

INTRODUCTION

Graduated Provisioning in China's Urbanized Villages



In 2014, China's central government unveiled its National Urbanization Plan, presenting it as "people-centered." The plan is part of Xi Jinping's "new era," which began in 2013 and hails the ideal of a "peaceful and prosperous society" hinging on a more equal distribution of wealth. Socioeconomic inequalities became acute in China's first three decades of reform (1978–2006), which, though not as exacting as Eastern European shock therapy, saw the end of the delivery of free social goods such as housing as well as general state retrenchment on the distribution of welfare and social services (Selden and You 1997; Wong 2006; Zhang and Ong 2008; Duckett 2011; Ong and Zhang 2015).

Proclamations about the need for a more egalitarian development path can be traced back to Hu Jintao's presidency (2003–12). In 2004, the Chinese state pledged to create a "harmonious society" by rebalancing the economy, improving public services, reducing regional inequalities, and promoting fairness. Two years later, "urban-rural integration," intended to bring urban and rural development into the same framework, became a national directive after decades of a sustained drive aimed at urban and industrial development.¹ Although it continues these efforts, for the first time in Chinese history the National Urbanization Plan acknowledged the importance of urbanization and the need to remedy the inequalities generated by the urbanization process itself.² The plan, promoting a "new type of urbanization," was a response to the challenges of mass environmental damage, social unrest, as well as the generation and reproduction of inequalities created by the speed of China's urbanization.

The main drivers of China's widening inequalities and their reproduction over time have been uneven development favoring large coastal cities and the differences in access to education and welfare for urban citizens and migrants from the countryside resulting from the institutional, social, and economic separation of urban and rural areas (Kwong 2004; Liang and Chen 2007; Goodburn 2009, 2015; Liu et al. 2009; Solinger 2018). China's urban population grew from 172 million in 1978 to 691 million in 2011, when it exceeded the number of rural residents, and reached 902 million in 2021. In 1980, at the outset of the country's market-oriented economic reforms, the urban population comprised 19.36 percent of the total population. This grew to 63.88 percent in 2020; however, the share of the *registered urban population* in the total population is far less: in 2020 only 45.4 percent of the total population were registered as residents of the city in which they lived (National Bureau of Statistics 2021).³ The remaining 18.48 percent consists of the so-called floating population: people living for more than six months in an urban place other than where they are registered, i.e., to which their *hukou* is attached.⁴

Hukou is a form of local citizenship, which entitles people to certain rights, notably rights to welfare and education, based on people's place of origin, not work or residence. The *hukou* registration system has enabled several decades of export-oriented economic growth based on both a low-waged labor force and low-cost socialized reproduction, in what has variously been termed China's "temporary urbanization" (Sklair 1991) or "semi-urbanization" (Chan 2021).⁵ Until very recently, the temporary residence status of migrant workers has excluded them from the social services and welfare entitlements provided in the urban localities—mainly urban villages—where they live, and city infrastructure planning and resource allocation have paid little attention to migrants' needs, taking into account only the population with *de jure* urban registered residency, i.e., the *hukou*-holding population.

China's recent reforms aim to eliminate the unequal entitlement to social protection that rigidly divided urban and rural residents according to the conventional household registration system. One of the goals of the National Urbanization Plan, which unfolded from 2014 to 2020, was to grant urban *hukou* to approximately 100 million people. Even more noticeable was the policy paper issued by the State Council announcing the abolition of the classification of *hukou* as rural or urban as they had been since 1958: Chinese citizens will universally register simply as "residents" (*jumin*).⁶

This book's primary focus is on the intertwined processes of creating urban neighborhoods (the transformation of rural villages hosting large sections of migrant workers into urban communities) and of making public goods (among others pensions and health insurance, public parks, education, and senior care) equally accessible to all living in these recently urbanized communities.⁷ Public goods are a major political issue in countries whose constitutions profess an ideology of equality that is belied by high-speed capitalist urbanization. Despite political proclamations and increased state redistribution, equality is not the only principle taken into consideration by the Chinese authorities: it is kept in check by their commitment to "trickle-down" ideology, creating a "moderately well-off society" (*xiaokang shehui*), and by the capitalist logics of uneven development. The burden of solving the dilemmas resulting from these contradictory commitments falls on the governments of fast-growing cities facing scalar reorganization, which has created fiscal pressure, and intercity competition to attract capital and talent.

Examining the making of new urban neighborhoods in China through the lens of public goods provisioning offers a way of analyzing the shaping of Chinese cities according to a variety of processes, of which neoliberalization is one key aspect, as both a sociospatial function of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" (Lim 2014b: 223) on the national scale and a tool of local governance in conditions of budgetary scarcity. The reforms adopted under the National Urbanization Plan aim at facilitating migrants' access to urban public goods, but do so in highly graduated ways, and discrimination remains high. The book explores the way in which municipal governments have sought to extend rights such as education benefits, employment assistance, housing, eldercare, social welfare, and social assistance to newcomers. Local governments bear the brunt of the financial responsibility of meeting the central government's directives for equalization and better service provision without burdening their budgets.

In so doing, they are comforted by the central government's call to "gradually achieving equality" (State Council 2014). "Gradual" is an omnipresent qualifier when it comes to equalizing access to public goods, which local governments interpret both literally, to legitimize their slow progress toward equalization based on their budgetary resources, and more figuratively by interpreting "gradual" as "in graduated measures": policies that differentiate and select those most worthy of access to public goods.

The processes by which they increase their intervention in the provision of urban public goods are multifaceted and uneven. This book takes a pragmatic and historicized approach to public goods. A historicized approach retraces changing provisioning paths and shows that although provision is no longer based on the classification of Chinese citizens as either rural or urban, enduring legacies of this old dichotomy are still apparent in the inequalities and tensions that surface in China's urban villages. A pragmatic approach avoids some of the dead ends of the debate about whether neoliberalism is predominant in China, which is mainly about ideology and discourse instead of practice; this book looks at actual practices of provisioning in Chinese urbanized villages. The concept of graduated provision highlights the contradictions between the authorities' economic and social policies.

I first introduce China's villages-in-the-city (*chengzhongcun*), or urban villages, which are ideal sites for observing the immense challenges facing the Chinese authorities in terms of managing rapid urban growth, reducing inequalities, and ensuring social stability, and which have come to stand for many of these problems. The urbanization of these formerly rural villages raises particular challenges in terms of the provision of public goods, and the social division between natives and migrants poses issues of inequality in access to public goods. Next, I present the ways economists have initially defined public goods according to inherent characteristics distinguishing them from other types of goods—private goods, club goods, and common-pool resources. This has been shown to be highly problematic; I therefore advocate a political economy approach that defines public goods as the result of political decisions to provide them. A focus on public goods allows consideration of both the state's importance as a provider and its shortcomings in providing public goods. The recent literature's preoccupation with commons tends to neglect these issues or even to construe public goods as antithetical to commons (see discussion in later sections). However, they are not: both are social goods.

