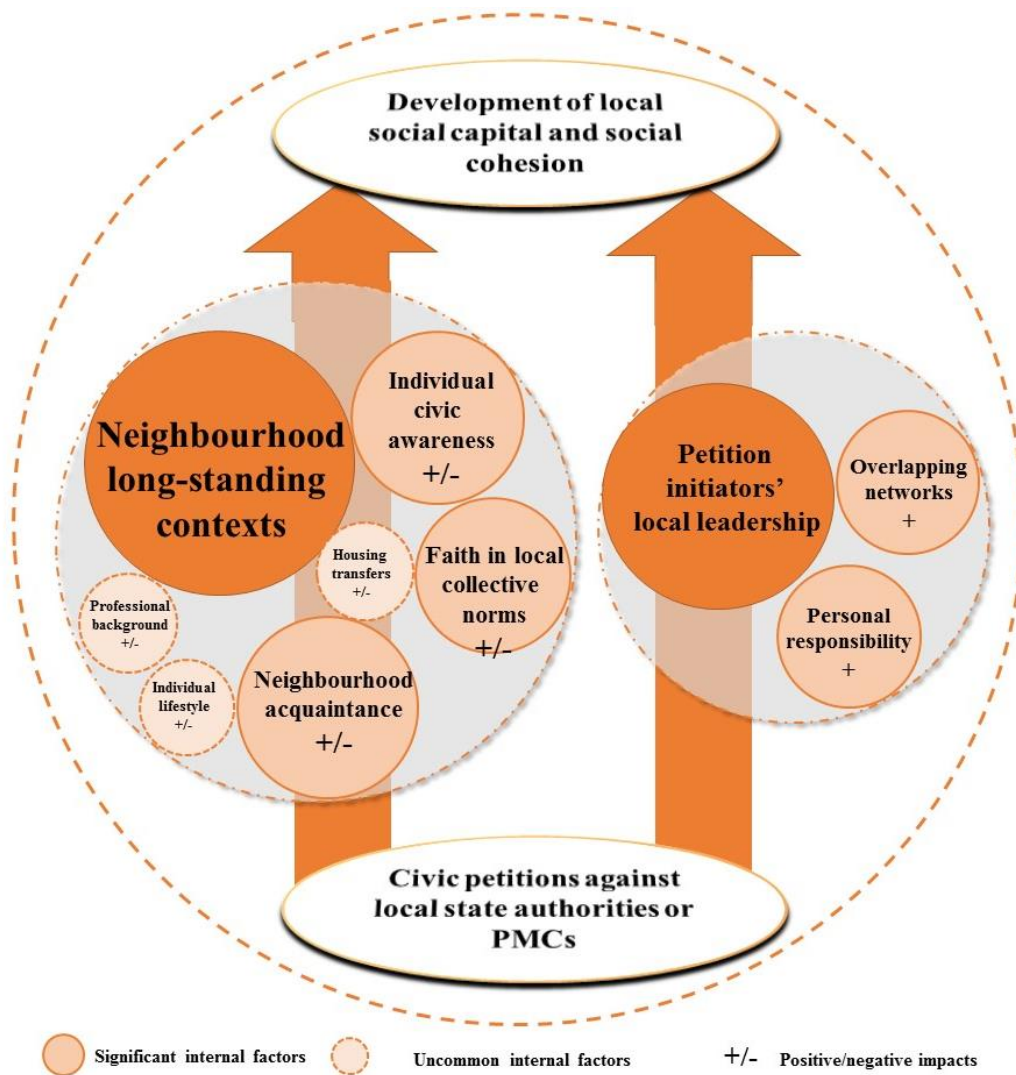
Figure 9.1 Internal factors affecting community formation through the civic petition
Source: Author

9.2.3 External factors from petition arbitrators and opponents

The involvement of multiple stakeholders can also influence changes to the development of local social networks. Those arbitrators (higher urban state authorities in all the cases) and the petition opponents (either local state authorities

or PMCs) continually interact with local neighbourhoods in the way the conflict arises, potential concession-making, and the coordinating and resolving arbitration decision outcomes (Son and Lin, 2008; Lichterman and Eliasoph, 2014). In the case studies, some of the behaviour of the arbitrators and petition opponents could be considered to be external factors that affected the development of local social capital and social cohesion. The external factors which belonged to the arbitrators included the state's authoritarian position and abundant resources – both of which are institutionalised by the Chinese urban hierarchical administrative system. In contrast, and with regards to the petition opponents, external factors included the local state authorities' and private agencies' institutional vulnerabilities and cooperation, both of which were institutionalised by the process of Chinese reform that began in 1978.

(1) Arbitrators' interventions: authoritarian positions and abundant resources

Theoretically, as the third party involved in civic actions, arbitrators' interventions should provide the coordination mechanism to impose the state's opinion into disputes between local residents and petition opponents (Son and Lin, 2008; O'Higgins, 2010; Lichterman and Eliasoph, 2014). Through this coordination, the arbitrators can organise trade-offs in proposing resource exchanges with investments into local social capital and social cohesion (O'Higgins, 2010; Lichterman and Eliasoph, 2014). However, as reflected in these case studies, this coordinating role was distorted by the arbitrators' direct interventions, which resulted in different levels of involvement by local residents and their development of local organisational social networks. Based on the case studies, these interventions were commonly structured by the higher urban state authorities' authoritarian position and abundant resources (including social and economic resources).

Within these case studies, the arbitrators, as the higher level of urban state authority in the cities (Municipal or District governments, or the Municipal and District Bureaus of People's Letter and Visit) mostly expressed their unchallenged authority through their direct interactions with multiple stakeholders in the petition. This strong expression of the state's authoritarianism had the explicit and implicit influence of restricting the application and development of local organisational social networks in the petition processes. In the No.20 Estate, the arbitrators'

pressure on the petition initiators and local retired residents directly excluded most local homeowners' involvement from making resource exchanges. This suppression limited the investments from the intergroup cooperation among local different groups to the development of local organisational social networks. However, the arbitrators' imposing interventions was not deemed to have the same influential mechanism in restricting the local majority's engagement. With reference to the Pudong Estate, because of the arbitrators' intervention with a strong authoritarian, the local residents' proactive participation was stimulated. Their proactive involvement brought more application of local organisational social networks in those trade-offs, and consequently promoted the development. Such a stimulating influential mechanism could also be found in the case of the Lilian Estate. By considering current Chinese contexts, it can be seen that the state's authoritarian image was commonly expressed by higher urban state authorities in managing the grassroots civic actions (Roy, 1994; Tang, 2001; Deng and O'Brien, 2013; Duckett and Wang, 2013; Zeng, 2014; Peter, 2015; Fu and Distelhorst, 2018; Hou *et al*., 2018). As suggested by all the case studies, state authoritarianism seemed to be crucial in all the petitions, negatively or positively influencing the application and development of local social networks.

In the case studies, these petition arbitrators also made promises and provided compensation to achieve the final coordination and arbitration. These promises and compensation were funded by the higher urban state authorities' abundant resources, such as political resources and economic resources. The delivery of the state's resources into local neighbourhoods can have positive influences on the development of local organisational social networks. This influential mechanism was strongly reflected in the cases of the Lilian and Greenland estates. The compensations from several District Governments raised the local residents' feeling as winning their civic action, with psychological gains that were positive to enhance their social networks. In addition, and with regard to the cases of the No. 20 and Pudong estates, there were some promises made by those higher urban state authorities to the local neighbourhoods. Significantly, those promises also brought direct investments to the local neighbourhood, and were also positive in enhancing the residents' social capital. As suggested by all the case studies, the influence of higher state authorities' abundant resources was a crucial factor in developing local

social capital and social cohesion at the end of the petitions.

(2) Petition opponents' capacity: institutional vulnerabilities and cooperation

The petition opponents' involvement in the civic action could provide a stimulus for the development of local organisational social networks because of the petitions origin (Son & Lin, 2008; Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014). Such mechanisms were commonly reflected in the case studies, although there were different outcomes because of there being different petition opponents. In the Lilian and Greenland estates, the Street Office and Residents' Committees presented their institutional vulnerabilities and these strongly motivated the local residents' in initiating and structuring their civic petitions. In contrast, in the No.20 and Pudong estates the institutional deficiencies of the private agency PMCs were the catalyst for local residents' collective claims and protests. The PMCs' institutional vulnerabilities seemed to have a strong influence in stimulating the mobilisation and development of local organisational social networks in the petitions' origins. These PMC institutional vulnerabilities continued to be important in maintaining the development of local organisational social networks throughout the petition processes. As commonly suggested by the case studies, the local state authorities' and PMCs' similar institutional vulnerabilities seemed to be a stimulating factor in developing local social capital and social cohesion in the origins of the petitions and, thence, in maintaining pressure throughout the whole process of the petitions.

As reflected by the case studies, the relationship between local residents and their petition opponents is not universally antagonistic in civic actions (Paxton, 1999, 2002; Roloff, 2008; Cheung and Chan, 2008; O'Higgins, 2010). At the end of the petition, the petition opponent would often transform its role into being co-operative with the local residents. This, in turn, had a positive influence in supporting the development of local organisational social networks. Typically, as reflected in the cases of Lilian and Greenland estates, local state authorities cooperated with local residents through the implementation of the final petition arbitrations. In the cases of the No.20 and Pudong estates, cooperation between the local PMCs and local residents deepened after the petitions, because of the cooperative framework which was formed to manage the local estates. This cooperative framework acted as a platform for enhanced local residents' civic engagement. However, this mechanism had different impacts on the different

estates; this was dependent upon whom the petition opponents cooperated with. When they cooperated with most local homeowners, the mutual interactions were deemed to be the investment to the local majorities' development of local organisational social networks. However, when they cooperated with those empowered petition initiators, such cooperation and interactions might have more investment to those individual social networks.

(3) Co-dependent mechanism of external factors

As indicated in Figure 9.2, these external factors had cumulatively an influence on the development of local social capital and social cohesion. However, unlike the internal factors, these external factors' influential mechanisms were not co-existing in the occurring of a civic action. Within the arbitrators' interventions in the civic petition, higher urban state authorities' expressions of state authoritarianism could have either a negative or positive influence. A similar state of affairs also existed with regard to local state authorities and PMCs. Institutional vulnerabilities related to the Chinese contemporary political and market system mainly had a positive influence on the application and development of local organisational social networks and there was also increased co-operation at the end of the petition processes.

There were also some other external factors, such as the higher state authorities' openness to grassroots civic development and connections to the local neighbourhoods, which could have factored into the community formation in the case studies. However, their influence was not common or significant.
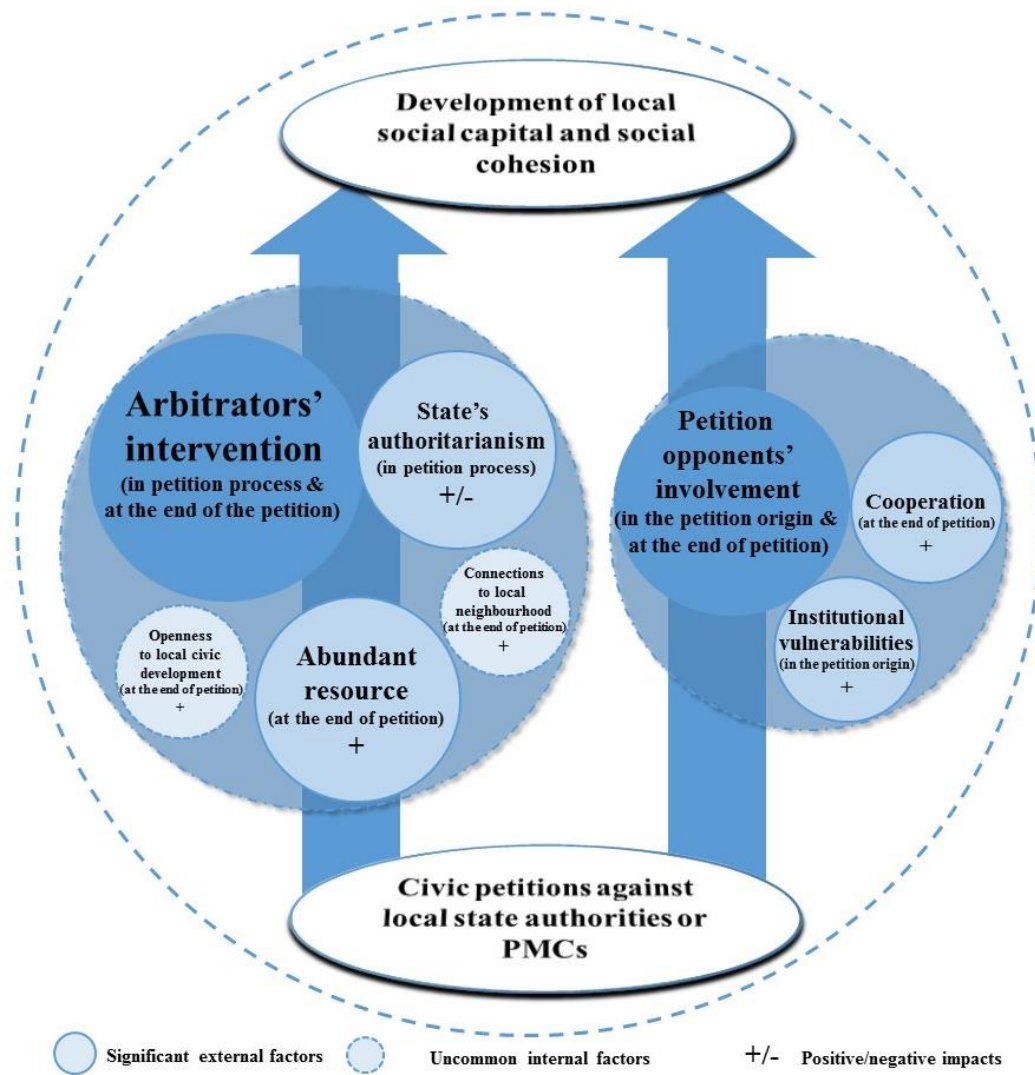
Figure 9.2 External factors affecting community formation through the civic petition
Source: Author

9.2.4 Further explanations on the conceptual model

With regard to the research findings from the case studies, especially the various internal and external factors' influencing on community formation, the conceptual model could be reorganised to provide further explanation of those civic petitions' impacts on local social capital. These impacts seemed to be fluid, potentially changing through the multiple steps of a civic petition, mainly because of the internal factors' changing attributes and influencing mechanisms. From this perspective, the conceptual model is restructured into three sections, including the petition origin, petition process, and the end of the petition.

(1) Conceptual model in the petition origin

In the petition origins, the internal factors based upon the individual CCHEs' contexts and some external factors related to the petition opponent created an co-

influential mechanism for the application and development of local social networks (see Figure 9.3). As an external factor, the petition opponents' institutional vulnerabilities could stimulate the application of local social networks, as a form of local social capital, in structuring local civic action. However, the ability to mobilise these local social networks will be different and influenced by long-standing internal factors. In a solid well-established neighbourhood, neighbourhood acquaintances of the majority, a shared individual civic awareness, and a common faith in the local collective norms can positively promote the application of local organisational social networks and organisational social capital. Consequently, these networks may be extended through more widespread local civic engagement. By contrast, if there are more limited neighbourhood acquaintances, less faith in local collective norms, and individualistic consciousness towards the local neighbourhood, then there is likely to be less application and development of organisational social networks. As a contingent internal factor, the petition initiators' personal responsibilities to the local neighbourhood can also initiate the application of individual social networks as individual social capital leading to a civic petition. With these overlapping ties with local organisational ties, the petition initiators can also have a positive influence on leading the application and the development of local organisational social networks, with their emerging role of local leadership.
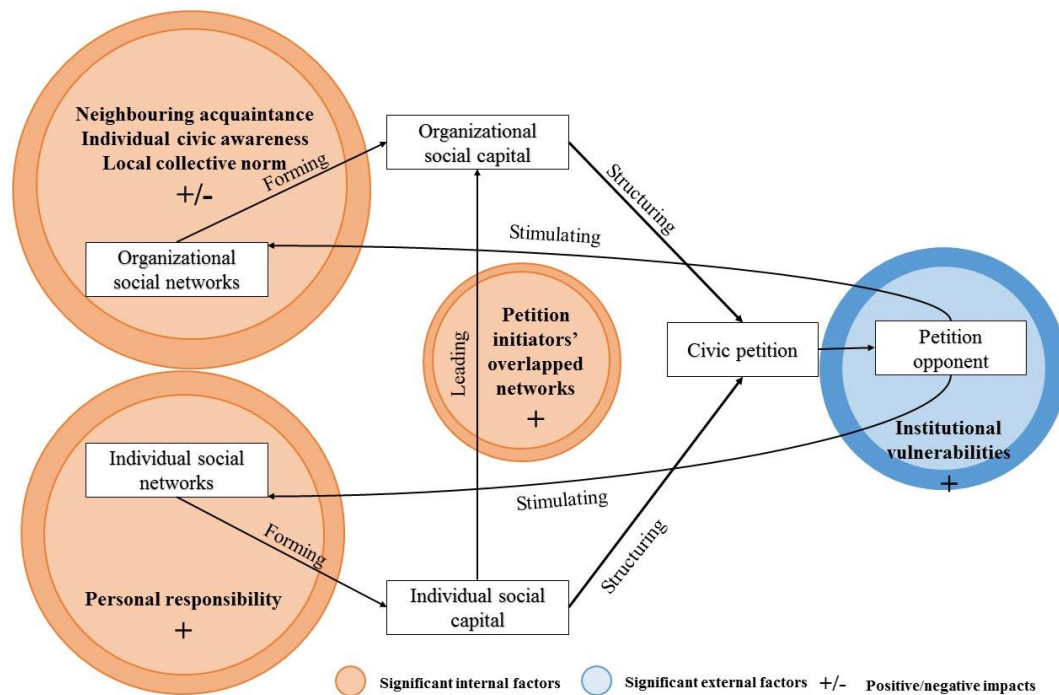
Figure 9.3 Reframed conceptual model of the petition origin
Source: Son and Lin, 2008; Author