Instead of romanticizing the commons by opposing them to public goods, as in much of the current literature, we should be looking at practices that change the status of goods. The third section shows how Elinor Ostrom takes a different approach that has resulted in her well-known work on commons, which result from *practices* of management and distribution at the local community level. This leads me to distinguish between the logics of clubbing and of commoning practices. Although they differ in that one is based on market logics

and the other is not, both delineate the contours of a community of users, and both are deployed as neoliberal practice, in spite of Chinese leaders' ideological proclamations about neoliberalism's absence in China.

The Chinese state continues to use a developmental narrative of progress and civilization as marked by urbanization, and it embraces modernist ideals of universal service access. I argue that this teleological vision of urbanization, in combination with the goal of "gradually equalizing access," accounts for the set of practices encapsulated in this book by the concept of "graduated provision." This book's comparative approach and ethnographic focus on the actual provisioning of and access to public goods in urban villages reveals how provision is graduated both temporally and spatially. In temporal terms, graduated provision reflects the evolutionary view of urbanization that prevails in China. Spatially, the concept and its practices provide different public goods to different communities based on their social composition, and to different categories of population within the same communities.

China's Urban Villages

Chinese urban villages are particularly interesting sites for observing how the authorities endeavor to reduce the extreme socioeconomic inequality that has emerged since the adoption of state capitalism. The book compares three urban villages, located in the cities of Shenzhen, Chengdu, and Xi'an. These three sites, anonymized as Pine Mansion, South Gate, and River Hamlet respectively, have experienced similar demographic explosions, with tenfold increases in population within the same time frame. This growth has brought dramatic changes to their landscapes, the livelihoods of their native inhabitants, and the power structures governing residents. All three were rural until the 1990s, when peasant incomes no longer primarily derived from the cultivation of land, and Pine Mansion, South Gate, and River Hamlet were legally urbanized—became administratively urban—in 2004.

The literature published on urban villages is so extensive that it is impossible to cite all of the works. Most available studies focus on only one village or create a composite portrait of a typical village based on a few cases studied in-depth (Li 2004, 2020). Monographs often retrace a village's evolution over time, drawing on classic sociological functionalism (Zhe 1997; Zhe and Chen 1997; Zhou and Gao

2001). This is especially the case when they deal with the “problem” of urban villages through the lens of Wirth’s (1938) notion of urbanism.⁸ The most influential research in this regard is that of Li Peilin (2002, 2004), who describes the psychocultural resilience of rural identity and the endurance of rural traditions among native urban villagers and migrant workers (see also Lan 2001, 2005; Wang and Zhang 2008; Wang 2015). Others are concerned with the sociospatial functions and planning problems of urban villages (Tang and Chung 2002; Song, Zenou, and Ding 2008; Tian 2008; Wang, Wang, and Wu 2009; Liu et al. 2010; Chung 2010, 2013). Most recently, a political economy approach has been adopted to focus on urban village redevelopment, making policy recommendations for progressive steps that protect the interests of local inhabitants, both native and migrant (Li and Liu 2018; Zhan 2018, 2021; Li 2020; Zhang 2021).

None of these studies focus on issues of public goods provision, although these are intrinsically related to the formation of urban villages in China, and their social characteristics in turn make public goods a central issue. Urban villages, or “villages-in-the-city,” which can be found in all Chinese cities, differ from the definition that Western urban planners have lent the term when designing new types of “village-like” neighborhood, notably in the UK (Chung 2010: 423). Moreover, they differ from squatter settlements and even from “migrant enclaves,” although they usually host large sections of the migrant population.⁹ While they can be very loosely defined as distinct spaces within the city, there is broad agreement among both Chinese and Western scholars that the term refers to a more precise phenomenon: it designates formerly rural villages, built by their native peasant inhabitants in the absence of planning, that have been engulfed by urbanization (Li 2002, 2004, 2020; Chung 2010; Wang 2017).

They are the product of China’s rapid urbanization, the political origin of which lies in the reshuffling of state power (Lin et al. 2015: 1964). The recentralization of fiscal resources in 1997 reduced local governments’ share of China’s growing fiscal revenue while increasing that of the central government,¹⁰ the fiscal pressure heightened by the decentralization of responsibilities along with increasing pressure on local governments to provide public goods such as compulsory education as part of the “harmonious society” project (Oi and Zhao 2007; Wong 2010; Jia, Guo, and Zhang 2014). This rearrangement of central-local power relations concerning responsibilities and tax collection since the mid-1990s is a state-led instance of the rescaling processes that have given increased importance to the subnational scale, with local strategies for attracting investment and rationalizing

the management of welfare in many countries (Brenner 2004; Kennedy 2017).

As a result, municipal governments face substantial budget deficits that drive them to seek extrabudgetary resources, mainly by promoting land conversion on the city's rural fringes. Only after collective agricultural land has been converted to state-owned urban land can its use rights be traded on the market, generating conveying fees and land-leasing income to strengthen municipal budgets (Wu Weiping 1999, 2010; Lin 2007; Wu, Xu, and Yeh 2008; Lin and Yi 2011; Lin et al. 2015; He, Zhou, and Huang 2016). Chinese municipal governments' massive conversion of land from rural to urban use, often within the extensive boundaries of urban jurisdictions, has played a crucial part in the urbanization of capital and the expansion of the built-up urban area.¹¹

The dramatic increase in China's urban population is the result of changes to the classification of the urban population and urban settlements and to the administrative boundaries of many cities (Zhou and Ma 2003; Chan 2014) following the recategorization of tens of thousands of previously rural villages.¹² In the sixteen years from 1985 to 2001, the number of Chinese villages dropped from 940,617 to 709,257. In 2001 alone, an average of seventy villages vanished from China's map every day (Li Peilin 2020: 23). These villages have undergone a process of legal urbanization involving their administrative conversion to urban communities under which their residents, formerly categorized as rural, become urban citizens. While the 1980s and 1990s were marked by a process of rural urbanization (Guldin 1992, 1997), by the early 2000s rural villages on the outskirts of expanding cities had been partially or entirely overrun by rapid urban sprawl, spurring this administrative change.

When a village is urbanized, the power of the original village leaders is eroded, and urban public goods replace the village commons. Indeed, while rural villages are autonomous organizations and village collectives legally own their rural land, urban communities are under direct state control, and the urban land they occupy is owned by the state. This principle was instituted under Mao and reasserted in the revised Constitution of 1982 (Zhao 2009: 97).¹³ As a consequence of this rural-urban dichotomy, a dual regime of public goods prevailed. The local state was responsible for the provisioning of urban areas, the basic provider under the urban public goods regime being the *danwei*, the local work unit. Rural collectives were largely responsible for their own welfare, infrastructure, public security, and sanitation (Han and Huang 2019). In the 1980s, the state

severely cut its already very small amount of direct aid for rural collectives (Howard 1986; Wong 1988), and many village communities had to largely finance their own infrastructure and other public services even as they started to urbanize their infrastructure and their populations expanded (Jiang 2005; Po 2012; Cheng 2014).

With administrative urbanization, villages (*cun*) become urban communities (*shequ*) under the jurisdiction of the municipality—that is, the local state—and, at least in theory, their land is transferred to the state along with responsibility for the provision of public goods. The ultimate goal of China’s policies is to entirely rid these former villages of their rural characteristics, based on an ideology that values the urban as the hallmark of modernity (Xie 2005; O’Donnell, Wong, and Bach 2017). Urban villages are still called *chenzhongcun*, villages-in-the-city, despite having been officially urbanized. The reason for this labeling, which carries a negative connotation, is that such neighborhoods are physically marked by their former rural status. Urbanized villages are conglomerations of highly diverse types of buildings and housing complexes constructed at different moments in time, many built informally by villagers in the absence of state planning, generally prior to the administrative urbanization. Moreover, their social characteristics starkly distinguish urbanized villages from other urban neighborhoods. They retain close-knit native villager communities that coexist with large sections of the floating population that the authorities view as a potential source of social instability (Xiang 2005; Zhang 2006), playing a functional role in providing inexpensive housing for the growing urban population (Tang and Chung 2002; Song, Zenou, and Ding 2008; Liu et al. 2010; Zhang 2011; Wu, Zhang, and Webster 2013; Wang, Du, and Li 2014; Cheng 2014; Zhan 2018).

Indeed, urban villages are the main recipients of the massive inflow of migrants from China’s towns and countryside. Statistics show that while migrant workers account for 20 to 50 percent of the population in some of China’s major cities, they often account for 80 percent or more of the total population of villages-in-the-city (Zhao et al. 2003; Li 2006; Chung 2010). They outnumber the native villagers by up to ten to one but are denied permanent residency rights and many of the associated social benefits that the native villagers, now urbanites, enjoy.

This book compares three villages-in-the-city, which were legally urbanized in 2004, through the lens of public goods. The change in the status of social goods from village commons to public goods in urbanizing villages illuminates the complex processes of China’s uneven urbanization. In principle, administrative urbanization should

result in the local state (municipal government) taking over village land and assuming responsibility for the provision of urban public goods; however, because land requisition involves the payment of compensation and entails additional infrastructure and service costs for the government (Po 2012), and because urbanized villages have large immigrant populations, this transition can lag behind the official declaration of a village as an urban community and is a highly conditional and fragmented process. The urbanization of rural villages thus generates tensions in the provision of social goods.

Public Goods and Club Goods

Public goods are one type of social good. Social goods are those essential to social reproduction, such as housing, roads, and electricity, including services such as education, healthcare, and welfare. Public goods are goods whose provision is regulated by a public entity, usually the state, although their actual delivery can be delegated to village-level public collectives and private actors. In Chinese economics, public goods are called *gonggong wupin*, but people more frequently refer to *gonggong sheshi* (public facilities or services) and *fuli* (welfare benefits). Reflecting these grassroots understandings, this book adopts a broader and more flexible approach to public goods than that used by economists.

Economists usually distinguish between four types of goods: public, private, club, and common-pool-resources. Public goods were invented in the period running from the late 1930s to the early 1950s, i.e., in the post–Great Depression context of the expanding interventionist state, by the economists Robert Musgrave (1939) and Paul Samuelson (1956). They defined them as neither rivalrous nor excludable owing to their natural characteristics. Nonrivalrousness, or nonsubtractability, means that one person consuming the good does not diminish another person’s consumption of it. Nonexcludability describes the impossibility of preventing someone’s access to a good when they wish to consume it.¹⁴ According to Samuelson (1956), in both these respects public goods—the typical example he gave being a lighthouse guiding all boats navigating in the area—stand opposed to bread, the quintessential private good. The premise that the features of public goods encourage free-riding (benefiting from a collective good without paying for it) and discourage private companies from profiting through their provision has laid the foundation for arguments supporting their provisioning by governments.

However, many public-sector economists have come to recognize that few goods are inherently nonrivalrous or nonexcludable (see Trémon 2022). Locally delivered urban public goods in particular do not exist per se; rather, they are social and political constructs (Elickson 1973; Goldin 1977; Malkin and Wildavski 1991; Stiglitz 2000; Kaul 2006). For instance, bread—the prototypical “private good” in Samuelson’s polar model—can become a matter of public concern in times of shortage, and the government can take over its distribution (Colm 1956). In the context of a pandemic, vaccines can become a “global public good” if states lift intellectual property rights allowing exclusion.

As Mary Douglas points out, absolutely anything can be a public good; it all depends on decisions regarding whether healthcare, schools, and parks should be public goods (1989: 43). If there are no inherent features that help to distinguish between private and public goods, and if the boundaries stem from social and political decisions, there is no way of justifying governmental intervention (and the imposition of taxes) on the basis of the nature of goods. “Economic theory can tell us about the efficiency of that choice. But it cannot make the choice for us,” write Malkin and Wildavski (1991: 365). The subject matter, they conclude, has to be taken away from economics and put squarely back into political economy (1991: 373).

Public goods are goods essential to social reproduction; their modalities of distribution conform to more abstract visions of the common good, and therefore their provisioning is often a government monopoly. The “provisioning path” (Narotzky 2012) ties together the production and the consumption of public goods and raises questions about the politics of distribution (who is entitled to and who has access to public goods) and about the politics of responsibility (who provides them). The anthropologists Laura Bear and Nayanika Mathur, in a special issue on bureaucracy (2015: 19–20, 22, 26), refer to a new range of public goods that includes “the public good of fiscal austerity” and “the public good of transparency.” However, this stretches the definition of public goods far beyond provisioning. To be sure, they bear a close relationship to the public good in the singular. The Chinese term *gongyi*, a contraction of *gonggong liyi*, translates as “the common good,” “the public interest,” “general welfare”—a political horizon or utopia used to justify policies and reforms (Madsen 1984; Zhao 2009). In grassroots understandings *gongyi* sometimes takes an adjectival form with the addition of the suffix “de” (*gongyide*), designating goods and services that conform to this vision of “what is good for all.” This book primarily focuses on public

goods in the plural, but the question of what the state should be providing relates to visions of the public good in the singular.

One branch of economics, public choice theory, departs from the Musgrave/Samuelson public goods theories by emphasizing governmental action rather than the goods' natural characteristics. According to its founder, James Buchanan, governments can decide to adjust the number of consumers to the quantity of goods they can offer depending on their available budget, and search for an optimal number of consumers for the goods according to the costs of producing them. Thus, to deliver public goods efficiently is to *make them excludable*. The result is what Buchanan (1965, 1999) calls "club goods": public goods available only to members of restricted groups. One solution he supports is restricting entry to certain groups via zoning mechanisms, especially in large cities (see Harvey's 1973 discussion).