(2) Conceptual model in the petition process

During the petition process, despite the internal factors having a continual influential mechanism, more external factors from the petition opponents and arbitrators' involvement presented their influential mechanisms on further application and development of local social networks (see Figure 9.4). Following the origins of the petition, the long-standing internal factors could have experienced improvements and enhancements. Increasing neighbouring acquaintances, greater faith in local collective norms, and rising individual civic awareness can all have a positive influence on increasing the further development of local organisational social networks. In contrast, if there were not much positive change that had occurred in the petition origin, those remaining long-standing internal factors may have restricted the further application and development of local organisational social networks. As the contingent internal factor, the petition initiators' empowerments, including rising responsibilities and extended individual social networks, can be positive in leading the development of local organisational social networks. As an external factor, the arbitrators' authoritarianism is expressed by their imposed interventions as intending to limit local residents' civic participation. The state authoritarianism can negatively affect the application and development of local social networks, but it could also have a stimulating mechanism within a solid

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well-established neighbourhood. In the petition process, the petition opponents were mostly passively involved, because of their institutional vulnerabilities. When the petition opponent was a private agency (as the PMCs in the case studies), this external factor can further stimulate the local application of organisational social networks, in the resource exchanges.
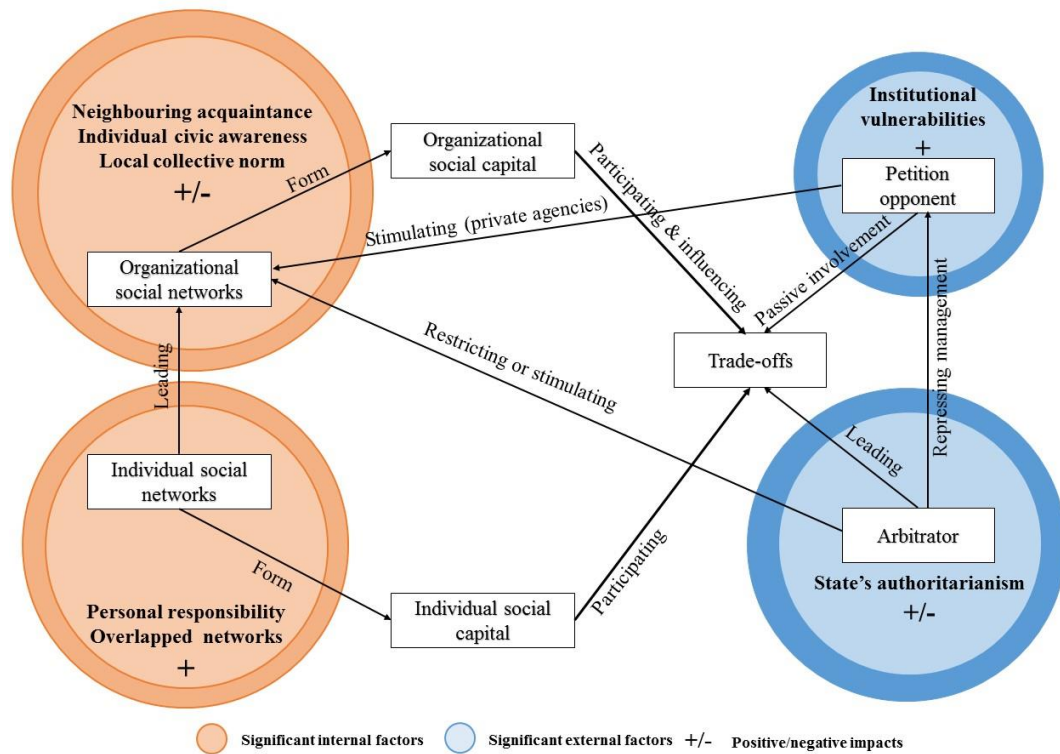
Figure 9.4 Reframed conceptual model of the petition process
Source: Son and Lin, 2008; Author

(3) Conceptual model at the end of the petition

At the end of the petition, internal and external factors from all stakeholders influence the mechanisms for the development of local social capital (see Figure 9.5). With direct investment as a result of the final petition arbitration, these further improved or enhanced long-standing internal factors should have continuing positive and influential effect on extending and knitting together more closely local organisational networks. By contrast, if the long-standing internal factors remained relatively stable throughout the multiple steps of a civic petition, then local organisational social networks and social capital would remain unchanged. The petition initiators' local leadership potential could be further enhanced following direct investment in the CCHE as a consequence of the arbitration process stemming from the petition. Their extended individual social networks in the local neighbourhood, with overlapping to the local organisational social networks, should

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be used in bonding the local residents to strengthen the local social capital and social cohesion. In addition, because of the proximity and new ties to the local neighbourhood, the petitions opponents' cooperation can provide indirect investments which stimulates local residents' potential for civic participation and promotes the further development of local social capital. However, these positive influential mechanisms can be emerged differently, because of the cooperation between local majorities or those petition initiators. Finally, the arbitrators can also have their indirect influence on the development of local social capital and social cohesion, within the deliveries of the higher urban state authorities' abundant resource into the local neighbourhood. Despite these compensations, this arbitrators' abundant resources may also bring indirect investments into those petition initiators' individual social capital, as promoting and enhancing these residents' local leadership. In sum, local social capital and social cohesion may be generally strengthened at the end of the petition, with different levels of community formations emerging in all case studies.
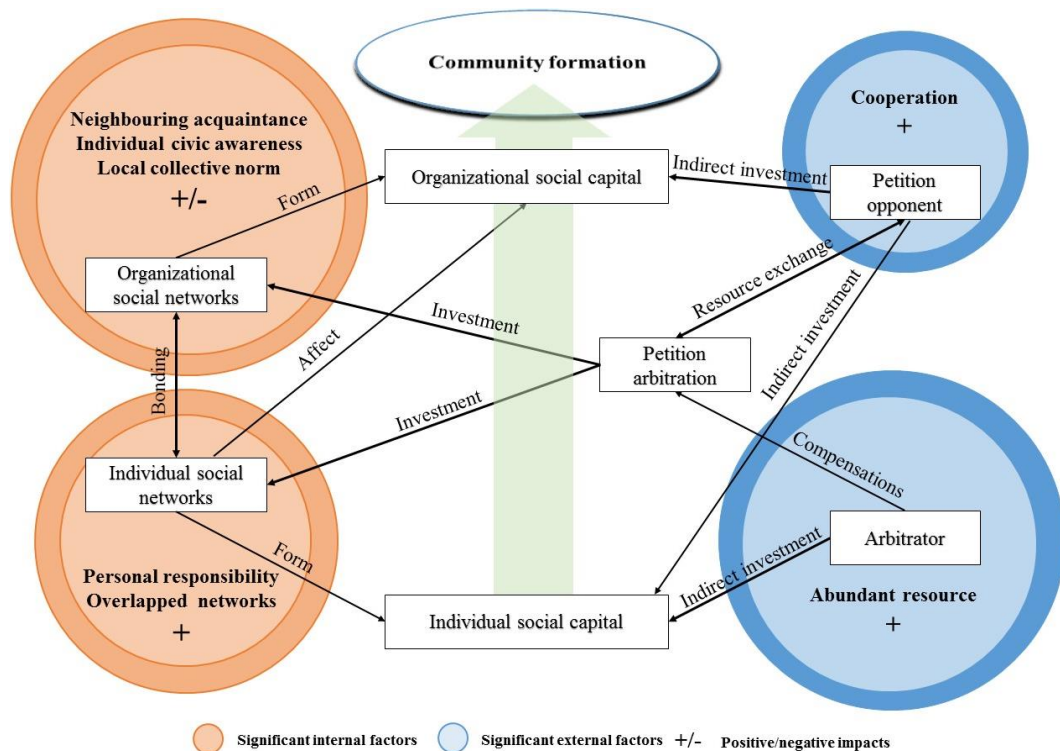
Figure 9.5 Reframed conceptual model of the end of petition
Source: Son and Lin, 2008; Author

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9.3 Policy recommendations to promote community formation in CCHEs through local civic engagement

This thesis has consistently and comprehensively explored theoretical and empirical perspectives concerning the formation of 'liveable, sustainable, vibrant, critical, and creative communities' through the local property-led civic petitions that occurred in CCHEs (Healey *et al*., 2008, p.382). The research findings confirmed the impact of civic petitions on enhancing local social capital and social cohesion, as a new reflection upon Chinese collectivist neighbourhood culture still evident in CCHEs. However, there were different levels of community formation reflected in the case studies. So far, the research findings have answered the general research aim of this thesis. Critically, within the CCHEs which have become an important part of China's urban landscape, an urban community can be formed or enhanced through local residents' civic actions.

Nevertheless, despite highlighting such research findings, there are various difficulties to really and commonly producing urban communities within new Chinese urbanism. As indicated in the case studies, internal and external factors can have negative influences on the development of local social capital and social cohesion. With the aim of further promoting community development in CCHEs, some policy recommendations are now presented.

9.3.1 Policy Recommendation 1: institutionalisation of local civic engagement at individual CCHEs' scale

The first recommendation is that there is a need to proactively promote local civic engagement in CCHEs. This institutionalisation of local civic engagement would provide more opportunities for internal interactions. This would improve residents' neighbourhood acquaintances, their faith in local collective norms, and their common awareness of collective interests.

This proposal for local institutional development re-iterates Putnam's (1993, 2000) theory of local civic engagement in urban neighbourhoods. Moreover, this policy recommendation is strongly dependent on the formal operations of local HOAs' as a local voluntary organisation which routinely organises local civic activities in the form of Community-interest developments (CIDs). This policy recommendation is already grounded in individual CCHEs where there exist common reflections on

the importance attached by local residents to the maintenance of a collectivist neighbouring culture.

If this recommendation is to be realised there would also be a need to renew relevant laws and institutions as, at present, these seem to restrict the effectiveness of local voluntary organisations to address local residents' political and social desires. At present the Property Right Law (Chinese National People's Congress, 2007) and National Code of Property Management (Chinese State Council, 2007) define the local HOA as the local self-management agency confined to property management affairs (Read, 2008; He, 2015b; Huang and Sun, 2015; Mattingly, 2016; Wang, 2016), and the local state authorities' close monitoring negatively affects the ability of these organisations to institutionally arrange local neighbourhood life (Kuang and Göbel, 2013; Fu and Lin, 2014; He, 2015b; Leggett, 2017). Both of these laws and regulations would need to be changed to further promote local social capital. In particular, the legislative definition of local HOA needs to be updated and state agents' interventions on local grassroots neighbouring life need to be reduced.

9.3.2 Policy recommendation 2: participatory planning at the urban grassroots' scale

The second recommendation is that more emphasis needs to be placed on participatory planning at the urban grassroots scale. This greater participatory approach should do more to include the grassroots in local state authorities' decision-making, such as the provision of public goods, local social development plans, and organisation of social events. These aspects are important because they are all related to local common interests. This recommendation needs to be implemented or developed among several adjacent CCHEs, in coordination with Street Offices and local Residents' Committees' jurisdictional areas. This cooperative framework between the party-state and local residents from individual CCHEs could be used for collaborative decision-making upon issues related to common interests.

There are good reasons to believe that this recommendation is practicable. First, and as noted in Chapter Six, grassroots cooperation in local civic development between adjacent CCHEs is already occurring via spill-over effects between property-led civic petitions. Second, with regard to the central party-state's

administrative reform, this participatory planning is paralleled by the proliferation of Chinese urban grassroots administration (Wan, 2015; Ye and Björner, 2018; Zhou et al., 2019). Third, participatory planning at the urban grassroots scale has been advocated in Western cities over the last two decades, with its outcomes intended to promote local sustainable development in various urban neighbourhoods (Healy, 1997; Banthien et al., 2003; Smith, 2005; Healy et al., 2008; Lawless and Pearson, 2012; Talen, 2017; Rasmussen and Reher, 2019).

9.3.3 Policy recommendation 3: The party-state should be more open to grassroots civic development

The third recommendation is to the urban higher state authorities to have more tolerant and open attitude to the grassroots civic development. As reflected by my case studies, these property-led civic petitions reflected the local residents' capacity in solving those local problems, especially those problems with market agencies. Within the petition process, the urban higher state authorities should reduce their direct interventions in those trade-offs, and leave the trade-offs to those local residents and their petition opponents. As the arbitrators, these state authorities should act as the supervisor, whether the administrators on local property-led civic actions.

There is a good reason to believe that this recommendation is practicable. To a certain extent, the higher urban state authorities have realised the property-led civic actions' contribution to their urban administration, as freed them from those increasingly complicated local disputes. There has been a contingent symbiosis within their administration on the grassroots civic action, with those governments' moderate attitudes to the rising property-led civic developments (Spires, 2011; Hurst et al., 2014; Ma and Li, 2014). There was rarely violent suppression of the residents' local civic actions, as the party-state did in the 1980s (Teets, 2014, 2015). In fact, this final policy recommendation has been, to some extent, implemented by some Chinese Municipal and District Governments (Zou, 2009; Spires, 2011; Cao and Guo, 2016; Wu and Yang, 2016; Fu, 2017b; Fu and Distelhorst, 2018; Liu, 2019). However, how much more open the party-state could be remains unknown, given the current institutionalisation of civic society (Fu and Distelhorst, 2018; Liu, 2019).

9.4 Conclusion

This chapter was designed to present the conclusions from the research based on the case study findings and then provide policy recommendations for community development in CCHEs. Based on the case studies, community formation through local property-led civic petitions were commonly emerging, reflecting the retention of a traditional Chinese collectivist neighbourhood culture remaining a strong aspect of local residents' ideology. However, community formation seemed to be processed differently in these civic petitions. A set of internal and external factors derived from multiple stakeholders were influential in the mobilisation and development of local social capital through the multiple steps of a civic petition. Based on these research findings, the conceptual model was reorganised into three parts with further explanations of the factors behind community formation through a local civic petition. Based on the research findings, some policy recommendations were provided to enhance the community development of CCHEs through local civic development and engagement.

Chapter Ten

Conclusions and future research

10.1 Introduction

This chapter draws together the major research findings and contributions to knowledge that emanate from this thesis. Four major research findings and contributions are set out; each associated with the research objectives. Then, some limitations of this research are discussed along with a consideration of future research avenues that could be based on the data and ideas presented herein.

10.2 Major research findings and contributions

The most significant research outcomes of this thesis can be summarised thus;

- First, the theoretical linkage that exists between local civic action and urban community formation has been defined based on academic reviews and theoretical discussions within the context of the rapid and continued construction of Chinese Commodity Housing Estates (CCHEs).

- Second, the rise in civic actions associated with CCHEs' management has been empirically defined through a broad survey in two cities.

- Third, different levels of community formation through various property-led civic petitions have been explored through empirical evaluations.

- Finally, policy commendations have been advanced with a view to further promoting bottom-up social transitions in CCHEs.

These major research findings and contributions are associated with the five research objectives, which were listed in Chapter One.

10.2.1 The theoretical linkage between local civic action and community formation

The first objective of this thesis was to understand the changing nature of new Chinese urbanism and the growing importance of urban civic development in contemporary urban China. The academic reviews in Chapter Two demonstrate how Chinese urban society and urban community life have changed as a consequence of the new Chinese urbanism that has been produced since 1978. This review presented contemporary academic challenges to traditional perspectives of

Chinese urban communities; the latter were considered to be deteriorating and disappearing and this could be associated with the rapid and continual construction of CCHEs. However, within this typical neoliberal discourse, the importance of the Chinese collectivist neighbourhood culture was ignored. This has been vital in forming urban communities in China throughout its long urban residential history. As discussed in Chapter Three, and with regards to the explosive civic actions that have occurred since the late 1990s, local residents have increasingly applied civic actions to defend and protect their collective rights and interests against what they perceive to be infringements from both state authorities and market forces. The growing number of property-led civic actions that have occurred in CCHEs reflects the existence of a collectivist neighbourhood culture. As shown throughout this thesis, local organisational and social capital are critical to the mobilisation of local voluntary organisations. These academic reviews organically connected the empirical facts of new Chinese urbanism with the rise of civic developments in CCHEs. The connections contributed to an enhanced academic understanding of Chinese contemporary urban communities and have provided a new focal point for research: local property-led civic actions. With regards to the rising property-led civic actions that have occurred in CCHEs, the theoretical discussion in Chapter Four demonstrated how urban community development and civic action could be linked. This helped to deliver the second research objective; the development of a conceptual framework to define the impacts of civic actions on local community formation and development. A conceptual model was constructed with mutual affecting mechanisms between local social capital and local civic action. In co-operation with the analytical framework deployed throughout the thesis, it supported the empirical evaluation focusing on the impacts of local property-led civic petitions on community formation. These theoretical discussions and the conceptual model not only contributed to the empirical evaluation in this thesis, but also contributed to the study of Chinese grassroots social transition within the context of local civic engagement occurring in consistent with constructions of CCHEs.