Municipal governments make urban public goods available to city dwellers. Roads, schools, and public parks are generally distributed locally, and in China this also includes welfare provision. Since they are usually provided through some locational mechanism, they spatially exclude all those who live too far away to use them: they are accessible only within certain territorial limits, and to this extent some classify them as club goods.¹⁵ However, I prefer to use the term "local goods," restricting the definition of club goods to instances where access ("membership" of the club) is deliberately determined by the ability to pay: that is, by a clubbing logic.

Before providing examples of such clubbing logics in China, the next section introduces commons and the context of their emergence in relation to public and club goods. The club goods theory has an advantage over the Musgrave-Samuelson public goods theory in that the technical properties of the goods do not play a role: Rather than starting from the premise that certain goods are intrinsically accessible to all, what is important is governmental action (Buchanan 1999). This approach influenced Ostrom's research on common-pool resources.

Commons

Public goods have been largely neglected, if not outright rejected, by the anti-capitalist literature, which has made "commons," "the common," and "commoning" central to its critique.¹⁶ The commons serves both as an alternative language and as a descriptor of struggles against market- and state-backed capitalism. The language of the commons is a way of recognizing the collectively produced nature

of many resources and goods that should be freely available to all members of society (Klein 2001; Bollier 2002; Harvey 2005; Gibson-Graham 2006; Nonini 2006, 2017; Hardt and Negri 2009; Gidwani and Baviskar 2011; Susser and Tonnelat 2013; Dardot and Laval 2014; Stavrides 2014; Borch and Kornberger 2015; Kip et al. 2015; Amin and Howell 2016; Blaser and de la Cadena 2017; Huron 2017; Holston 2019; Chatterton and Pusey 2020). The anthropological literature on commons overlooks state provision for two sets of reasons. One has to do with the privileging of small-scale communities and economic anthropology's traditional focus on reciprocal exchange rather than vertical transactions (among which are tax payments and state provision). The other is the influence of post-Marxist literature on commons and "the common," which not only ignores but also largely rejects the state's role as a potential provider, for reasons in sympathy with immanentist philosophies of power (Hardt and Negri 2009) and Proudhonian anarchism (Dardot and Laval 2014).

This new line of scholarship has drawn attention away from commons in nonurbanized settings toward urban commons. Hardt and Negri (2009) see the city as the very place where cognitive (knowledge-intensive and tech-driven) capitalism becomes prominent, allowing new modes of organization to be tried out. Movements for the reclamation of common wealth take place in the more diffuse locus of the city rather than the factory workplace. Dardot and Laval (2014) argue, against Hardt and Negri, that foregrounding cognitive capitalism overlooks the fact that the workplace, whether factory or corporation, largely remains organized according to the logics of capitalist exploitation (see also Kalb 2017: 164).¹⁷ They maintain an understanding of the commons as institutions for managing resources along the lines of Ostrom's definition. However, as Ostrom's work shows, there is no a priori reason why a self-governed commons should be more egalitarian and less exclusionary than a state-provided public good.

Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval (2014) note that the commons are too often defined "by default" as a defensive reaction to the logics of capitalism rather than given content, and they emphasize the added value of Ostrom's approach in this respect. Because it was awarded the Bank of Sweden Prize in 2009, her work is the most famous among a vast body of studies by economists and anthropologists who have highlighted processes of communal self-organization and self-governance for the managing of resources (Ciriacy-Wantrup and Bishop 1975; McCay and Acheson 1987; Feeny et al. 1990; Bromley and Feeny 1992; Baden and Noonan 1998; Gudeman 2001).

Elinor and Vincent Ostrom (1977) started by looking at common-property resources, which Elinor Ostrom later renamed common-pool resources (CPR), contrasting them with private and public goods. CPR can be natural or human-made resources, for instance pastoral or forest land, that are available to a group of users (2015: 30). Commons are not resources but institutions for managing CPR. For Ostrom, CPR share the attributes of rivalry with private goods and nonexcludability with public goods (2015: 31). Commons overcome the challenges that these CPR properties pose. Drawing on empirical cases, Ostrom shows that individuals engage in institution building when they perceive the benefits of creating rules and monitoring their application. Ostrom's work is extremely valuable with respect to her inquiry into the *practice* of rulemaking, independently of the intrinsic nature of the goods in question.

Her work—at this point influenced by club goods theories—shows that although resources such as fisheries may be intrinsically vulnerable because they are open-access, i.e., nonexcludable, they are *made* excludable by the drawing of boundaries. Likewise, although they are naturally rivalrous and therefore depletable, setting rules about their usage renders them less depletable. Commons prevent both market and state failures by restricting their use to the members of a community and regulating access according to locally determined rules of use. Ostrom cites several cases that failed when governmental intervention opened up a CPR to outsiders, resulting in its depletion.

The freedom and legitimacy to make local arrangements is one of the commons' "design principles" (Ostrom 2015: 203). The other design principles are cooperative arrangements that rely on neither the market nor the state but are facilitated by mutual trust and shared information in small communities. Ostrom's professed preference for the small-scale community and focus on sustainability renders her less aware of the social and power relations shaping such communities (Harribey 2013: 397; Dardot and Laval 2014: 157). This is due to her main preoccupation with resource conservation rather than with issues of inequity and domination: for instance, she notes that in a Swiss mountain village, access to pastoral land is defined by a proportional allocation rule, depending (among other factors) on the amount of meadowland that farmers own (Ostrom 2015: 64), and thus on unequal property relationships. In her view, commons are institutions that protect these resources and ensure their long-term sustainability.

Not only this absence of attention to social justice but also Ostrom's insistence on the possibility of changing the properties of CPR or other goods are lost in the literature on "new commons," such as cultural, neighborhood, infrastructure, knowledge, medical, health, market, and global commons. Apart from some recent attempts to clarify the concept (Kip et al. 2015; Huron 2017), much of this literature makes only fuzzy references to the intrinsic properties of CPR, drawing a broad analogy about how they can be vulnerable to private appropriation and depletion.¹⁸ For instance, Charlotte Hess maintains a distinction between "neighborhood commons" and public goods based on the idea that a commons "is a resource shared by a group where the resource is vulnerable to enclosure, overuse and social dilemmas. Unlike a public good, it requires management and protection in order to sustain it" (2008: 37).

This reasoning is puzzling: it means that a public good such as a public park can be relabeled a commons when there is a threat of it being sold to a private developer. This book departs from the confusing notion that vulnerability to enclosure is an intrinsic feature of commons. The same applies to the debate around the intrinsic rivalry or nonrivalry of urban commons, which I do not discuss here as issues of rivalry emerge only in chapter 5: it is fundamentally misleading. Although the idea of vulnerability to enclosure has inspired a vast strand of valuable research on how urban commons may be subtracted from capitalist logics, it also supports a false opposition between commons and public goods. There is no difference in nature between a park labeled a commons and one labeled a public good. When it is managed by a community outside of state and market logics, a park is a commons; when managed by an urban government, it is a public good.