10.2.2 Rising urban civic development within CCHEs.

Corresponding to research objective three which sought to explain the nature of property-led civic petitions that occurred in CCHEs, a broad survey of property-led

civic petitions was empirically undertaken in two cities; presented in Chapter Six. In the two cities, the analysis suggested that CCHEs were the main civic territory in which the continued growth of citizen civic petitions can be found. The broad survey also confirmed a common application of local social capital in structuring property-led civic petitions. This reflected local residents' different civic behaviour and different petition opponents. Furthermore, the spatial patterns indicated that property-led civic development was focused on CCHE construction in the two cities. This broad survey not only facilitated case study selection, but also contributed to our academic understanding of why the construction of CCHEs has prompted urban civic development.

10.2.3 Community formation through the local property-led civic petitions

In Chapters Seven and Eight, the multiple case studies were presented and their cumulative, and individual, roles in community formation through local property-led civic petitions were evaluated. These empirical evaluations corresponded to research objective four; an evaluation of the impacts of property-led civic petitions on local social networks and community formation in CCHEs. All the case studies indicated that the civic petitions have a positive influence on developing local social capital and social cohesion; they mobilise and develop local organisational social networks through the multiple steps that are undertaken in the process of a civic petition. In the case studies, the local residents commonly reflected collectivist neighbouring culture in their collective actions, and such a neighbouring culture is positive in uniting the local residents and cultivate the local community feeling. The case studies contributed to this thesis' challenging of the common argument of 'community lost' within contemporary academic perceptions of new Chinese urbanism (Gui *et al.*, 2009; Xu *et al.*, 2010; He, 2013; He and Lin, 2015; Zhu, 2015; Verdini; 2015).

The case studies also presented different forms, types and intensity of community formation. As concluded in Chapter Nine, civic petitions against state authorities tend to have more positive influences on enhancing local residents' social capital and social cohesion compared to petitions against PMCs. Furthermore, the research findings revealed how internal and external factors that arise from the involvement of multiple stakeholders in civic petitions can influence the development of local social networks. These factors have become opportunities and challenges to

community development within CCHEs. This finding further challenges the perception to CCHEs as gated communities, which deemed to lead a diminution of place-based community life (Huang, 2006; He and Lin, 2015; Zhou *et al.*, 2019).

10.2.4 Policy recommendations for community development through local civic engagement

In Chapter Nine, a series of policy recommendations were presented to assist in the further future promotion of community development in CCHEs through local civic engagement. These policy recommendations addressed research objective five; how to promote community sustainable development within the CCHE. They were discussed and delivered with reference to the research findings from the case studies. Three recommendations were advanced. The first would suggest the institutionalisation of local civic engagement at individual CCHEs' scale. The second suggested the implementation of participatory planning at the urban grassroots scale. The third suggested the party-state be more open to grassroots property-led civic development. Practically, each of these policy recommendations had groundings in implementation, based upon contemporary China's political and social transitions. With references to case studies in this thesis, some homeowners' contentious protests were tolerated by the state authorities, with the state-sanctioned channel in framing and controlling them. Although Chinese state authorities have applied strict institutionalisation on managing the contemporary civil society, those homeowners' civic actions have been regarded as the self-management at the grassroots level, and these also released the state authorities' pressure on governing the rapid changing urban societies (Kuang and Göbel, 2013; Dong and Kriesi, 2016; Fu and Distelhorst, 2018). To a certain extent, with regard to these case studies about local civic petitions, the meta-governance has emerged in contemporary Chinese urban administration (Jessop, 2009; Zonneveld and Spaans, 2014). Therefore, these policy recommendations contribute to the Chinese urban sustainable development within the increasing number of CCHEs.

10.3 Limitations of this research

Initially, in association with the research strategy, the applied qualitative research strategy successfully explored community formation in CCHEs through local civic petitions. However, this research strategy cannot measure the civic petition's impact

on the development of local social capital, nor measure the various influential factors' influential mechanisms on the application and development of local social networks. To further understand a local civic engagement's impacts on the community development, future studies should consider the application of quantitative research strategy or mixed research strategy on the individual civic participation's impact on extending and knitting local social networks. In fact, such quantitative research approaches had been commonly applied in the empirical studies on the grassroots civic actions within the Western contexts (Son and Lin, 2008; Manturuk *et al*., 2010; Manturuk *et al*., 2012; McCabe, 2013; Ruef and Kwon, 2016).

Second, the broad survey was designed to promote the reliability and validity of the subsequent empirical evaluations on the four civic petitions (two from each city). However, the similarities in the property-led civic petitions in the two cities means that the findings might not be fully generalisable to all cities of China. To further probe Chinese property-led civic development, it is necessary to develop further studies in more Chinese cities and to do so using broader territorial criteria. In addition, the research approach in the case studies also have its limitations. The research approaches, including the semi-structured interview provided reliable data for the empirical evaluation, but also constrained the researcher to have specific observations and knowledge concerning the positive change that occurred in the local neighbourhood. For example, the semi-structured interviews did not enable the researcher to direct by quantify the scale of increased neighbouring acquaintances and enhanced faith that individuals may have in the local collective norm; nor did the structured questionnaires enable the local residents to give more information about the petition's impacts on their neighbourhood connections. Future research might expand the number of interviews carried out and also increase the number of questionnaires delivered. Ideas for future approaches could include the use of focus groups, participation observations, and the use of unstructured interviews. The use of online questionnaires to non-residents in areas abutting CCHEs could also further broaden the scope of future studies upon aspects of civic participation and urban living arrangements within China's cities.

Third, due to the Chinese party-state's suppression of contemporary civil society and grassroots civic action, the quality of data from interviews was certain

influenced because of the current party-state's institution on managing the civil society. In interviewing key actors who served in the public agencies, the researcher clearly sensed their cautiousness in answering the semi-structured questions. They avoided or disguised any personal statement that were antagonistic to the party-state's discourse. This limitation might not be easily overcome in future research, unless the party-state adopts an ideological shift towards grassroots civic development and civic actions.

10.4 An agenda for future research

Based on the research contributions and limitations, a future research agenda associated with Chinese urban community formation/development within CCHEs can be suggested. Some research directions to further develop the empirical studies on the changes in local social capital and social cohesion through local civic engagements that have occurred in CCHEs are suggested. In addition to the two additional areas of potential future research that flow directly from perceived 'limitations' within this study, the author also proposes a further two areas of future potential research which would build directly upon the findings of this thesis.

An immediate area for future research based on the findings of this study should be developed that focus deeply on the application of local social networks through local civic engagement. There have been increasingly changes in local social order and deteriorating place-based ties in the urban neighbourhoods, as the direct consequence of CCHE' construction. Consequently, it is necessary to develop more theoretical and further empirical studies concerning contemporary urban citizen's local civic engagements, about how the place-based social networks are used and further developed in those processes. First, future research should be developed with a focus on the applications of local social networks through the local civic engagement. For example, empirical studies should focus on the internal interactions within some common local social activities inside each CCHEs, such as the elders' entertainment, children's playing, and younger families' communication through social media. Second, within the research topic, the empirical evaluations should be further developed in Chinese cities, from a broader territorial context. Within empirical evaluations on local civic petitions or civic actions from different cities, more mixed research strategies could be devised to

achieve further understanding and measuring local civic actions in promoting community formation. These future studies can feed into the academic understandings oft Chinese urban grassroots social transition following the construction of CCHEs, and these could also raise academic understanding concerning civic engagement impacts on local social capital and social cohesion.

The second area of suggested future study relates to the conceptual model, which has been further explained in Chapter Nine. So far, the continue development of new urbanism in China has revealed its special characteristics as being different to the western neo-liberal discourse, with the party-state, market, and grassroots action all being influential mechanisms for urban change (He and Lin, 2015; Zhou *et al.*, 2019). Growing grassroots civic awareness had promoted them to climb the ladder of citizen participation, as proactive participation in civic issues, whether being manipulated, informed, or placated by the party-state in the previous Socialist era (Arnstein, 1969; Zhou *et al.*, 2019). The growing influence of grassroots activities on urban development should be regarded as a valuable research objective, to generate more critical understanding of China's urban transitions. For example, with regard to the trade-war between China and United States, rising grassroots civic engagements has occurred in Chinese coastal cities invoking empirical studies on the impact of such activities on the party-state's urban governance (Li *et al.*, 2018; Lukin, 2019).

10.5 Concluding thoughts

Overall, this thesis has demonstrated the mutual affecting mechanisms that exist between local social capital and civic action. All the case studies illustrated different levels of community formation in the four CCHEs that were chosen for investigation: Lilian Estate and No.20 Estate in Nanjing City, and Greenland Estate and Pudong Estate in Huai'an city. Various factors relating to the involvement of numerous (and competing) stakeholders have been discussed and it has been shown how these affect the impact of civic petitions on improving and enhancing local social capital. In summary, this thesis has provided a critical reflection on Chinese contemporary urban communities and how they can be formed and reformed through civic actions. It has reflected on the challenges faced and the divisions that may exist within residential areas, for instance between longer-term and new

residents, young and old and renters versus homeowners. It has also noted how issues pertaining to the importance of collectivist neighbourhood culture may clash with the development of new 'more individualistic' lifestyles. Furthermore, this thesis has made a unique contribution to the furtherance of existing academic knowledge by noting how community formation can be achieved through local civic actions and, in particular, the initiation (and subsequent processes) of property-led civic petitions.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: List of maps in broad survey

The maps below demonstrate the distributions and spatial analysis of property-led civic petitions in Chinese Commodity Housing Estates (CCHEs), in Chapter Six. These maps include Figure 6.3, Figure, 6.4, Figure 6.7, and Figure 6.8.

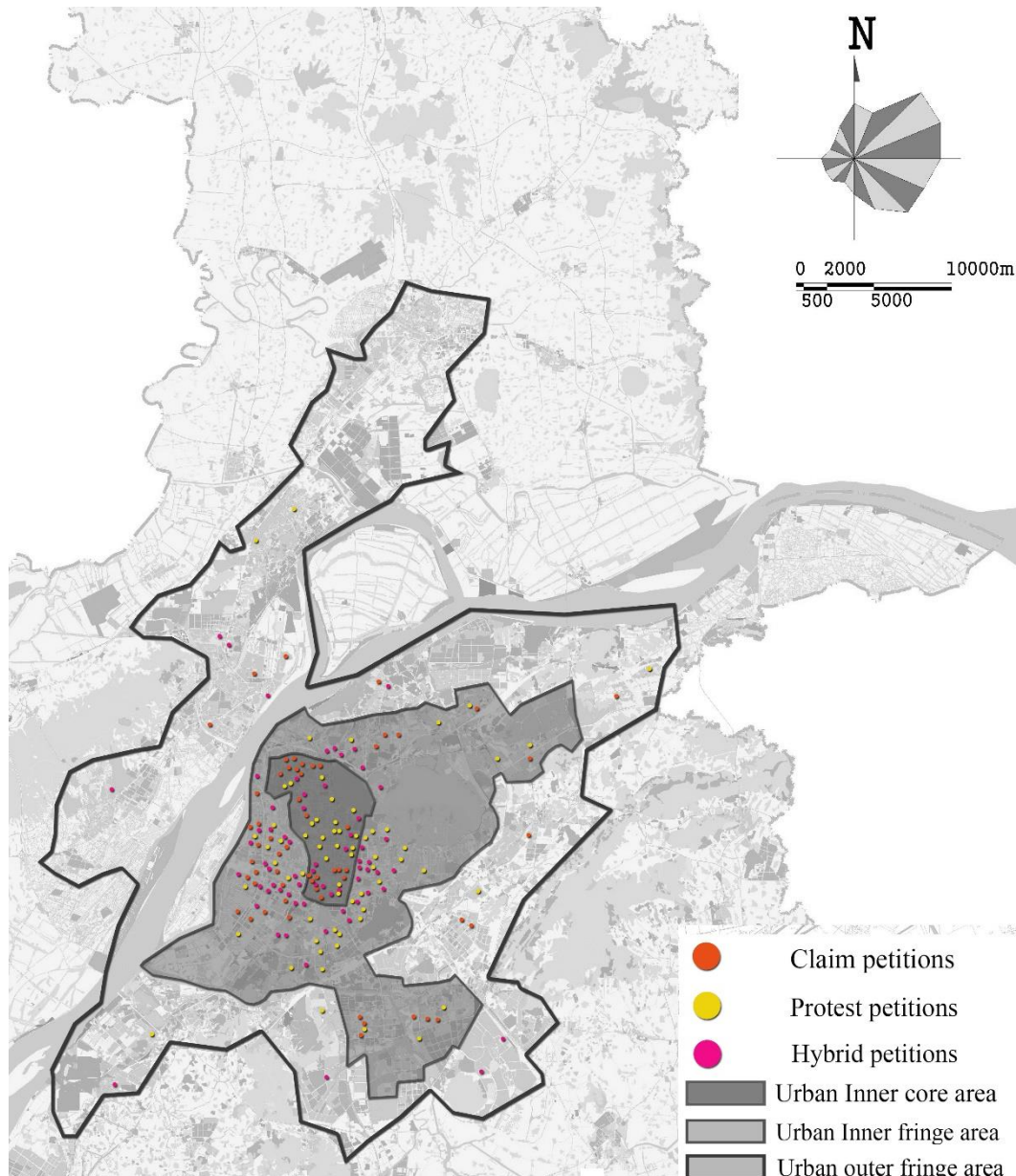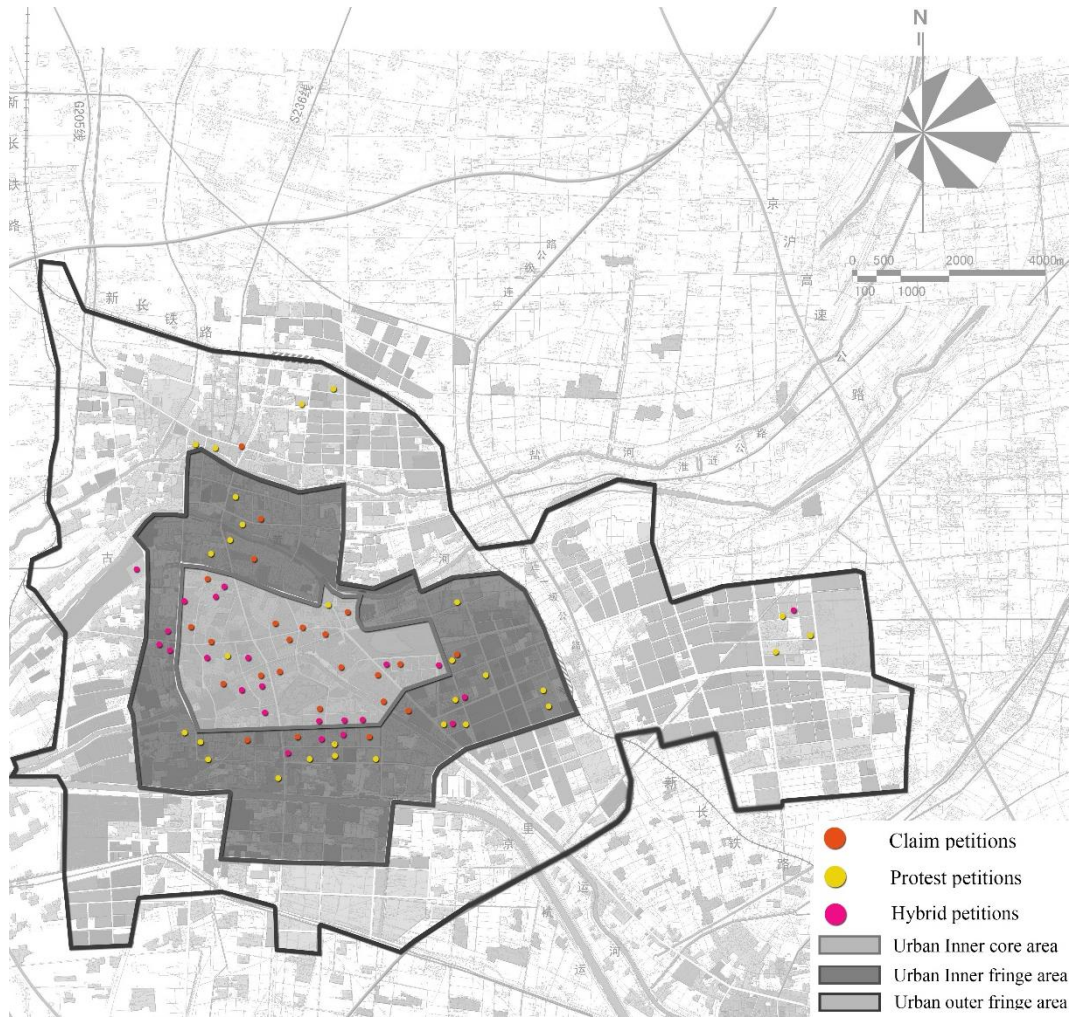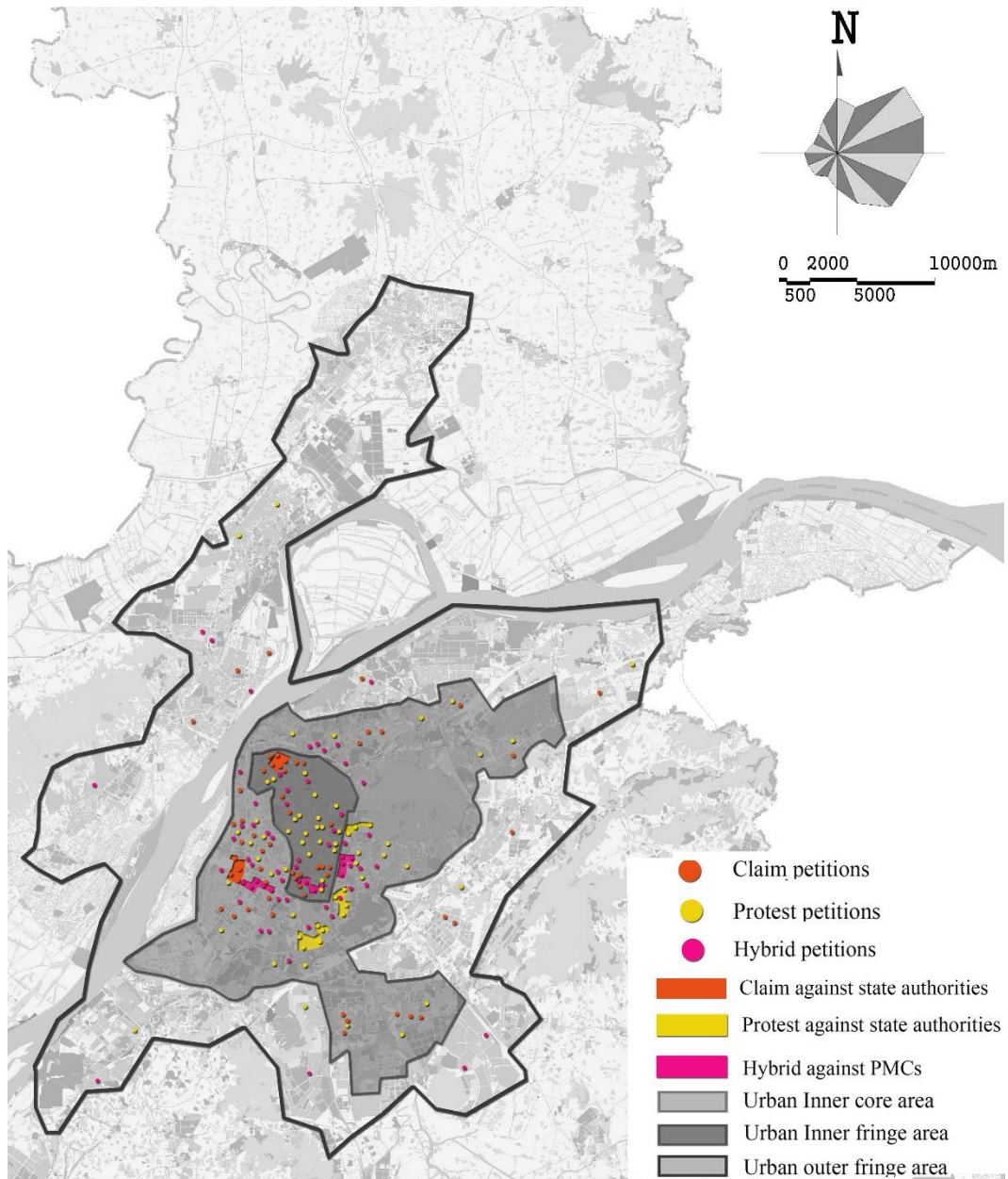**Figure 6.3 Location of collective civic petition in CCHEs in Nanjing City**