In China's urbanized villages, when the state sells former common land that it has expropriated for development by a private real estate company, this operation is indeed an enclosure aimed at fostering capitalist accumulation. Many situations encountered in this book follow this pattern. However, some former-village commons such as burial land or a village-funded school become urban public goods when the state takes them over from former village collectives. Local communities react in various ways to the transformation of village commons into (or the substitution of village public goods by) urban public goods. With urbanization, some commons that were essential to the functioning of small rural communities may lose their appeal, with the necessity for new public goods and services, such as care for the elderly and parking spaces, recognized instead.

Rather than starting from predefined notions of public goods as accessible (i.e., nonexcludable) and available to all (i.e., nonrivalrous), a more fruitful point of departure is to use the criteria of non-excludability and nonrivalry not as intrinsic qualities but as issues that render public goods fragile. In the concluding chapter I argue for a pragmatic approach that treats criteria such as excludability and rivalry as indicators of larger social and political issues rather than as goods' natural properties.

Public goods and commons are not antithetical: both are social goods as opposed to private goods. As stressed by the French alternative economist Jean-Marie Harribey, both commons and public goods are provisioned as a result of a political decision; only the scale at which the decision is made and the good is provided differs (2013: 400). Commons are more local and exclusive than public goods. Their differing status as commons, public goods, or club goods results from management and distribution practices that *make* them different: commoning and clubbing.¹⁹

Neoliberal Commoning and Clubbing

Public goods are not essentially different from commons, in that both are crucial to people's daily social reproduction and are free to all; the main difference resides in their mode of provision and scope of access. This calls for a pragmatic approach using verbs rather than nouns. Several scholars have therefore drawn attention away from *commons* to *commoning* as a verb, referring to collective practices of sustaining and managing common assets (Linebaugh 2009; Harvey 2012; Kalb 2017). Linebaugh's frequently quoted recommendation that the word "commons" should be kept as a verb rather than a noun is followed by, "But this too is a trap. Capitalists and the World Bank would like us to employ commoning as a means to socialize poverty and hence to privatize wealth" (2009: 279). Several scholars have also pointed out that the self-governing ideal of the commons is perfectly attuned to neoliberalism's endorsement of communal self-management, seen as a way of cutting public spending and offloading the costs of social reproduction (Lazzarato 2009; McShane 2010; Pithouse 2014; Enright and Rossi 2018).

Public goods provisioning is neoliberal when the state espouses commoning and clubbing logics. Both delineate the contours of a community of users whose members have access to schools, parks,

social care, and welfare. Whereas clubbing practices are adopted by the state and grounded in market logics, giving access to social goods on the basis of ability to pay for them, commoning practices are encouraged by the state and are based on nonmarket logics, drawing on ethical commitment to care for others.

Although they profess principles of equality, the mechanisms that local governments have adopted for provisioning social goods are uneven and conditional as they embrace clubbing practices that amount to the de facto restriction of access to those goods. China's larger city governments practice clubbing—i.e., the creation of clubs, in Buchanan's sense—on the city scale when they cap the number of urban dwellers granted urban citizenship each year, selecting applicants on the basis of their contribution to the municipal budget to match the quantity of public goods they are able (and willing) to provide them with (chapters 1 and 5). Membership of the club of *hukou* holders, who have access to local public goods, is thus largely dictated by ability to pay. Such clubbing also occurs on the local neighborhood scale. China's urbanization since the 1990s conforms to a club goods model of allocation in which private developers are incentivized to provide public goods to those who have purchased property in new residential complexes (Lee and Webster 2006). This widespread model results from the tendency for local city governments to increase their revenue by encouraging real estate redevelopment projects, a telling sign of the neoliberal entrepreneurialization of the governance of Chinese cities.²⁰ Moreover, what appears to be a public good can turn out to be a club good when it is, although nominally free, useful or even profitable for a particular class (Gioielli 2011; Loughran 2014), for instance when a new public school or a public park raises the value of property owned by those living in the vicinity (see chapter 2).

James M. Buchanan, the “inventor” of club goods, was, along with George Stigler and Milton Friedman at the Chicago School of Economics, one of the main exponents of American neoliberalism. Buchanan's work on fiscal transfers (see Collier 2011) and on club goods demonstrates that neoliberalism is a strand of thought that differs from nineteenth-century economic liberalism in that, emerging at a time when the social state was firmly in place, it sought market-based solutions for more efficient public goods provisioning. Conventional accounts of neoliberalism as an ideology that professes the state's *laissez-faire* approach and withdrawal from any intervention in redistribution need revision. Such accounts are used by the Chinese party-state to cast itself as anti-neoliberal. Point 4 of the leaked *Communiqué*

issued by the Central Committee in 2013 presents neoliberalism as an ideology that “opposes any kind of interference or regulation by the state” and which foreign powers seek to impose on China.²¹

Commoning practices are increasingly encouraged by the state as part of its neoliberal mode of provisioning. Although a clubbing logic is at work in the three case studies presented in chapters 1, 2, and 3, public goods provisioning in urbanized villages is not reducible to it. Lee and Webster (2006), predicting a generalization of market mechanisms in China, did not anticipate the return of the state with a strengthened commitment to addressing inequalities and creating a sense of community at the urban community (*shequ*) scale. Until recently, local Chinese officials’ careers were determined primarily by a performance-based assessment system that focused heavily on promoting local economic growth and less on social welfare provision (Edin 2003; Li and Zhou 2005).²² Under Hu Jintao and then Xi Jinping, reforms of the evaluation system have introduced other criteria besides GDP (Zuo 2015). The new model that has emerged in Xi Jinping’s era is that of the “livable” community (*yiju shequ*), which continues and enhances the community-building policy (*shequ jianshe*) instituted in the 1990s (chapters 3, 4, and 5). The livable community is shaped by an image of the good life, where the “good” pursued is not only wealth and growth but also culture, leisure, and a sense of community solidarity.

Commoning may at first sight seem incompatible with state interference. It consists of protecting community members’ collective rights of use from privatization and subordination to market and state logics. Community members are successful in creating a commons when they succeed in “fencing” and “patrolling” its boundaries “to ensure that no outsider appropriates” —i.e., can use—the CPR (Ostrom 2015: 203). Harvey offers the ironic observation that rich property owners can create a commons that excludes poorer city dwellers: “the ultra-rich, after all, are just as fiercely protective of their residential commons as anyone” (2012: 74).²³ Commoning generally requires restricting use rights to the members of a community, meaning that a commons can exclude outsiders such as poor newcomers, for instance migrant workers in urbanized Chinese villages where natives hold use rights to their common land and distribute the welfare benefits drawn from real estate income among themselves. In such cases, state intervention can equalize access to essential social goods. However, graduated governance practices (see next section) tend to be extremely selective in the way they open up access, notably to schooling.