Figure 6.4 Location of collective civic petition in CCHEs in Huai'an City
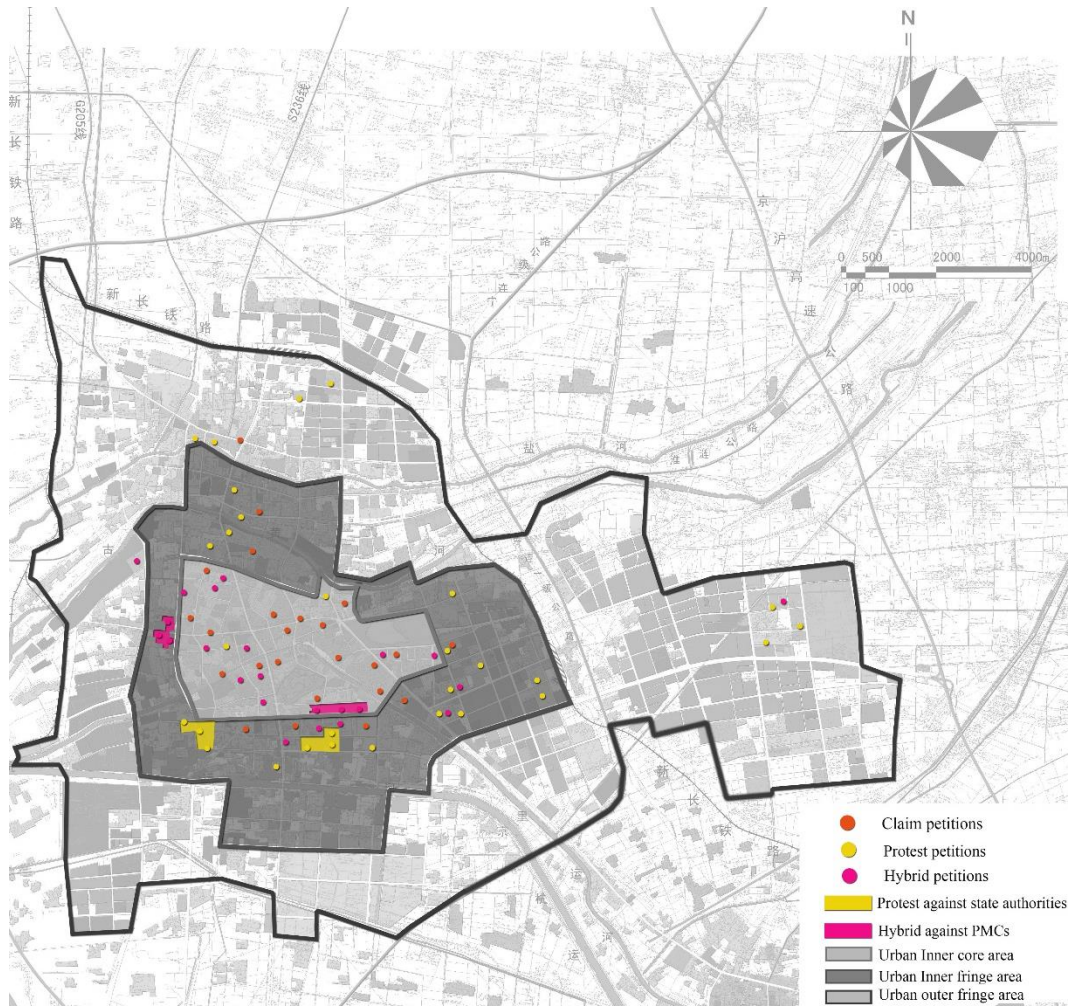
Figure 6.7 Spatial agglomeration of collective civic petitions in CCHEs in Nanjing City

Figure 6.8 Spatial agglomeration of collective civic petitions in CCHEs in Huai'an City

Appendix 2: Participant information sheets in case studies

Participant Information Sheet to interview the key residents involved in the civic petitions against State Authorities
(Lilian Estate in Nanjing City and Greenland Estate in Huai'an City separately)
Version 1
28/05/2017

Title of Research Project:
Urban community formation through local civic petitions that occurred in Chinese Commodity Housing Estates

Researcher:
Tang Le (PhD student)
le.tang@liverpool.ac.uk
00447776730543   (UK);
008615195354683 (China)

Invitation:
You are being invited to participate in this research study. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask me if you would like more information or if there is anything that you do not understand. Please also feel free to discuss this with your friends, relatives and neighbours if you wish. I would like to stress that you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to.
Thank you for reading this.

The purpose of this study:
This study is trying to understand the formation of new urban community in China's Commodity Housing Estates with impacts from raising civic engagements (civic petitions). It wants to explore how civic petitions were organised and processed in housing estates. This study has selected four embedded case studies in Nanjing and Huaian, and it attempts to assess and explore the process and the outcomes of these civic petitions in housing estates. These case housing estates are chosen mainly because the similar social, territorial, and spatial attributes via the comparison among all civic petitions from housing estates during 2013 to 2015 in both two case cities. Among the four embedded cases, two of them were civic petitions against local Property Management Companies, while the other two were civic petitions against state authorities. This research is trying to locate and position the current civilisation in urban residential compounds, which may lead to form one new type of urban community to fill the current theoretical vacuum of urban grassroots' organisation in China. Therefore it is important to provide a platform for the expressions of key actors involved in the civic petitions, including the key residents and the state officers, in order to understand their philosophies, as well as the ways they were involved in shaping and processing these civic petitions to improve the social cohesion, neighbourhood attachment, sense of community and other neighbourhood environment in China's Commodity Housing Estates.
The main objectives of this research will be reached by trying to answer to these main questions: how the civic petitions were shaped and processed by the local residents? What were reactions from the state officers and key staffs in Property Management Companies to the civic petition? What are the outcomes from the civic petition? And how a civic petition could affect the neighbouring environment and the formation of urban community?
This research intends to have an iterative paradigm of these interview with questionnaires implemented in your living housing estates. The interviews first try to recognise and identify the process of the civic petitions as well as the key actors' perceptions about the outcomes from

civic petition. The questionnaires then try to explore essential outcomes from civic petitions to the whole neighbourhood as the test to the previous interview.

Questions you may have:

1. **The reasons for your participation:**

Your participation in this interview and this study is very important to the researcher as you were involved in the urban community formation in your living housing estates.
Please remember that your participation is voluntary and that you are free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without your rights being affected.

2. **What will happen if you take Part?**

- In this research, the interview is 'semi-structured' in nature, which means you will be asked prompt questions, but that you are also encouraged to 'tell your story' in the order you see as appropriate, with minimal interruption. The Interview questions are divided in to two sections: the first section contains specific questions related to the process of specific civic petitions and the second section contains general questions about the outcomes from the civic petitions.

- Interviews will take place in a mutually agreed place, where participants would feel comfortable and relaxed.

- All of your responses will be both recorded by handwriting and audio recorded for use by the researcher in transcription, and to recollect what was said and how it was said.

- It is important to remember that all information supplied will be anonymised – no personal information is stored beyond the period of data collection (up to publication) and if the dissertation uses direct quotes, it will not be identified or identifiable in the dissertation or academic papers or reports that may result from the research. These details about your anonymity are provided in the Participant Consent Form which you will be asked to sign before research can commence.

- The only researcher you will have direct contact with is Tang Le (PhD Student), although the confidential and anonymised information you provide may also be viewed by the Supervisory team at the University of Liverpool during the research study period.

- The researcher aims to take up as little time as possible. Each interview will last up to one hour, and you may request as many breaks as you need or ask to reschedule the meeting to another more convenient time by request to the researcher.

3. **Are there any risks in taking part?**

No, there are not any risks or any perceived disadvantages involved in this interview session. But if you should experience any discomfort or disadvantage as part of the research then this should be made known to me immediately.

4. **Are there any benefits in taking part?**

Hopefully this research would provide a platform for you to express your opinion in regards to the grassroots' civic development in urban China.

5. **What if you are unhappy or if there is a problem?**

If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please feel free to let me know by contacting [Tang Le, le.tang@liverpool.ac.uk, 00447776730543 (UK), 008615195354683 (China)] and I will try my best to help. If you remain unhappy or have a complaint which you feel you cannot come to me with then you should contact the Research Governance Officer at

ethics@liv.ac.uk. When contacting the Research Governance Officer, please provide details of the name or description of the study (so that it can be identified), the researcher(s) involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make.

6. Will your participation be kept confidential?

The information you provide during the course of the interviews with the researcher will be transcribed/recorded by the researcher and stored in an anonymous format on the University secure network. All storage and data usage will comply with the University's strict Data Protection Policy. The information you provide will be used for this research study, and may also be used in future research projects conducted by the researcher (Tang Le). In both instances, data will remain anonymised and confidential. Personal information (name, address, telephone number, e-mail address) will be stored securely for the period of the research study to allow correspondence with research participants. However, information provided will be anonymised and stored in a secure manner for up to period of publication (about two years from the date of data collection). You are entitled to withdraw any information you provide. However, it is important that you understand and agree that once you check and submit your data to the researcher (you will be sent a copy of the information you provide to check) it will become anonymised and you will therefore no longer be able to withdraw the data.

7. What will happen to the result of this study?

The results of the study will primarily be made available in the public domain through the publication of a dissertation (PhD thesis). This will be available to read on the University of Liverpool's website for free. If you wish to receive a hard copy of the PhD thesis, please indicate this on the Participant Consent Form. The study will also be used in conference presentations and academic papers, and information provided may be used in future research studies in an anonymised format. Participants will not be identifiable from the results.

8. What will happen if you want to stop taking part?

You can withdraw at any time, without explanation. Results up to the period of withdrawal may be used, if you are happy for this to be done. Otherwise you may request that they are destroyed and no further use is made of them. Results are anonymised once the information you provide is checked and agreed by you, and after this point results may not be withdrawn.

9. Who can you contact if you have further questions?

Please contact Professor David Shaw (Supervisor of Tang Le)
School of Environmental Sciences
Department of Geography and Planning (Civic Design)
74 Bedford Street South
University of Liverpool
Liverpool
L69 7ZQ
T: +44 (0) 151 794 3114
E:Dave.Shaw@liverpool.ac.uk

Participant Information Sheet to interview the key residents involved in the civic petitions against Property Management Companies
(No. 20 Estate in Nanjing City and Pudong Estate in Huaian City separately)
Version 1
28/05/2017

Title of Research Project:
Urban community formation through local civic petitions that occurred in Chinese Commodity Housing Estates
Researcher:
Tang Le (PhD student)
le.tang@liverpool.ac.uk
00447776730543   (UK);
008615195354683 (China)

Invitation:
You are being invited to participate in this research study. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask me if you would like more information or if there is anything that you do not understand. Please also feel free to discuss this with your friends, relatives and neighbours if you wish. I would like to stress that you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to.
Thank you for reading this.

The purpose of this study:
This study is trying to understand the formation of new urban community in China's Commodity Housing Estates with impacts from raising civic engagements. It wants to explore how civic petitions were organised and processed in housing estates. This study has selected four embedded case studies in Nanjing and Huaian, and it attempts to assess and explore the process and the outcomes of these civic petitions in housing estates. These case housing estates are chosen mainly because the similar social, territorial, and spatial attributes via the comparison among all civic petitions from housing estates during 2013 to 2015 in both two case cities. Among the four embedded cases, two of them were civic petitions against local Property Management Companies, while the other two were civic petitions against state authorities. This research is trying to locate and position the current civilisation in urban residential compounds, which may lead to form one new type of urban community to fill the current theoretical vacuum of urban grassroots' organisation in China. Therefore it is important to provide a platform for the expressions of key actors involved in the civic petitions, including the key residents, the state officers, and key staffs in Property Management Companies, in order to understand their philosophies, as well as the ways they were involved in shaping and processing these civic petitions to improve the social cohesion, neighbourhood attachment, sense of community and other neighbourhood environment in China's Commodity Housing Estates.
The main objectives of this research will be reached by trying to answer to these main questions: how the civic petitions were shaped and processed by the local residents? What were reactions from the state officers and key staffs in Property Management Companies to the civic petition? What are the outcomes from the civic petition? And how a civic petition could affect the neighbouring environment and the formation of urban community?
This research intends to have an iterative paradigm of these interview with questionnaires implemented in your living housing estates. The interviews first try to recognise and identify the process of the civic petitions as well as the key actors' perceptions about the outcomes from civic petition. The questionnaires then try to explore essential outcomes from civic petitions to the whole neighbourhood as the test to the previous interview.

Questions you may have:

10. The reasons for your participation:
Your participation in this interview and this study is very important to the researcher as you were involved in the urban community formation in your living housing estates.
Please remember that your participation is voluntary and that you are free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without your rights being affected.

11. What will happen if you take Part?
- In this research, the interview is 'semi-structured' in nature, which means you will be asked prompt questions, but that you are also encouraged to 'tell your story' in the order you see as appropriate, with minimal interruption. The Interview questions are divided in to two sections: the first section contains specific questions related to the process of specific civic petitions and the second section contains general questions about the outcomes from the civic petitions.

- Interviews will take place in a mutually agreed place, where participants would feel comfortable and relaxed.

- All of your responses will be both recorded by handwriting and audio recorded for use by the researcher in transcription, and to recollect what was said and how it was said.

- It is important to remember that all information supplied will be anonymised – no personal information is stored beyond the period of data collection (up to publication) and if the dissertation uses direct quotes, it will not be identified or identifiable in the dissertation or academic papers or reports that may result from the research. These details about your anonymity are provided in the Participant Consent Form which you will be asked to sign before research can commence.

- The only researcher you will have direct contact with is Tang Le (PhD Student), although the confidential and anonymised information you provide may also be viewed by the Supervisory team at the University of Liverpool during the research study period.

- The researcher aims to take up as little time as possible. Each interview will last up to one hour, and you may request as many breaks as you need or ask to reschedule the meeting to another more convenient time by request to the researcher.

12. Are there any risks in taking part?
No, there are not any risks or any perceived disadvantages involved in this interview session. But if you should experience any discomfort or disadvantage as part of the research then this should be made known to me immediately.

13. Are there any benefits in taking part?
Hopefully this research would provide a platform for you to express your opinion in regards to the grassroots' civic development in your living housing estates.

14. What if you are unhappy or if there is a problem?
If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please feel free to let me know by contacting [Tang Le, le.tang@liverpool.ac.uk, 00447776730543 (UK), 008615195354683 (China)] and I will try my best to help. If you remain unhappy or have a complaint which you feel you cannot come to me with then you should contact the Research Governance Officer at ethics@liv.ac.uk. When contacting the Research Governance Officer, please provide details of the name or description of the study (so that it can be identified), the researcher(s) involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make.

15. Will your participation be kept confidential?

The information you provide during the course of the interviews with the researcher will be transcribed/recorded by the researcher and stored in an anonymous format on the University secure network. All storage and data usage will comply with the University's strict Data Protection Policy. The information you provide will be used for this research study, and may also be used in future research projects conducted by the researcher (Tang Le). In both instances, data will remain anonymised and confidential. Personal information (name, address, telephone number, e-mail address) will be stored securely for the period of the research study to allow correspondence with research participants. However, information provided will be anonymised and stored in a secure manner for up to period of publication (about two years from the date of data collection). You are entitled to withdraw any information you provide. However, it is important that you understand and agree that once you check and submit your data to the researcher (you will be sent a copy of the information you provide to check) it will become anonymised and you will therefore no longer be able to withdraw the data.

16. What will happen to the result of this study?

The results of the study will primarily be made available in the public domain through the publication of a dissertation (PhD thesis). This will be available to read on the University of Liverpool's website for free. If you wish to receive a hard copy of the PhD thesis, please indicate this on the Participant Consent Form. The study will also be used in conference presentations and academic papers, and information provided may be used in future research studies in an anonymised format. Participants will not be identifiable from the results.

17. What will happen if you want to stop taking part?

You can withdraw at any time, without explanation. Results up to the period of withdrawal may be used, if you are happy for this to be done. Otherwise you may request that they are destroyed and no further use is made of them. Results are anonymised once the information you provide is checked and agreed by you, and after this point results may not be withdrawn.

18. Who can you contact if you have further questions?

Please contact Professor David Shaw (Supervisor of Tang Le)
School of Environmental Sciences
Department of Geography and Planning (Civic Design)
74 Bedford Street South
University of Liverpool
Liverpool
L69 7ZQ
T: +44 (0) 151 794 3114
E:Dave.Shaw@liverpool.ac.uk

Participant Information Sheet to interview the key local civil servants involved in the civic petitions against State Authorities
(Lilian Estate in Nanjing City and Greenland Estate in Huai'an City separately)
Version 1
28/05/2017

Title of Research Project:
Urban community formation through local civic petitions that occurred in Chinese Commodity Housing Estates
Researcher:
Tang Le (PhD student)
le.tang@liverpool.ac.uk
00447776730543   (UK);
008615195354683 (China)

Invitation:
You are being invited to participate in this research study. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask me if you would like more information or if there is anything that you do not understand. Please also feel free to discuss this with your friends, relatives and neighbours if you wish. I would like to stress that you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to.
Thank you for reading this.

The purpose of this study:
This study is trying to understand the formation of new urban community in China's Commodity Housing Estates with impacts from raising civic engagements (civic petitions). It wants to explore how civic petitions were organised and processed in housing estates. This study has selected four embedded case studies in Nanjing and Huaian, and it attempts to assess and explore the process and the outcomes of these civic petitions in housing estates. These case housing estates are chosen mainly because the similar social, territorial, and spatial attributes via the comparison among all civic petitions from housing estates during 2013 to 2015 in both two case cities. Among the four embedded cases, two of them were civic petitions against local Property Management Companies, while the other two were civic petitions against state authorities. This research is trying to locate and position the current civilisation in urban residential compounds, which may lead to form one new type of urban community to fill the current theoretical vacuum of urban grassroots' organisation in China. Therefore it is important to provide a platform for the expressions of key actors involved in the civic petitions, including the key residents and the state officers, in order to understand their philosophies, as well as the ways they were involved in shaping and processing these civic petitions to improve the social cohesion, neighbourhood attachment, sense of community and other neighbourhood environment in China's Commodity Housing Estates.
The main objectives of this research will be reached by trying to answer to these main questions: how the civic petitions were shaped and processed by the local residents? What were reactions from the state officers and key staffs in Property Management Companies to the civic petition? What are the outcomes from the civic petition? And how a civic petition could affect the neighbouring environment and the formation of urban community?
This research intends to have an iterative paradigm of these interview with questionnaires implemented in your living housing estates. The interviews first try to recognise and identify the process of the civic petitions as well as the key actors' perceptions about the outcomes from civic petition. The questionnaires then try to explore essential outcomes from civic petitions to the whole neighbourhood as the test to the previous interview.

Questions you may have:

19. The reasons for your participation:

Your participation in this interview and this study is very important to the researcher as you were involved in the urban community formation in your living housing estates.

Please remember that your participation is voluntary and that you are free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without your rights being affected.

20. What will happen if you take Part?

- In this research, the interview is 'semi-structured' in nature, which means you will be asked prompt questions, but that you are also encouraged to 'tell your story' in the order you see as appropriate, with minimal interruption. The Interview questions are divided in to two sections: the first section contains specific questions related to the process of specific civic petitions and the second section contains general questions about the outcomes from the civic petitions.

- Interviews will take place in a mutually agreed place, where participants would feel comfortable and relaxed.

- All of your responses will be both recorded by handwriting and audio recorded for use by the researcher in transcription, and to recollect what was said and how it was said.

- It is important to remember that all information supplied will be anonymised – no personal information is stored beyond the period of data collection (up to publication) and if the dissertation uses direct quotes, it will not be identified or identifiable in the dissertation or academic papers or reports that may result from the research. These details about your anonymity are provided in the Participant Consent Form which you will be asked to sign before research can commence.

- The only researcher you will have direct contact with is Tang Le (PhD Student), although the confidential and anonymised information you provide may also be viewed by the Supervisory team at the University of Liverpool during the research study period.

- The researcher aims to take up as little time as possible. Each interview will last up to one hour, and you may request as many breaks as you need or ask to reschedule the meeting to another more convenient time by request to the researcher.

21. Are there any risks in taking part?

No, there are not any risks or any perceived disadvantages involved in this interview session. But if you should experience any discomfort or disadvantage as part of the research then this should be made known to me immediately.

22. Are there any benefits in taking part?

Hopefully this research would provide a platform for you to express your opinion in regards to improve the efficient governance of the urban residential compounds.

23. What if you are unhappy or if there is a problem?

If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please feel free to let me know by contacting [Tang Le, le.tang@liverpool.ac.uk, 00447776730543 (UK), 008615195354683 (China)] and I will try my best to help. If you remain unhappy or have a complaint which you feel you cannot come to me with then you should contact the Research Governance Officer at ethics@liv.ac.uk. When contacting the Research Governance Officer, please provide details of the name or description of the study (so that it can be identified), the researcher(s) involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make.

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25. What will happen to the result of this study?

The results of the study will primarily be made available in the public domain through the publication of a dissertation (PhD thesis). This will be available to read on the University of Liverpool's website for free. If you wish to receive a hard copy of the PhD thesis, please indicate this on the Participant Consent Form. The study will also be used in conference presentations and academic papers, and information provided may be used in future research studies in an anonymised format. Participants will not be identifiable from the results.

26. What will happen if you want to stop taking part?

You can withdraw at any time, without explanation. Results up to the period of withdrawal may be used, if you are happy for this to be done. Otherwise you may request that they are destroyed and no further use is made of them. Results are anonymised once the information you provide is checked and agreed by you, and after this point results may not be withdrawn.

27. Who can you contact if you have further questions?

Please contact Professor David Shaw (Supervisor of Tang Le)
School of Environmental Sciences
Department of Geography and Planning (Civic Design)
74 Bedford Street South
University of Liverpool
Liverpool
L69 7ZQ
T: +44 (0) 151 794 3114
E:Dave.Shaw@liverpool.ac.uk

Title of Research Project:
Urban community formation through local civic petitions that occurred in Chinese Commodity Housing Estates

Researcher:
Tang Le (PhD student)
le.tang@liverpool.ac.uk
00447776730543   (UK);
008615195354683 (China)

Invitation:

You are being invited to participate in this research study. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask me if you would like more information or if there is anything that you do not understand. Please also feel free to discuss this with your friends, relatives and neighbours if you wish. I would like to stress that you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to.

Thank you for reading this.

The purpose of this study:

This study is trying to understand the formation of new urban community in China's Commodity Housing Estates with impacts from raising civic engagements. It wants to explore how civic petitions were organised and processed in housing estates. This study has selected four embedded case studies in Nanjing and Huaian, and it attempts to assess and explore the process and the outcomes of these civic petitions in housing estates. These case housing estates are chosen mainly because the similar social, territorial, and spatial attributes via the comparison among all civic petitions from housing estates during 2013 to 2015 in both two case cities. Among the four embedded cases, two of them were civic petitions against local Property Management Companies, while the other two were civic petitions against state authorities. This research is trying to locate and position the current civilisation in urban residential compounds, which may lead to form one new type of urban community to fill the current theoretical vacuum of urban grassroots' organisation in China.

Therefore it is important to provide a platform for the expressions of key actors involved in the civic petitions, including the key residents, the state officers, and key staffs in Property Management Companies, in order to understand their philosophies, as well as the ways they were involved in shaping and processing these civic petitions related to improving the social cohesion, neighbourhood attachment, sense of community and other neighbourhood environment in China's Commodity Housing Estates.

The main objectives of this research will be reached by trying to answer to these main questions: how the civic petitions were shaped and processed by the local residents? What were reactions from the state officers and key staffs in Property Management Companies to the civic petition? What are the outcomes from the civic petition? And how a civic petition could affect the neighbouring environment and the formation of urban community?

This research intends to have an iterative paradigm of these interview with questionnaires implemented in the specific commodity housing estates. The interviews first try to recognise and identify the key staffs' perceptions about the process and the outcomes from civic petition as well as their efforts to the requirement from the civic petition. The questionnaires then try to explore essential outcomes from civic petitions to the whole neighbourhood as the test to the previous interview.

28. The reasons for your participation:

Your participation in this interview and this study is very important to the researcher as you were involved in the urban community formation in your living housing estates.
Please remember that your participation is voluntary and that you are free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without your rights being affected.

29. What will happen if you take Part?

- In this research, the interview is 'semi-structured' in nature, which means you will be asked prompt questions, but that you are also encouraged to 'tell your story' in the order you see as appropriate, with minimal interruption. The Interview questions are divided in to three sections: the first section contains specific questions related to the process of specific civic petitions, the second section contains the general questions about the efforts and changes made by the Property Management Companies to satisfy the local residents' requirements in the civic petitions, and the third section contains general questions about the outcomes from the civic petitions.

- Interviews will take place in a mutually agreed place, where participants would feel comfortable and relaxed.

- All of your responses will be both recorded by handwriting and audio recorded for use by the researcher in transcription, and to recollect what was said and how it was said.

- It is important to remember that all information supplied will be anonymised – no personal information is stored beyond the period of data collection (up to publication) and if the dissertation uses direct quotes, it will not be identified or identifiable in the dissertation or academic papers or reports that may result from the research. These details about your anonymity are provided in the Participant Consent Form which you will be asked to sign before research can commence.

- The only researcher you will have direct contact with is Tang Le (PhD Student), although the confidential and anonymised information you provide may also be viewed by the Supervisory team at the University of Liverpool during the research study period.

- The researcher aims to take up as little time as possible. Each interview will last up to one hour, and you may request as many breaks as you need or ask to reschedule the meeting to another more convenient time by request to the researcher.

30. Are there any risks in taking part?

No, there are not any risks or any perceived disadvantages involved in this interview session. But if you should experience any discomfort or disadvantage as part of the research then this should be made known to me immediately.

31. Are there any benefits in taking part?

Hopefully this research would provide a platform for you to express your opinion in regards to the efficiency of delivering services and mutual trust among local residents and your serving companies.

32. What if you are unhappy or if there is a problem?

If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please feel free to let me know by contacting [Tang Le, le.tang@liverpool.ac.uk, 00447776730543 (UK), 008615195354683 (China)] and I will try my best to help. If you remain unhappy or have a complaint which you feel

you cannot come to me with then you should contact the Research Governance Officer at ethics@liv.ac.uk. When contacting the Research Governance Officer, please provide details of the name or description of the study (so that it can be identified), the researcher(s) involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make.

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34. What will happen to the result of this study?

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35. What will happen if you want to stop taking part?

You can withdraw at any time, without explanation. Results up to the period of withdrawal may be used, if you are happy for this to be done. Otherwise you may request that they are destroyed and no further use is made of them. Results are anonymised once the information you provide is checked and agreed by you, and after this point results may not be withdrawn.

36. Who can you contact if you have further questions?

Please contact Professor David Shaw (Supervisor of Tang Le)
School of Environmental Sciences
Department of Geography and Planning (Civic Design)
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University of Liverpool
Liverpool
L69 7ZQ
T: +44 (0) 151 794 3114
E: Dave.Shaw@liverpool.ac.uk

Participant Information Sheet to interview the key arbitrators involved in the civic petitions
(all cases)
Version 1
28/05/2017

Title of Research Project:
Urban community formation through local civic petitions that occurred in Chinese Commodity Housing Estates
Researcher:
Tang Le (PhD student)
le.tang@liverpool.ac.uk
00447776730543   (UK);
008615195354683 (China)

Invitation:
You are being invited to participate in this research study. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask me if you would like more information or if there is anything that you do not understand. Please also feel free to discuss this with your friends, relatives and neighbours if you wish. I would like to stress that you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to.
Thank you for reading this.

The purpose of this study:
This study is trying to understand the formation of new urban community in China's Commodity Housing Estates with impacts from raising civic engagements. It wants to explore how civic petitions were organised and processed in housing estates. This study has selected four embedded case studies in Nanjing and Huaian, and it attempts to assess and explore the process and the outcomes of these civic petitions in housing estates. These case housing estates are chosen mainly because the similar social, territorial, and spatial attributes via the comparison among all civic petitions from housing estates during 2013 to 2015 in both two case cities. Among the four embedded cases, two of them were civic petitions against local Property Management Companies, while the other two were civic petitions against state authorities. This research is trying to locate and position the current civilisation in urban residential compounds, which may lead to form one new type of urban community to fill the current theoretical vacuum of urban grassroots' organisation in China.
Therefore it is important to provide a platform for the expressions of key actors involved in the civic petitions, including the key residents, the state officers, and key staffs in Property Management Companies, in order to understand their philosophies, as well as the ways they were involved in shaping and processing these civic petitions related to improving the social cohesion, neighbourhood attachment, sense of community and other neighbourhood environment in China's Commodity Housing Estates.
The main objectives of this research will be reached by trying to answer to these main questions: how the civic petitions were shaped and processed by the local residents? What were reactions from the state officers and key staffs in Property Management Companies to the civic petition? What are the outcomes from the civic petition? And how a civic petition could affect the neighbouring environment and the formation of urban community?
This research intends to have an iterative paradigm of these interview with questionnaires implemented in the specific commodity housing estates. The interviews first try to recognise and identify the state officers' perceptions about the process and the outcomes from civic petition. The questionnaires then try to explore essential outcomes from civic petitions to the whole neighbourhood as the test to the previous interview.

Questions you may have:

37. The reasons for your participation:

Your participation in this interview and this study is very important to the researcher as you were involved in the urban community formation in your living housing estates.

Please remember that your participation is voluntary and that you are free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without your rights being affected.

38. What will happen if you take Part?

- In this research, the interview is 'semi-structured' in nature, which means you will be asked prompt questions, but that you are also encouraged to 'tell your story' in the order you see as appropriate, with minimal interruption. The Interview questions are divided in to two sections: the first section contains specific questions related to the process of specific civic petitions and the second section contains general questions about the outcomes from the civic petitions.

- Interviews will take place in a mutually agreed place, where participants would feel comfortable and relaxed.

- All of your responses will be both recorded by handwriting and audio recorded for use by the researcher in transcription, and to recollect what was said and how it was said.