This book identifies various and not always successful commoning logics where communities of native villagers attempt to defend their village's public goods against encroachment by outsiders, whether migrants or the state. For instance, the cemeteries central to formerly rural communities' collective life retain their importance and become the object of commoning practices in the face of state encroachment (chapter 2). However, as Ostrom highlights by including this among her design principles, in a country with a strong state such as China, commoning logics are successful only when there is some degree of state encouragement of local initiatives and/or tolerance of self-organization.

Furthermore, the state encourages forms of commoning through a range of activities, such as charity work and volunteering at the urban community scale. Because the offloading of responsibilities burdens public collectivities' budgets (Harvey 2012: 62–68; Xue and Wu 2015), communities are required to rely on their own resources and to compete for complementary, project-based funding from urban governments (chapter 4). Such community-based governance displays contradictions that focusing on public goods brings to the fore. On the one hand, the Chinese state authorities seem intent on overriding categorial divisions between native villagers and migrants by making commonality central while simultaneously deploying tools of governance that are radically different according to the categories of population that they target within the same community (chapter 3); on the other, the means for fostering self-governance—encouraging the urban community to generate and manage its own sources of income—and the tools used to foster a sense of community (e.g., volunteering and charity events)—are often selectively directed only at certain elements of the population, reproducing socio-economic inequality (chapters 4 and 5).

Neoliberal provisioning includes but is not reducible to clubbing; state-encouraged commoning is also a cost-effective, neoliberal method for ensuring that state redistribution remains compatible with urbanization-driven capitalist accumulation, and in this respect it involves subject-shaping governmentality. While I reconceptualize these practices and logics more precisely as graduated provision (see next section), they can be subsumed under the broad conceptual heading of neoliberalism. Rather than relinquishing neoliberalism altogether as an analytical optic (Laidlaw 2015; Dunn 2017), a long-called-for reconciliation of political-economic and governmentality approaches is needed (Barnett 2005: 10; Clarke 2008: 145). In this book, my approach builds on and revises the insights of the govern-

mentality school by placing the emphasis on the ways in which techniques and technologies of governance shape the political-economic process of the provision of public goods while being shaped themselves by capital accumulation and circulation. These practices obey logics whose dominant features share many traits with neoliberalism as it is understood both political-economically as a process of economic liberalization backed by the state and from a governmentality point of view as a subject-shaping moralized mode of governance.

Bringing public goods back into the equation without eschewing the state's role involves documenting and critiquing actual problems and tensions around the delivery of basic goods and services to city dwellers. Their lack of accessibility and availability may result from accidental governmental failure, but it is more generally related to deliberate graduated provision.

Graduated Provision

The three case studies presented in this book are located at different stages of a process that is explicitly framed as evolutionary in the sanctioned Chinese discourse, which is not merely rhetorical but translates into action by officials in different echelons and can be called "graduated governance."²⁴ All three of the urban villages presented in this book were legally urbanized, although differently, in 2004, in a nationwide wave of legal urbanization for which Shenzhen, which claims to have become the very first Chinese city without rural villages, set the model. However, contrary to what could be expected from the habitual narratives about Shenzhen's pioneering reforms, the conversion from a rural to an urban public goods regime occurred much faster in Chengdu's South Gate than in Shenzhen's Pine Mansion, with River Hamlet, in Xi'an, the slowest. South Gate comes closest to the ideal pursued by the Chinese authorities: a vision of cities populated by well-educated, property-owning, and self-governing (including when it comes to public goods) citizens (Tomba 2004, 2014; Zhang 2010). River Hamlet is at the other end of the spectrum, with Pine Mansion between the two. The differences are due to specific combinations of regional and local histories and social configurations that either accelerate or slow down what we found across our field sites to be a coherent ideological discourse with performative effects and a largely top-down planned process. However, state decentralization produces considerable disparities in policy implementation depending on each local government's fiscal means

(Smart and Smart 2001; Ngok and Huang 2014; Carrillo, Hood, and Kadetz 2017), while also leaving space for local experimentation.

Students of China's political system have shown how an experimental approach derived from the adaptive governance instituted in the Mao era prevails, in which local innovations are first piloted in a few localities, with only those proven to produce desired outcomes then diffused to more localities and potentially eventually becoming national policy (Heilmann 2008a, 2008b; Heilmann and Perry, 2011; Cai 2016). Among the best-known forms of this approach are the special economic zones that have by now spread all over China under new names (cf. Naughton 1995; Ong 2004), but the approach also includes experimental regulation in selected areas or sectors (Heilmann 2008b). The experimentation process is neither completely top-down nor completely bottom-up, involving an interplay between local initiative and central sponsorship. Pilot projects often involve temporary extralegal policies that can be legalized a posteriori.

Graduated governance does not refer to incremental change but rather to the way the grand teleological narrative of urbanization is taken into consideration by local officials and civil society actors. It involves attunement to the state of maturity and the stage reached in this evolutionary framework in a given locality (here, urbanized villages) when deciding on the next steps to be taken and the goods to be provided. Although the Chinese state is committed to reducing inequalities, actual practices in the provisioning of public goods show that not only principles of equality are considered in urbanization policies: in practice the model communities who come closest to the authorities' expectations in terms of their degree of urbanization receive the most resources. Local officials create showcases and designate model urban villages for the prioritization of subsidies and budgetary allocation.

What also counts as part of graduated governance is a propensity to govern by differentiating between categories of the population. Egalitarian values are balanced, and often checked, by principles of territorial entitlement, that is, access to public goods based on *hukou*, and increasingly by evaluations of worthiness. The household registration system "helps maintain and produces social and spatial hierarchies no longer through exclusion, but through differential inclusion" (Zhang 2018: 863). Despite the recent reforms, urban governments are reluctant to grant full residence rights, i.e., local *hukou*, to migrants due to budgetary scarcity. They tend to grant the rights to the city using selective points systems for those who are able to contribute financially to the costs of the urban public goods regime.

Graduated provision is the variegated, selective, and conditional delivery of public goods informed by the teleological ideology of urbanization and by neoliberalism, understood as the generalization of capitalist market logics and their shaping of governing techniques, including clubbing and commoning. As mentioned above, fiscal re-centralization and the transfer of responsibilities for public goods to the lower echelons of the state (Wong 2010) have put a strain on local governments and encouraged them to engage in the pursuit of economic growth, with public goods often used as an instrument for attracting private investors and buyers.

In China's urban villages, the state's financing of public goods is often conditional upon villagers relinquishing all or part of their land-use rights to the state. The provision of public goods and infrastructure is a strategy to attract private developers and drive up future income-generating land-leasing fees. Even when local state representatives are committed not only to generating growth but also to the well-being of urban dwellers, the logics of public goods provision in many urbanizing villages favor the tendency to use them to enhance the wealth and income of particular social groups—the native villagers, and more generally, the propertied middle class. It is also the case that even without the state having to finance new public goods, the use value of what were formerly village public goods is extracted to generate exchange values in redevelopment programs, turning them too into sources of public revenue for the state.

In contrast to the nationwide political campaigns of the Mao era, local officials are encouraged to take local circumstances into account and attune to them in a process of “community building” to which I return in later chapters. But they do this while also having to keep an eye on the national objectives of urbanization. Thus, while it may look as if I am “reducing cases to instances of a general law” (Burawoy 2009: 49–50), I am rather looking at how a teleological framework—the law of inevitable urbanization-cum-modernization—matters in practice in the course of the distinct paths followed by the three cases.

Evolutionary logic is central to local cadres and other key actors' understanding and actions: they select the urban villages they consider most advanced along this evolutionary path and turn them into model communities. In nonmodel villages, while officials may leave things as they are for long transitional periods, sudden crackdowns may be used to discourage “less advanced” behavior. Indeed, while they may have some latitude in applying top-down directives, local officials have no choice but to follow nation- or citywide campaigns

decided from above. South Gate and Pine Mansion have been put forward as models by the Chengdu and Shenzhen municipal authorities, while the Xi'an authorities explicitly devalue River Hamlet as a countermodel. These temporalities of governance intersect with local history to produce stark contrasts among the case studies.

Comparing Three Urban Villages

Although I designed the research project that led to this book, the outcome is the result of team collaboration. Having worked since 2011 in a Shenzhen urban village where I initially focused on the relationship between the native inhabitants and their diaspora, I came to realize the importance of public goods not just in that relationship but also in the process of transitioning from a rural locale to an urban community. Based on this finding, I produced a comparative research plan aiming at expanding the focus to China's urbanization process: away from the specifics of the former emigrant village, which has become an immigrant urban neighborhood, toward an understanding of how public goods matter in the transformation of rural villages into components of China's megacities.

With funding for this project from the Swiss National Research Foundation, I recruited two postdoctoral researchers, Wang Bo and Jessica Wilczak, who proposed researching urban villages in the cities they know well—Xi'an, from where Wang Bo originates, and Chengdu, where Jessica conducted her doctoral research—for comparison with Pine Mansion in Shenzhen. Although the main goals of the project were predefined, both brought their own sensibilities, expertise, and disciplinary backgrounds in anthropology and geography respectively. I was fortunate enough to receive generous funding that allowed for time in the field—while I (Anne-Christine) made my sixth and seventh research visits to Pine Mansion in 2017 and 2018, Wang Bo and Jessica arrived in Xi'an and Chengdu in April 2018 and, after spending several weeks selecting their field sites, stayed there almost uninterruptedly for a year. As mentioned in the acknowledgments, having decided not to pursue academic careers, they entrusted me with the writing of this book. For this reason I use "I" throughout the chapters when referring to my analyses and my own fieldwork and refer to Wang Bo and Jessica by name when describing their fieldwork—and to the villages they worked in by the pseudonyms they chose for them. In this section, however, I use the plural pronoun to describe the methods we agreed on collectively.

Wang Bo and Jessica's arrival in Lausanne in the early autumn of 2017 was followed by a phase of intensive familiarization with the interdisciplinary literature on public goods, with an emphasis on political-economic anthropology, and then with a preparatory period during which we collectively designed the canvas for the survey and interview questions, creating a common methodological framework that left room for contextualized observation, which we deliberately left open for serendipitous ethnographic encounters and the researchers' idiosyncratic sensibilities and thematic preferences.²⁵ In choosing our field sites we were careful to keep them comparable in terms of population size, the proportion of migrants in their populations, and the timing of their urbanization. Because the project framing was based on my fieldwork in Shenzhen's Pine Mansion, we expected to find wide variations. These expectations were mostly met, but the villages displayed more similarities than I had anticipated. Their governance institutions and hierarchical structures were strikingly similar, albeit with some variation due to differing administrative arrangements (chapter 1). The main difference we found was in the strength of the collective economy and, accordingly, the division of responsibilities between the former-village-level and upper-level municipal government authorities. Most notably, shareholding companies inherited from the rural and collectivist past are stronger and direct government control less present in Shenzhen than in the other two case studies.

This difference is related to another: although Shenzhen is larger, its rural past is far more present than that of Xi'an and Chengdu, cities that not only go back much further in time historically but were also prioritized for industrialization during the Mao era, while Shenzhen was industrialized only in the 1980s. Still, all three of the villages were rural until the twenty-first century, and their native inhabitants are former peasants who were recategorized as urban when the village became part of the expanding city. The difference may also be explained in social terms: like many other urban and rural villages in Guangdong Province, Pine Mansion in Shenzhen used to be a lineage village, most of its inhabitants being patrilineally related and considering themselves descendants of a common founding ancestor. Lineage ties tend to be stronger in South China than in other regions and therefore unsurprisingly play a more substantive role in Shenzhen. The presence of such "solidary groups" (Tsai 2007) may explain the distinct path followed by the Shenzhen authorities in allowing powerful shareholding companies, usually lineage based, to continue to exist after urbanization.

While Shenzhen's Pine Mansion is set apart from Xi'an's River Hamlet and Chengdu's South Gate in this respect, one important similarity between Pine Mansion and River Hamlet emerged. At the time of our fieldwork, both comprised a minority rentier class of native villagers and a majority population of migrant workers whose socioeconomic conditions were markedly lower than those of the indigenous villagers. Epitomizing a new model of urban migration in China, in South Gate Village in Chengdu the majority of non-native residents are white-collar workers granted local *hukou*. In Xi'an and Shenzhen, the native villagers kept the use rights to their land until very recently, well after administrative urbanization, while in the case of Chengdu most village groups relinquished their property rights at the moment of urbanization. In short, South Gate seems to have conformed very early to the top-down, new-style model of urbanization as a force for achieving middle-class prosperity.

There are only a handful of cross-city and cross-regional comparisons of villages-in-the-city in the literature using qualitative methods (Po 2008; Cheng 2012; Chung 2013; Smith 2014; Song 2014; Tang 2015; Wang 2017), which should not be surprising considering how difficult it is to take account of the multiplicity of factors involved in variation. Quantitative research isolating a limited number of variables to compare a large number of cases (e.g., Tsai 2007 on public goods in rural villages) is better suited for this purpose than an ethnographic approach. Multicase ethnography makes the best of the limited comparative potential of ethnographic case studies. It involves "thematizing the difference [between the sites] rather than their connections" and asking how that difference is produced (Burawoy 2009: 202–3). Case-oriented methods are aligned toward a comprehensive examination of historically defined cases and phenomena for their intrinsic value rather than testing propositions and assessing probabilistic relationships between variables.