- It is important to remember that all information supplied will be anonymised – no personal information is stored beyond the period of data collection (up to publication) and if the dissertation uses direct quotes, it will not be identified or identifiable in the dissertation or academic papers or reports that may result from the research. These details about your anonymity are provided in the Participant Consent Form which you will be asked to sign before research can commence.

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- The researcher aims to take up as little time as possible. Each interview will last up to one hour, and you may request as many breaks as you need or ask to reschedule the meeting to another more convenient time by request to the researcher.

39. Are there any risks in taking part?

No, there are not any risks or any perceived disadvantages involved in this interview session. But if you should experience any discomfort or disadvantage as part of the research then this should be made known to me immediately.

40. Are there any benefits in taking part?

Hopefully this research would provide a platform for you to express your opinion in regards to improve the governance on the urban residential compounds.

41. What if you are unhappy or if there is a problem?

If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please feel free to let me know by contacting [Tang Le, le.tang@liverpool.ac.uk, 00447776730543 (UK), 008615195354683 (China)] and I will try my best to help. If you remain unhappy or have a complaint which you feel you cannot come to me with then you should contact the Research Governance Officer at ethics@liv.ac.uk. When contacting the Research Governance Officer, please provide details of the name or description of the study (so that it can be identified), the researcher(s) involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make.

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44. What will happen if you want to stop taking part?

You can withdraw at any time, without explanation. Results up to the period of withdrawal may be used, if you are happy for this to be done. Otherwise you may request that they are destroyed and no further use is made of them. Results are anonymised once the information you provide is checked and agreed by you, and after this point results may not be withdrawn.

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Appendix 3: Interview questions and questionnaire

Interview questions to key actors in the civic petition against local state authorities (Lilian Estate in Nanjing City, and Greenland Estate in Huai'an City)

Interview questions to key petition initiators

1. Why did you organise or join in this civic petition against state authorities?
2. How did you organise the civic petition and implement the participation of other residents?
3. What was the process of this specific civic petition, for example, the cause of this civic petition, the discussion among key organisers, the making decision on appealing civic petition, and others?
4. How did the other residents involve in this civic petition, including the participants and the non-participants?
5. What was the outcome of this civic petition, for example, the changes of urban planning scheme, the physical change of your living housing estates, and others?
6. How did the outcomes from this civic petition benefit the neighbouring relationship in your living housing estates, for example, enhancing the mutual relationship, the social cohesion, the neighbourhood attachments and others?

Interview questions to local civil servants

1. How did you and your serving department react to this civic petition?
2. What have the local state authority done to meet residents' concern in this civic petition?
3. Have the local state authority and you change the administration to local residents?
4. Generally, do you think this civic petition could raise the local residents' mind on forming an urban community, with dense ties among neighbours and cohesive neighbouring environment in the estate?

Interview questions to arbitrators

1. What did you do after receiving this civic petition? Or what did you do to handle the requirements from this civic petition?

2. Did the relevant state authorities or other public grassroots' organisations follow up the residents' requirement in this civic petition?

3. How did you determine the outcomes of this civic petition?

4. Regarding to this civic petition, whether the local residents were developing an urban community, with dense ties among neighbours and cohesive neighbouring environment in the estate?

Interview questions to key actors in the civic petition against local Property Management Companies (No.20 Estate in Nanjing City and Pudong Estate in Huai'an City)

Interview to key petition initiators

1. Why did you organise or join in this civic petition against PMC in your housing estates?

2. How did you organise the civic petition and gather the participation of other residents?

3. What was the process of this civic petition, for example, the cause of this civic petition, the discussion among organisers, the making decision on appealing civic petition, and others?

4. How did the other residents involve in this civic petition, including the participants and the non-participants?

5. What was the outcome of this civic petition, for example, the changes of the services from PMC, the changes of Property Management Companies' behaviour in delivering services, and others?

6. How did the outcomes from this civic petition benefit the neighbouring relationship in your living housing estates, for example, enhancing the mutual relationship, the social cohesion, the neighbourhood attachments and others?

Interview to PMC key staffs

1. How did you and your serving company react to this civic petition?

2. What have your company done to meet residents' requirement in this civic petition?

3. Have your serving company and you change the behaviour on delivering services to local residents?

4. Generally, do you think this civic petition could raise the local residents' mind on forming an urban community, with dense ties among neighbours and cohesive neighbouring environment in the estate?

Interview to arbitrators

1. What did you do to the civic petition against local Property Management Company?

2. How did you determine the outcomes of this civic petition?
3. Did the local Property Management Company follow up the promoting arbitration from your section?
4. Regarding to this civic petition, whether the local residents were developing an urban community, with dense ties among neighbours and cohesive neighbouring environment in the estate?

Questionnaire to local residents about the impacts from civic petitions on local urban community formation (Four cases in Nanjing City and Huai'an City)

1. Did you know the civic petition (depended on specific cases) happened in your living housing estates?

   (Tick one box only)

   Yes ☐
   No ☐

2. Did you engage in this civic petition?

   (Tick one box only)

   Yes ☐

   No ☐

3. Did you support this civic petition?

   (Tick one box only)

   Yes ☐

   No ☐

4. Will you engage in the future civic engagements in your living housing estates?

   (Tick one box only)

   Yes ☐
   Fairly yes ☐
   Fairly no ☐
   No ☐

   No mind

5. Do you think this civic petition had made some changes into your living housing estates, for example, changed the living condition, convenience to individual life, and others?

(*Tick one box only*)

Yes	
Fairly yes	
Fairly no	
No	

No mind

6. Do you agree this civic petition posed positive effects on improving the mutual relationship among local residents?

(*Tick one box only*)

Yes	
Fairly yes	
Fairly no	
No	

No mind

7. Do you think this civic petition raised your attachment to the neighbourhood in your living estate, for example, mutual trust and cooperation among neighbours?

(*Tick one box only*)

Yes	
Fairly yes	
Fairly no	
No	

No clear mind

8. Whether this civic petition supported the cohesive development of your living housing estates, for example, reliable ties with neighbours?

(*Tick one box only*)

Yes

Fairly yes

Fairly no

No

No clear mind

Appendix 4: List of interviewees

The tables below demonstrate the complete list of interviews with key actors in the four case studies. When directly quoting the interview data in the thesis, labels were used for different groups of interviewees, (X_1 represents the city, and X_2 represents the case petition),

- X_1-X_2-R – Key petition initiators
- X_1-X_2-C – Key local civil servants
- X_1-X_2-M – Key property managers
- X_1-X_2-A – Key petition arbitrators

Classifications of interviews conducted in case studies

Groups of interviewees	Lilian Estate, Nanjing City	Greenland Estate, Huai'an City	No.20 Estate, Nanjing City	Pudong Estate, Huai'an City
Key petition initiators	3	3	2	3
Key local civil servants	2	2	1	–
Key property managers	–	–	2	2
Key petition arbitrators	2	2	1	2

Numbers of questionnaires conducted in case studies

Case studies	Numbers of sampled households
Lilian Estate, Nanjing City	41
Greenland Estate, Huai'an City	52
No.20 Estate, Nanjing City	42
Pudong Estate, Huai'an City	87

List of interviewees in the case studies

| CCHEs	Dates	Venues	Groups of interviewees	Numbers of interviewees
Lilian Estate, Nanjing City	September 17, 2017	Lilian Estate	Key petition initiators	2
	September 17, 2017	Lilian Estate	Key petition initiators	1
	September 19, 2017	Huowaxiang Residents' Committee	Key local civil servants	1
	September 20/21, 2017	Qinhuai District Bureau of People's Letter and Visit	Key arbitrators	2
	September 26, 2017	Huowaxiang Residents' Committee	Key local civil servants	1
No.20 Estate, Nanjing City	October 9, 2017	No.20 Estate	Key petition initiators	2
	October 11, 2017	No.20 Estate	Key property managers	2
	October 12/13, 2017	No.20 Estate	Key local civil servants	1
	October 15, 2017	Qinhuai District Bureau of People's Letter and Visit	Key arbitrators	1
Pudong Estate, Huai'an City	October 29, 2017	Pudong Estate	Key petition initiators	2
	November 2, 2017	Pudong Estate	Key petition initiators	1
	November 4/5, 2017	Pudong Estate	Key property managers	2
	November 9/11, 2017	Huai'an Municipal Bureau of People's Letter and Visit	Key arbitrators	2
Greenland Estate, Huai'an City	December 2, 2017	Greenland Living Collection (Community centre)	Key petition initiators	1
	December 7, 2017	Greenland Living Collection (Community centre)	Key petition initiators	2
	December 8, 2017	Greenland Living Collection (Community centre)	Key local civil servants	2
	December 11, 2017	Eco-Tourism District Bureau of People's Letter and Visit	Key arbitrators	1
	December 13, 2017	Eco-Tourism District Bureau of People's Letter and Visit	Key arbitrators	1

Appendix 5: List of published papers and conference presentations

Published papers:

- **Le Tang.** (2017) 'The Essentiality of Chinese Urban Blocked Neighbourhood through the Discourse Analysis'. *Modern Urban Studies.* 2017(7): 60-65. (*in Chinese*)

- **Le Tang,** Fenqing Zhou, Xueliang Feng, and Yali Luo. (2018) 'Collective Civic Petitions in Urban Neighborhoods: A Comparative Study between Two Different-Tier Chinese Cities'. *Sustainability,* 10(12): 4660.

- **Le Tang.** (2019) 'The Enlightenment from the Urban Generation in UK Post-industrial Cities to China: the Case of Liverpool'. *Modern Urban Studies.* 2019(3): 75-82. (*in Chinese*)

Conference presentations:

- **Le Tang** and Shaw, D. (2017) 'Developing a new form of urban community through grassroots action in China's Commodity Housing Estates'. 2017 International Conference on China Urban Development, University College of London, London, UK. 4th-5th May, 2017.
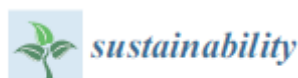
Appendix 6: Paper published in Sustainability

Collective Civic Petitions in Urban Neighborhoods: A Comparative Study between Two Different-Tier Chinese Cities

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Abstract: This paper engages with civic development in urban neighborhoods in China after the period of reform that began in 1978. Examining the collective civic petitions that have occurred in urban neighborhoods, the paper offers a comparative analysis of changing trends, internal mechanisms, and their spatial distribution between two different-tier cities. Data pertaining to the collective civic petitions was drawn from open archives in two municipal bureaus, and related to the years 2013 to 2015. The data was then split into three types of petition typology—claim, protest, and hybrid. Certain similarities and differences emerged from the analysis relating to the types of petition that have occurred against different petition counterparties, namely, state authorities, real developers, and property management companies. Similarities among the two cities could be capable of indicating advancing urban civic developments with internal mechanisms among petition typology and contexts of individual petitions. Differences among the two cities could be related to various differences in their urban contexts, and may also reflect different levels of citizen civic consciousness and behavior.

Keywords: civic development; collective civic petitions; urban neighborhoods; petition types; spatial concentrations

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1. Introduction

Since the market-oriented reform that commenced in 1978, China has undergone rapid industrialization and urbanization. Concurrently, China's urban society has experienced drastic changes [1]. Describing social changes in urban China has been undertaken by academics from both China and the Western world. Within such studies, civic engagement has been adapted as the terminology for observing urban social changes, including social cohesion, social capital, and civic participation, within a context of the state's openness to citizens' civic actions [2–4]. Academically, civic engagement is highly connected to urban civic development at the urban neighborhood scale, and is commonly defined as citizens' collective awareness and participation in achieving common goods [2–5]. In seeking to achieve common goods for local communities, civic engagement is distinguished from other social actions [2].

Some empirical studies have suggested the growth of citizens' civic engagements in urban China, with the state's openness to citizen participation [6–14]. In the last three decades, hierarchical state authorities have established specialized petition systems (*Xinfang*), various public hearing practices, and even village-level direct elections, as responses to citizens' empowerment and civic engagement [12–14]. These systems and practices have proved effective in addressing citizens' non-political civic engagements, such as collective disputes with other stakeholders, collective claims

of public goods, and civic environmental issues [14–16]. However, those political civic engagements, which primarily desired democratic reform, were mostly forbidden and even classified as illegal actions, as they represented ideological threats to China's one-party political system and its urban social stability [15–17].

Significantly, the emergence of citizens' awareness, with regard to protecting citizenship and legalized rights, has been widely acknowledged as the driving force for increased civic engagements at the urban neighborhood scale [9,11,12]. In addition to the existence of a range of studies that have been developed at the urban neighborhood scale, others have been developed at the city scale, and these have sought to illustrate aspects of civic development in China's cities [5,13–16]. None of these studies has illustrated the detailed civic developments amongst different Chinese cities, or the similarities and differences that exist. Numerous western studies have stated the different civic developments that have occurred among urban neighborhoods and cities within different socioeconomic contexts; many have had an especial focus on the differentiated levels of citizens' civic awareness and behavior [16–23]. In order to explore China's urban civic development, it is rational to develop such studies to include both city and urban neighborhood scales. This is for two reasons. First, within the period of market-oriented reform, the hierarchical structure of China's urban administration (with strong sociologist ideology) has been transformed so that there now exists hierarchical differentiations amongst China's cities [24–26]. Officially and academically, those hierarchical differentiations among China's cities are commonly classified as first-tier cities (mostly megacities, in geographic terms), second-tier cities (mostly large cities or big cities in geographic terms), third-tier cities (mostly medium-sized cities in geographic terms), and other lower-tier cities (including small cities and big towns). It is worth noticing that the different-tiers reflect the hierarchical differentiations of urban socioeconomic developments among cities; this suggests further different levels of civic development among different-tier cities [24–28]. Second, the urban neighborhoods, as the typical units of analysis in studying urban civic developments, are highly affected by the differentiated urban civic developments that have occurred among different-tiers cities. This further impacts upon individual's differentiated civic awareness and their behavior [16–18,29–34].

Consequently, the general research aim of this paper is to explore the current urban civic developments within Chinese different-tier cities, through the perspective of collective civic petitions that have occurred in urban neighborhoods (as the targeted petitions in this paper). Within this research, three research questions are answered. The first research question is about how urban civic development was processed according to the changes of those targeted petitions among two cities. The second research question is about how neighborhood contexts and petition contexts were internally correlated to the existence of those targeted petitions. The third research question is about how those targeted petitions were spatially distributed within the cities.

2. Methodology and Data

2.1. General Research Paradigm and Research Approaches

One comparative case study paradigm is applied to studying the targeted petitions from the two different-tier Chinese cities. The first section is the numerical analysis of the targeted petitions and the other petitions that have occurred in the two cities from 2013 to 2015. The targeted petitions were initially compared to other petitions that have occurred. These were then compared within the applied typology so as to present the similarities and differences that have occurred in civic engagements in urban neighborhoods. The second section is the statistical analysis that arose from examining the internal mechanisms of those targeted petitions, mainly in the form of correlation and logistic regression analysis [5,20,34]. Within the statistical analysis, the petition types, as dependent variables, were tested against correlations to the independent variables, including the territorial contexts of individual urban neighborhoods and the social contexts of individual petitions. The third section

involved the spatial mapping of those targeted petitions within urban spatial strata. This was done with reference to the different petition types and petition counterparties [18,19,34,35].

2.2. Selection of Case Cities

Two different-tier Chinese cities were selected; Nanjing City and Huai'an City. The two cities possess significant territorial, social, and economic differences, as indicated in Table 1. The location of the two cities is presented in Figure 1. These various contextual differences are capable of guaranteeing the research rationality of selecting the case cities. The classification of the two cities as, respectively, second-tier and third-tier cities, also guarantees the research rationality as urban civic development is highly connected to urban socioeconomic development [2,36–38].

Table 1. Contextual differentiation in two case cities.

Categories of City Contexts	Nanjing	Huai'an
Territorial Area (Km^2)	6622.45	10,072.03
Urban Administrative Area (Km^2)	653	330
Municipal Population (M)	8.19	3.83
Urban Population (M)	5.41	1.66
City Hierarchy (2016)	Second-tier	Third-tier
City GDP in 2016 (Billion RMB)	10,503.02	3048

Figure 1. The location of the two different-tier cities: Nanjing City and Huai'an City.

2.3. Data Collection and Coding

Concerning the targeted petitions, the collective civic petitions that have occurred in the urban neighborhoods, along with other relevant data, was coded from the typology of the official petition documents. These official petition documents were collected from two Municipal Bureaus of People's Letter and Call (*Renmin Xinfang Ju*) in Nanjing City and Huai'an City. They consisted of open documents in the online archives and paper archives. In those open documents, all petitions were classified to have been effectively arbitrated. From 2013 to 2015, 188 petition documents were appealed to Nanjing Municipal Bureaus of People's Letter and Call, and 74 petition documents were appealed to the Huai'an Municipal Bureau of People's Letter and Call. Upon getting access to the petition documents, coding procedures were implemented to the petitions that had occurred in the urban

neighborhoods; then, from among the petitions that had occurred in urban neighborhoods, those that were 'single' or 'non-civic' petitions were excluded.

(1) 'Single' means a petition with the signature of a single resident or household without any collaboration [2,39].
(2) 'Non-civic' means that the purpose of the petition was shaped to an individual's or certain group's interest [2,39].

After the identification of these targeted petitions, one event coding was implemented to generate documentary information. Six categories of distinct information were coded:

(1) Numerical information (e.g., the number of petitions that had occurred in the two case cities from 2013 to 2015, the number of petitions that had occurred in urban neighborhoods, and the number of collective civic petitions that had occurred in urban neighborhoods);
(2) Petition purpose (e.g., residents' claims, oppositions, and other requests in the petition document);
(3) Petition type (e.g., claim, protest, or hybrid);
(4) Petition counterparties (e.g., state authorities, property management companies, real developer, or others);
(5) Contextual information (e.g., event date, individual urban neighborhoods' locations, the size of individual urban neighborhood, as well as the time that has elapsed since the individual urban neighborhood were built);
(6) Households involvement in individual petitions (the number of families that signed the given petition).

Within this coded information, the typology of individual targeted petitions was subjectively developed according to the classification rules applied in the research about civic engagement in Chicago over three decades (1970–2000) [21]. Within the documentation on the purpose of the individual petitions, the individual targeted petitions were typed as claim, protest, or hybrid. The claim petitions explicitly stated the citizens' proactive demands pertaining to common goods or collective private goods from other stakeholders; the protest petitions explicitly illustrated the citizens' joint opposition and resistance to imprints from other stakeholders; the hybrid petitions were a blend of claim and protest petitions with citizens' explicit claims and resistant behaviors being noted. Due to the subjective attributes involved in coding procedures, the petition type was regarded as an independent variable in the statistical analysis, while the other categorizations of information were regarded as dependent variables.

3. Changing Trends

3.1. General Trends

The general conditions of petitions appealed to Municipal Bureaus of People's Letter and Call in the two cities from 2013 to 2015, and are presented in categories with hierarchically inclusive connections, including all petitions, petitions that have occurred in urban neighborhoods, and targeted petitions (Table 2). The first trend worthy of note is that the petitions which have occurred in urban neighborhoods experienced constant and significant growth in both cities. Although the total number of petitions also increased during the same period, these growths were relatively non-significant compared to the other two categories. For example, in Huai'an City, the annual average rate of change in the number of petitions appealed was 2.5%, which is relatively insignificant compared to the annual growth of petitions that occurred in urban neighborhoods (13.2%). Further, and regarding the constant growth of petitions that occurred in urban neighborhoods, the targeted petitions increased constantly to a rate of 15% in both cities. These numerical comparisons suggest that appealing petitions, whether individually or collectively, has been widely and increasingly applied by citizens in contemporary urban China. Moreover, the relatively higher growth of targeted petitions has occurred

in parallel to rising property-led civic developments within commodity housing developments in urban China [7,31,37].

Table 2. Petitions in Nanjing and Huai'an (2013–2015).

	2013	2014	2015	Annual Average Changing Rate
Nanjing				
All petitions (amounts)	113	121	135	6.1%
(proportions)	100%	100%	100%	
Petitions in urban neighborhoods (amounts)	71	89	99	11.7%
(proportions)	62.8%	73.6%	73.3%	
Targeted petitions (amounts)	49	62	77	16.3%
(proportions)	43.4%	51.2%	57.1%	
Huai'an				
All petitions (amounts)	65	66	70	2.5%
(proportions)	100%	100%	100%	
Petitions in urban neighborhoods (amounts)	31	39	45	13.2%
(proportions)	47.7%	59.1%	64.3%	
Targeted petitions (amounts)	19	24	31	17.7%
(proportions)	29.2%	36.4%	44.3%	

Despite the general growing trends noted, as indicated in Table 2, another important trend is the increase in the number of targeted petitions in the two cities. From 2013 to 2015, targeted petitions increased from around 35% (Nanjing, 43.4%; Huai'an, 29.2%) to around 50% (Nanjing, 57.1%; Huai'an, 44.3%). However, at the urban neighborhood scale, there was a decrease in both single and non-civic petitions. These changes suggest that there has been increased citizen awareness with regard to raising civic engagement and achieving common good in urban neighborhoods. Those increasing trends also suggest that urban neighborhoods have been the main civic territories in urban civic developments [8,40].

The increasing trends noted above all presented similar advancing civic developments in the two cities. However, it is significant to note that some differences still exist. Firstly, with regard to the number of petitions, the number in Nanjing City were significantly greater than those in Huai'an City. This difference could be related to the different urban populations and socioeconomic developments that exist between the two cities. Secondly, the relatively lower proportion of targeted petitions in Huai'an City may indicate the relatively lower level of civic development at the urban neighborhood scale in Huai'an City compared to Nanjing City.

3.2. Trends of Targeted Petitions

It was also noted that the similarities and differences between the two cities were quite significant with regard to the petition types, as indicated in Table 3. Similarly, the claim petitions experienced consistent growth in terms of both number and proportion. In contrast, the annual changes in terms of the number and proportion of protest and hybrid petitions were significantly different between the two cities. In Nanjing City, the claim petitions continually increased in amount and proportion; there was only a minor numerical change in the number of protest petitions, but there was a significant decrease in proportion. There was a continual increase in hybrid petitions, and the hybrid petitions had been the main type in 2015. In Huai'an City, protest petitions were the dominant type, and there has been growth in their number, as well as their proportion. The occurrences of hybrid petitions experienced minor growth in terms of number with a consistent decrease in proportion. These different trends in protest and hybrid petitions reflected individual's different awareness and behavior in their civic engagements [21]. Further, these different levels of consciousness and behavior could be connected to the different levels of civic development in Chinese different-tier cities; to a certain extent, citizens may be more affected by state authoritarian images in lower-tier developing cities [2,8,16,18,41].

Table 3. Collective civic petitions in urban neighborhoods by type (2013–2015).

	2013	2014	2015	**Annual Changing Rate**
Nanjing				
Claim (amount)	12	19	26	29.4%
(proportion)	24.5%	30.7%	33.8%	11.3%
Protest (amount)	21	23	19	−3.3%
(proportion)	42.9%	37.1%	24.7%	−16.8%
Hybrid (amount)	16	20	32	26.0%
(proportion)	32.6%	32.2%	41.5%	8.4%
Huai'an				
Claim (amount)	5	8	10	26.0%
(proportion)	26.4%	33.3%	32.3%	7.0%
Protest (amount)	7	9	12	19.7%
(proportion)	36.8%	37.5%	38.7%	1.6%
Hybrid (amount)	7	7	9	8.7%
(proportion)	36.8%	29.2%	29.0%	−7.6%

3.3. Cross-Tabulation in Targeted Petitions

Through cross-tabulating petition type and petition counterparties, the numerical changes of those targeted petitions were seen to be more variable in the two cities, as indicated in Table 4. In Nanjing City, from 2013 to 2015, the state authorities were the dominant counterparties involved in all petitions, the real developers (RDs) were the least emerged counterparties, and the property management companies (PMCs) were the main counterparties in the hybrid petitions. In Huai'an City, the state authorities were rarely involved as counterparties in claim and hybrid petitions. By contrast, the PMCs were the main counterparties in all the targeted petitions—especially in claim and hybrid petitions. RDs became the dominant counterparties in claim petitions. That, in 2015, the RDs became the dominant counterparties in claim petitions occurred for several reasons, including the fact that several RDs tried to sell car parking spots to individuals against the original contracts.

Table 4. Collective civic petitions in urban neighborhoods by type and counterparties (2013−2015).

Year			**Petition Counterparties**		
			State Authorities	**Real Developers**	**PMCs**
Nanjing					
2013	Claim	%	83.3	8.3	8.3
	Protest	%	76.2	14.3	9.5
	Hybrid	%	37.5	25.0	37.5
	Total	%	65.3	16.3	18.4
2014	Claim	%	73.7	15.8	10.5
	Protest	%	68.0	20.0	12.0
	Hybrid	%	38.9	11.1	50.0
	Total	%	68	16.1	22.6
2015	Claim	%	68.0	25.0	12.0
	Protest	%	68.4	21.1	10.5
	Hybrid	%	40.6	9.4	50.0
	Total	%	56.6	15.8	27.6
Huai'an					
2013	Claim	%	40.0	20.0	40.0
	Protest	%	57.1	14.3	28.6
	Hybrid	%	14.3	28.6	57.1
	Total	%	36.8	21.1	42.1
2014	Claim	%	37.5	25.0	37.5
	Protest	%	44.4	22.2	33.3
	Hybrid	%	14.3	42.9	42.9
	Total	%	33.3	29.2	37.5
2015	Claim	%	20.0	50.0	30.0
	Protest	%	58.3	25.0	16.7
	Hybrid	%	11.1	33.3	55.6
	Total	%	32.3	35.5	32.3

Similarly, in both cities, the state authorities always emerged as the main counterparties in the targeted petitions, and especially in protest petitions (with proportions over 65%); by contrast, RDs rarely appeared as counterparties in the targeted petitions (with proportions less than 30%), and PMCs were the main counterparties that emerged in the hybrid petitions. The differences between the two case cities were the different proportions of the various petitions against the PMCs.

4. Internal Mechanisms

4.1. Correlation Analysis

Citizens' civic awareness and behaviors in those targeted petitions could differ with regard to the different territorial and social contexts of individual urban neighborhoods, and also with regard to the different petition counterparties [20,34–36]. Consequently, the petition type was determined as the dependent variable in the statistical analysis. Table 5 indicates the comparative correlation analysis among dependent and independent variables in all the targeted petitions in the two cities for the years 2013 to 2015. Regarding the petition type, the correlation model confirmed the existence of internal mechanisms in those targeted petitions, and that there were a range of similarities that existed between the two cities. Among all the independent variables, the ages of individual urban neighborhoods and households involved were all significantly correlated to the petition type, while the housing size of individual urban neighborhoods was not vitally correlated to the dependent variable. By contrast, the petition counterparties were significantly correlated to the petition type in Nanjing City, but not significantly correlated in Huai'an City. These correlations enabled the further application of the logistic regression model to explore the relevant independent variables' correlations to the petition types.

Table 5. Correlation among dependent and independent variables.

		Ages of Urban Neighborhoods [1]	Petition Counterparty	Housing Size	Households Involved
Nanjing					
Petition type	Pearson Correlation	0.240 **	0.346 **	0.020	0.299 **
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	0.000	0.787	0.000
Huai'an					
Petition type	Pearson Correlation	0.237 *	0.164	0.155	0.353 **
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.042	0.164	0.189	0.002

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). [1] Age of urban neighborhoods is the categorical variable explaining the built dates of individual neighborhoods, including pre-1998, 1999–2008, and after 2009 [39].

4.2. Logistic Regression

As indicated in Table 6, certain similarities and differences between the internal mechanisms of the targeted petitions emerged from the logistic model. The categorization involved in those independent variables was differently correlated to the petition type. Initially, and with reference to those correlations between the ages of urban neighborhoods and petition type, the statistical analysis suggests that targeted petitions might be more processed as the hybrid type in urban neighborhoods built between 1999 and 2008, which were similar in both cities. These similar correlations suggest the application of citizens' social capital in those hybrid petitions. This suggestion is in line with some existent empirical evidence about the neighboring environment in Chinese urban neighborhoods with regard to the highly heterogeneous nature of older neighborhoods and new neighborhoods [10–12,28–30,40]. There is no other significant correlation between the age of urban neighborhoods and the other two types of petitions—claim petitions and protest petitions.

On another note, the involved households present significant correlations to the protest and hybrid petitions in the two cities. These similar correlations further indicate the application of citizens' social capital in determining civic awareness and behavior within the targeted petitions [21,41].

Table 6. Logistic regression on the correlated variables to petition types.

	Petition Type [1]		Beta	Standard Error	Sig. [2]
Nanjing					
Protest	Ages of urban neighborhoods	Pre-1998	0.466	0.491	0.342
		1999–2008	0.033	0.521	0.949
		After 2009	−0.918	0.547	0.093
	Households Involved		0.021	0.009	0.015
Hybrid	Ages of urban neighborhoods	Pre-1998	−1.960	0.638	0.002
		1999–2008	0.455	0.483	0.346
		After 2009	−1.266	0.563	0.025
	Households Involved		0.037	0.009	0.000
Huai'an					
Protest	Ages of urban neighborhoods	Pre-1998	0.031	0.687	0.964
		1999–2008	1.301	0.843	0.123
		After 2009	−0.886	0.867	0.307
	Households Involved		0.020	0.016	0.043
Hybrid	Ages of urban neighborhoods	Pre-1998	−2.214	1.191	0.049
		1999–2008	1.567	0.847	0.065
		After 2009	−1.876	0.987	0.050
	Households Involved		0.040	0.018	0.027

[1] The reference category is the claim petition, with relative lower occurrences in two cities. [2] Regression is significant at the 0.05.

5. Spatial Mapping

The spatial mapping of those targeted petitions illustrated several similarities and differences with regard to the distribution of those targeted petitions in the two cities. Concerning the two cities, the spatial strata was set according to the historical urban territorial changes described in the city master plans of the last two decades, as indicated in Figures 2 and 3 [42–46].
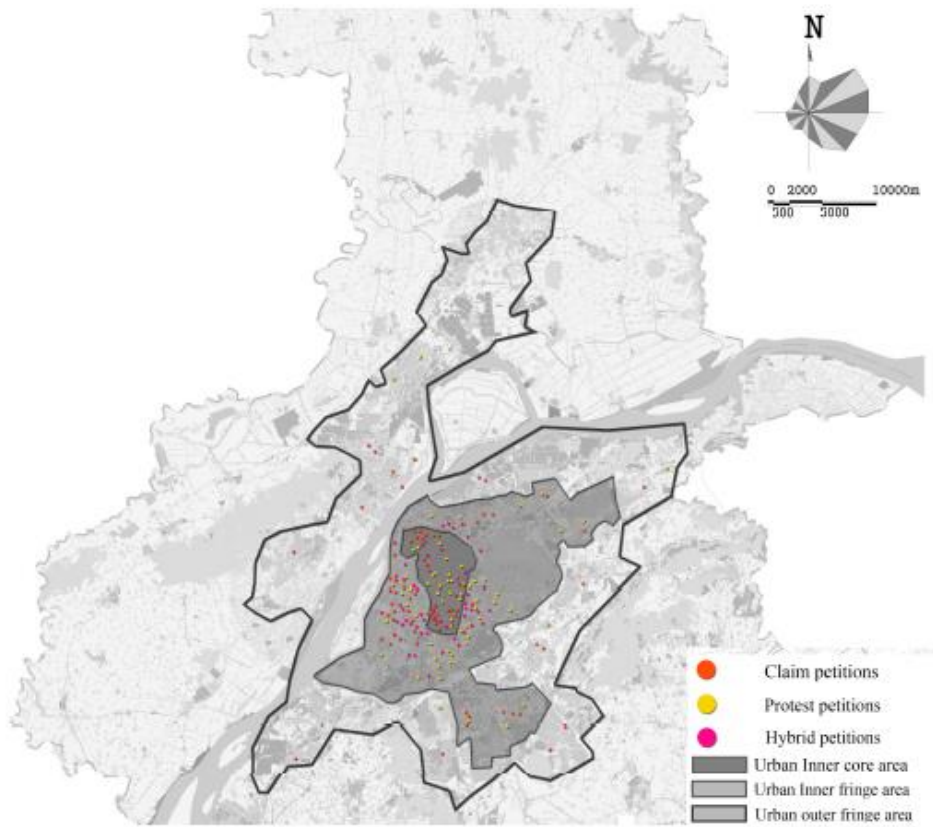
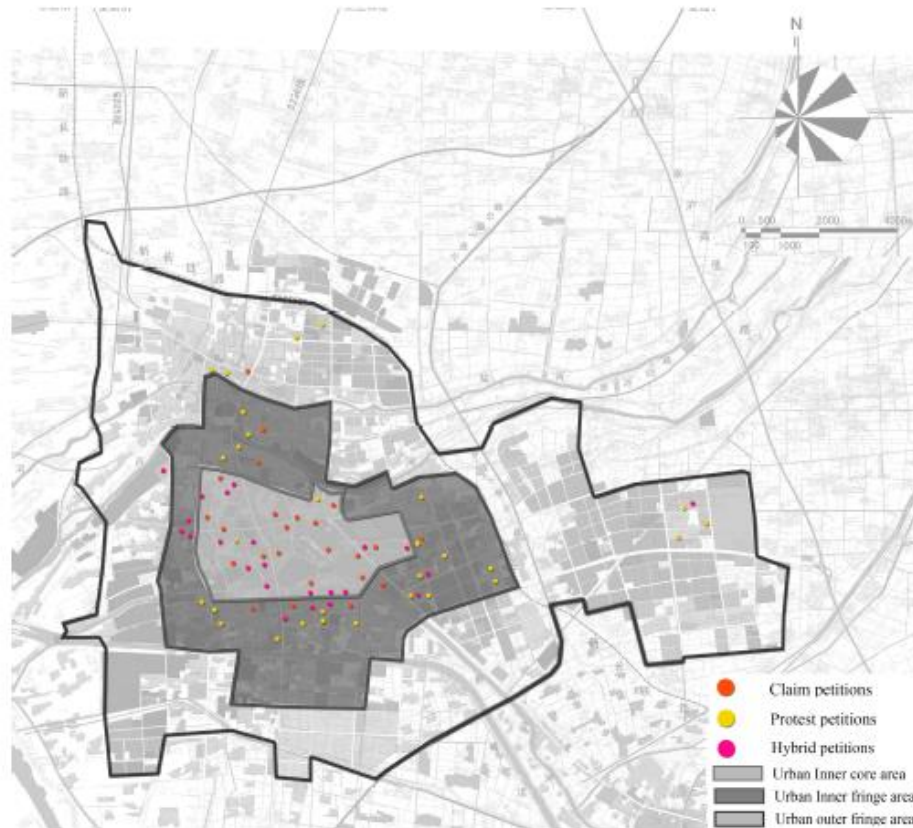**Figure 2.** Location of collective civic petition in urban neighborhoods in Nanjing.

Figure 3. Location of collective civic petition in urban neighborhoods in Huai'an.

5.1. Spatial Distribution

As indicated in Figure 4, the mapping results suggested some similarities in the spatial distribution of the targeted petitions in both cities. All targeted petitions seem to have occurred in those urban neighborhoods that are located in the urban inner core areas and the inner fringe areas, whereas examples of targeted petitions were relative rare in those urban neighborhoods located in the urban outer fringe areas. The significant spatial concentrations in the inner core areas and inner fringe areas can be related to general housing developments within Chinese urban planning practices since the 1980s [39,42]. As indicated in the city master plans of the two cities, urban neighborhoods were progressively developed initially in urban inner core areas, and then in urban inner fringe areas [47–53]. Cumulatively, in the two cities, those radical urban renewals resulted in the relative concentration of urban neighborhoods in urban inner core areas and inner fringe areas [42]. As indicated in latest city master plans of the two cities, the residential areas are the main urban spaces in the urban inner spaces (including inner core areas and inner fringe areas), and account for 42.1% and 38.7% of population in Nanjing and Huai'an respectively [50,53]. However, despite these similar spatial concentrations, there also existed certain differences. In Nanjing City, all the targeted petitions were more located in the inner fringe areas than the inner core areas. Conversely, in Huai'an City, those targeted petitions, typed as claim and hybrid, were more often located in the inner core area; protest petitions tended to be located in the inner fringe area.
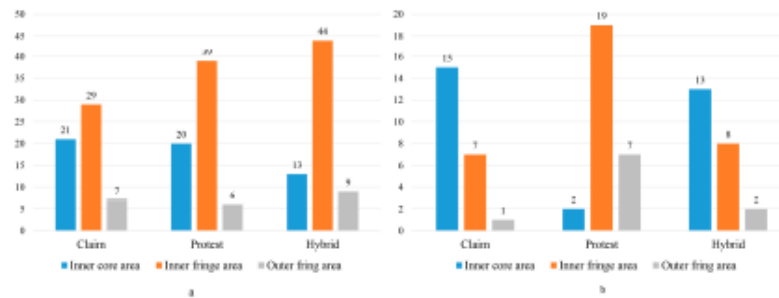
Figure 4. (a) Distributions of individual targeted petitions in urban stratums (Nanjing); (b) Distributions of individual targeted petitions in urban stratums (Huai'an).

Having cross-tabulated the petition types and petition counterparties, the mapping results suggest the existence of further similarities and differences with further spatial concentrations in the urban inner core and fringe areas, as indicated in Figure 5. With reference to claim and protest petitions, it can be noted that, in Nanjing City, most targeted petitions were raised against state authorities, with fewer being raised against RDs and PMCs. However, with regard to hybrid petitions, PMCs were the most numerous counterparties. In Huai'an City—and as a consequence of the more limited samples in the cross-tabulation—the only suggestion that emerges is that protest petitions located in the urban inner fringe area were mostly against state authorities. Consequently, regarding spatial concentration, it can be concluded that the protest petitions against state authorities tended to occur more often in the urban inner fringe areas of both cities.
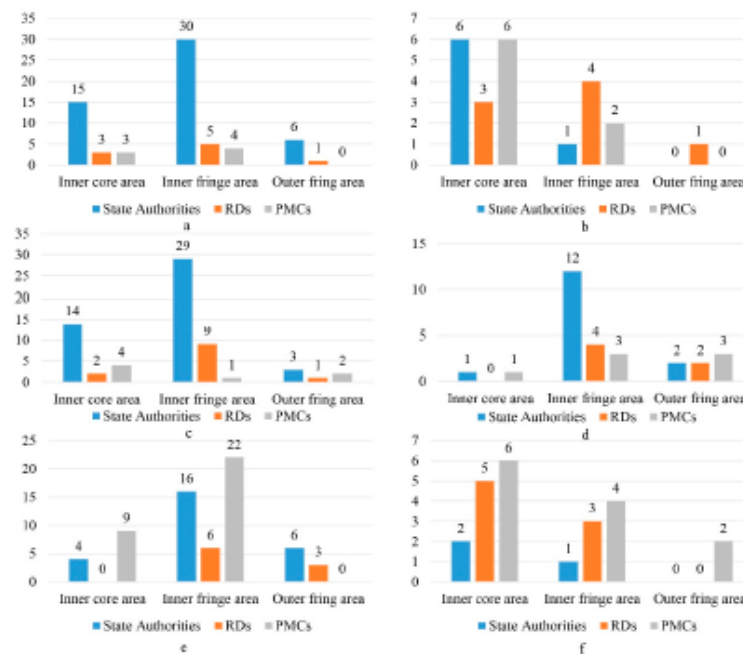

Figure 5. (a) Distributions of claim petitions in urban stratums, Nanjing; (b) Distributions of claim petitions in urban stratums, Huai'an; (c) Distributions of protest petitions in urban stratums, Nanjing; (d) Distributions of protest petitions in urban stratums, Huai'an; (e) Distributions of hybrid petitions in urban stratums, Nanjing; (f) Distributions of hybrid petitions in urban stratums, Huai'an.

5.2. Spatial Agglomeration

Within those spatial concentrations, the mapping results further suggested the existence of spatial agglomerations among those targeted petitions, as indicated in Figures 6 and 7. Similarly, there emerged a number of spatial agglomerations comprised of protest petitions against the state authorities and hybrid petitions against PMCs. Regarding those protest petitions against state authorities, there were three spatial agglomerations (including more than three petitions) in urban inner fringe areas in Nanjing City; and two spatial agglomerations (including three petitions) in Huai'an city. Regarding the hybrid petitions against PMCs, there were three spatial agglomerations in Nanjing City, as one agglomeration (including four petitions) located in the inner core area and two (both including more than three petitions) located in the inner fringe area. Two spatial agglomerations emerged in Huai'an city, one (including three petitions) located in the inner core area, and another (including three petitions) located in the inner fringe area. Contrastingly, there were two spatial agglomerations of claim petitions against state authorities in Nanjing City, but no such spatial agglomerations in Huai'an City.
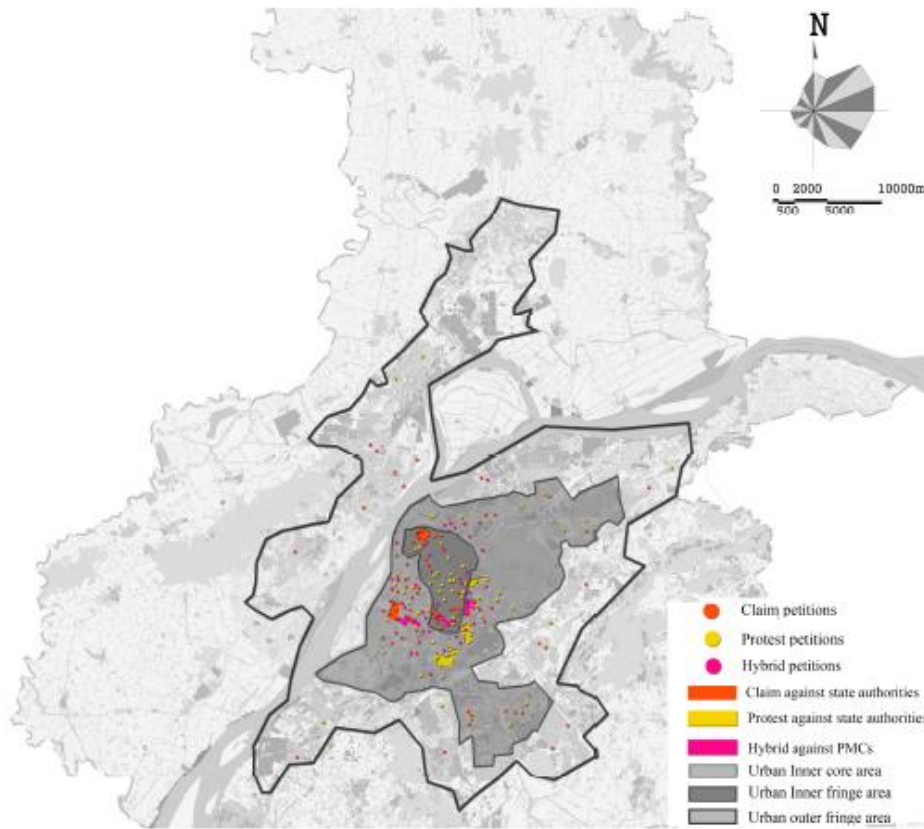
Figure 6. The spatial agglomeration of collective civic petitions in urban neighborhoods in Nanjing.
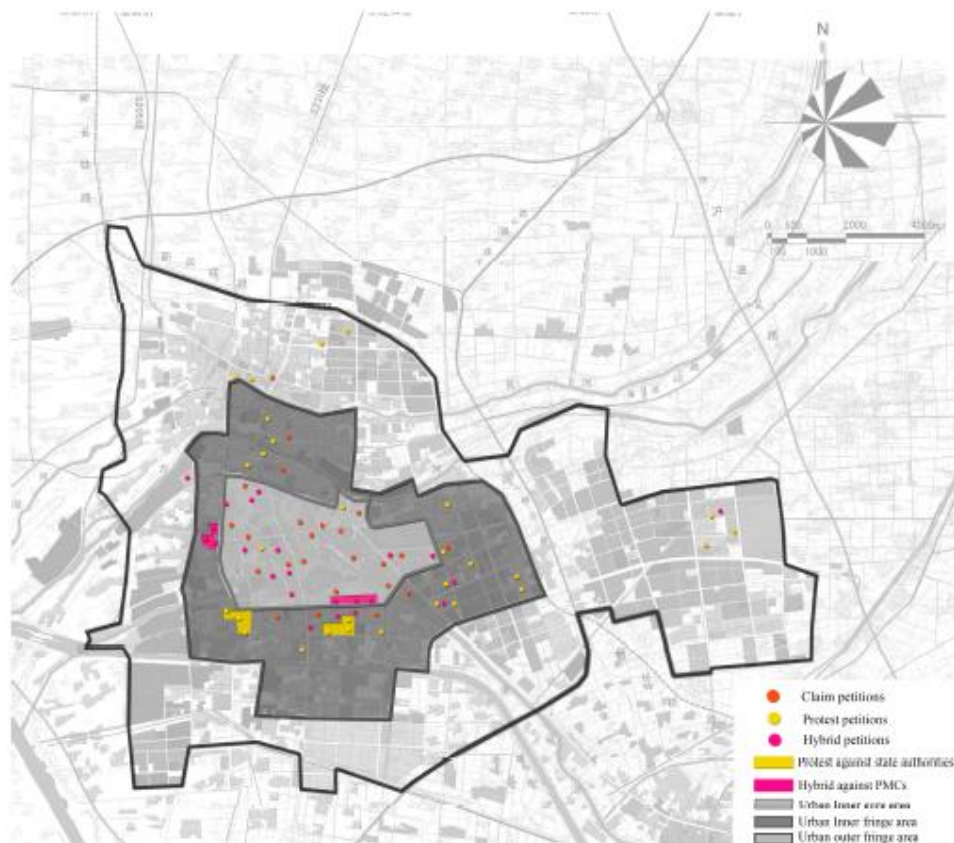
311

Figure 7. The spatial agglomeration of collective civic petitions in urban neighborhoods in Huai'an.

6. Research Findings

Based on the typology of all the targeted petitions in the two cities, the series paralleling analysis presented several similarities and differences pertaining to civic engagements in the two cities' respective urban neighborhoods. These similarities were qualified by reflecting upon citizens' raised civic awareness and behavior with regard to advancing contemporary civic developments in urban China. The differences that were found through the analysis may well illustrate the existence of different levels of urban civic development between different-tier cities that possess socioeconomic differences.

6.1. Advancing Urban Civic Engagements

As indicated through the numerical analysis, targeted petitions were the most numerous type of petition in the two cities. At the city scale, the increased number and proportion of targeted petitions suggests that urban neighborhoods have been the main civic territories for raising civic engagements in both cities [36,53]. This is similar to the findings of some western empirical studies about civic development and socioeconomic changes with regard to urban neighborhoods' size, and the effects of increasing residential density caused through rapid urbanization [53]. At the individual urban neighborhood scale, the growing trend of appealing collective civic petitions witnessed a consistent decrease in 'single' and 'non-civic' petitions. However, the differences in the proportions of targeted petitions suggest that there has been greater advancement of citizens' civic engagements in the

second-tier city, Nanjing City, than the third-tier city, Huai'an City. Corresponding to this different level of civic development, the differences that emerged with regard to the comparisons between petition types also reflected a more advanced civic development in Nanjing city. These research findings indicate a general growing trend of citizens appealing collective civic petitions in urban China, and certain different levels of urban civic development between these two different-tier cities.

6.2. Internal Mechanisms within the Typology

The statistical analysis presented the existence of internal mechanisms about the correlations among petition types and the various contexts in individual targeted petitions. To the petition type as the dependent variable, the correlation models stated the similar correlations from two independent variables, including ages of individual urban neighborhoods and households involved in individual petitions. As the territorial context, the ages of individual urban neighborhoods reflected the social networks among neighbors within long-term acquaintances; and, as the petition context, the households involved reflected the citizens' trust and reciprocities in making collective decisions [3,4]. Consequently, these internal mechanisms, among two independent variables and petition types, presented the strong application of social capital in citizens' collective civic resistances [2–5]. Further, the logistic regression model suggested that the hybrid petitions had occurred less in the urban neighborhoods with ages over 20 years (pre-1998) or less than 10 years (after 2009). This correlation might indicate the different conditions of neighbors' social capital within Chinese urban housing developments, with high heterogeneity in the renewed old neighborhoods (pre-1998) and new neighborhoods (after 2009). Besides that, there existed significant correlation among petition types and counterparties in the targeted petitions in Nanjing city, but no such correlation existed in Huai'an. This correlation further suggested the more advanced civic development in the second-tier city, as citizens had more oriented civic awareness and behaviors against certain counterparties.

6.3. Spatial Concentration and Agglomerations

As indicated in the spatial mapping, all targeted petitions tended to be located in the urban inner core areas and inner fringe areas of the two cities with similar urban spatial structure. In one aspect, these spatial concentrations can be related to Chinas' urban housing developments within the similar urban renewal procedures in the radical forms from inner core area to inner fringe area. Moreover, by cross-tabulating petition types and petition counterparties, the mapping results suggest that certain spatial agglomerations exist in the urban inner core areas and the inner fringe areas of the two cities. These spatial agglomerations further suggest the existence of potential spillover effects among individual targeted petitions. However, with regard to the spatial agglomerations, there were differences in their number and composition between the two cities; there were significantly more in Nanjing City. In addition, there was only evidence of spatial agglomerations of claim petitions against state authorities in Nanjing City.

7. Conclusions

With typological analysis applied to those targeted petitions in years 2013 to 2015, this paper suggests several important research findings with regard to improving urban civic developments in two different-tier Chinese cities. The collective civic petitions had been increasingly and widely applied by citizens in resistance against imprints from other stakeholders, including state authorities, RDs, and PMCs. Urban neighborhoods had been the main civic territory in advancing urban civic developments. Some petition contexts presented significant correlations to the different petition types, and those correlations indicated the application of social capital in citizens' civic engagements [4–6]. Similar spatial agglomerations, with regard to targeted petitions, include protest petitions against state authorities and hybrid petitions against PMCs, which emerged in urban inner core areas and inner fringe areas. However, these identified differences reflected different levels of advancing civic development between two Chinese different-tier cities. These differences were also consistent with

some empirical research findings about differences between civic engagements pertaining to different socioeconomic contexts [6,20,35].

The research findings from this paper also raise some new research subjects and directions pertaining to contemporary China's urban civic development. In one aspect, in subjects of urban studies, studying the efficacy of civic engagement could be enable observation of the social changes with highly socioeconomic homogeneity in individual urban neighborhoods [19,30,34,54]. Another aspect, in the subjects of urban political and social studies, is the increasing trends of applying collective civic petitions against state authorities which indicate more opportunities on observing the changes in citizens' participation in urban China, as climbing the ladder of citizen participation, within the socialist states' bounded administrations on civic engagements [1,17,18,55].

Author Contributions: L.T. designed the analytical framework, and wrote and revised the paper. F.Z. co-wrote and revised the paper. X.F. constructed the model and analyzed the data. Y.L. assisted the collection of research data. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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