This book does not provide a model based on a set of variables; rather, it accounts for the significant contrasts between the sites and offers context-sensitive generalizations—specificities of the local cultural, historical, and socioeconomic properties of the former villages and their inhabitants; municipal urban planning and city governance; and nationally defined ideological aims and legislative constraints. It looks at how the cases reflect a gradation of situations that stems partly from local variation in city history and socioeconomic circumstances and partly from their being at different stages within the wider evolutionary framework adopted by the Chinese state, which ultimately aims to totally dismantle villages-in-the-city. Government

cadres' attitudes to the urban villages influence the pace and methods that they adopt and the resources they allocate.

We used a combination of methods to trace the histories of different public goods, their changes of status in the course of urbanization, and their provisioning paths: how and by whom the provision of public goods is planned, financed, distributed, and consumed. We collected urbanized villagers' accounts of the past and carried out short surveys at all three sites with natives and non-natives to get a more systematic sense of the social differences in access to public goods such as healthcare, pensions, schools, and public transport, and we elicited opinions about existing public goods. We hung out in public spaces, where we had many informal conversations and met streetcleaners, children's carers, and volunteers for community activities and services. By taking regular walks we observed the state of the roads, the garbage collection, and the spatial distribution of cleanliness between neighborhoods and got a concrete sense of issues of remoteness from schools and public squares.

We also relied on data collected at different levels of the urban administration, including census and budgetary data, media reports, urban planning and renovation programs, audit reports, and legal documents relating to the collective economy and local *hukou* policy. We conducted interviews with local state cadres at the district and subdistrict levels²⁶ and with party secretaries and community workers at the grassroots, probing to discover which public goods they prioritized and why; to what extent they were responsive to local needs, the demands made of them, the evaluations they were subject to, and the objectives they had to fulfill; and how they met them. We asked them how they defined public goods and attempted to understand the dilemmas they faced in their daily work.

The project's comparative dimension required the preselection of a series of goods. We started out with the following list: health insurance and pensions, garbage collection, schools, cemeteries, public transportation, and parks and squares. Our premises differed from those of most economics and political science studies, which aim to modelize the mechanisms that ensure the efficient provision of public goods. We set out into the field without a predefined notion of which goods are intrinsically "public." We agreed on a deliberately eclectic list of goods in order to remain open to local, emic understandings of what counts as public goods. This allowed us to broaden the theoretical scope of our research by bringing together for analytical scrutiny the series of goods usually studied by economists and public administration studies (welfare, roads, garbage collection) and those

avored by urban studies (roads, garbage collection, public spaces), as well as those far less often considered, although central to social reproduction (schools, cemeteries).

However, we left open the possibility that some goods might be absent or not relevant to residents, or that others might emerge as important in the course of the research. Strikingly, the only nonrelevant good at all three sites turned out to be public transport; instead, parking was a priority for residents. The wet market in South Gate (Chengdu) was an unexpected good. Public schools were an issue only in River Hamlet (Xi'an) and Pine Mansion (Shenzhen). Health insurance and pensions emerged as major issues but were hard to approach using ethnographic methods; I discuss them in chapter 1 in relation to social inequalities. Instead, care, particularly of seniors but also childcare, lent itself well to an ethnographic approach because, whether privately or publicly provided, it is largely performed in public space.

Book Outline

Chapter 1 introduces the field sites and focuses on two types of public goods: large-scale urban infrastructure and welfare (insurance and pensions). It locates the three urban villages in the cities of Shenzhen, Chengdu, and Xi'an and in the context of their different Mao- and reform-era industrialization and urbanization trajectories. Although all three have recently repositioned themselves as high-tech and service hubs and their *hukou*-granting policies have converged, the urban-rural integration paths they have taken and the types of rural to urban migration they have attracted differ. The chapter discusses the administrative reorganization that resulted from their legal urbanization and the consequences for the native villagers, notably in terms of the differing fates of the former village collectives. Inequalities between the welfare benefits of urbanized villages' native urbanites and new inhabitants also vary; these are starkest in Shenzhen and least in Chengdu, with Xi'an an intermediary case.

Chapter 2 retraces the changing provisioning and governance logics in the shift of regime from rural to urban. Even though circumstances are sometimes favorable to their *de facto*, if not *de jure*, persistence, one common that is systematically dismantled and dispossessed is communal burial land. The funeral reform in the Shenzhen and Xi'an case study villages was a violent decommoning that triggered recommoning mobilizations. The chapter compares two different ways of extracting market value and state revenue from the

preexisting use-value of village goods: by letting an informal economy subsist in Xi'an's River Hamlet, and by luring the shareholding companies to sign urban renovation projects and expropriating the former village's self-funded school in Pine Mansion. While state provision of public goods in Pine Mansion is conditioned on this deal, South Gate's rapid transition from a village to an urban *shequ* through resettlement made way for a new tabula rasa allocation of public goods. Officials in Chengdu's already-redeveloped urban village of South Gate attune to the needs of its residents in a club-like manner. In this new, middle-class, resettled urban community, the authorities carefully alternate between privatization and public allocation of new urban social goods.

Chapter 3 focuses on the process of turning former peasant villages into urban neighborhoods conforming to the ideal of the civilized city, which is promoted against the threat of chaos: an urban landscape considered unruly because it is unplanned, and the presence of large, impermanent migrant populations in River Hamlet and Pine Mansion. This chapter examines the role of public goods that are closely associated with the discourse on urbanization as a civilizing process: urban infrastructure such as garbage collection and the maintenance of public order. The actors in the urban governance *wangge* (surveillance system) and *chengguan* (urban management) use these as governing tools. Infrastructure provision is graduated, in that it is constantly revised locally to accommodate both policies and campaigns decided by upper-level authorities and the local authority's vision not only of what remains to be done but also of what can potentially be achieved, based on its estimation of the community inhabitants' maturity in the urbanization-civilization process.

Chapter 4 looks at the provision of public goods and services, mainly care for seniors and cultural and pedagogic activities for all, through community-building projects. It also considers how the public good, in the singular and with a new philanthropic connotation, underlies this policy. Some community-building projects consist of charity events in which volunteers play an essential part; others are cultural events promoting traditional Confucian values, their overall goal being to shape ethical, self-governing citizens. Across our sites, such events are supported by unpaid and mainly female volunteer labor and by a competitive project-based allocation system that targets specific groups with the aim of integrating them into the community. And yet this moral governance is equally graduated, in that the charity events mainly cater for migrants and senior care is mainly performed by outsider volunteers for native beneficiaries.

Chapter 5 examines how the state asserts its presence in urbanized villages by shaping new public spaces that, in theory, are open to all. Whereas new modes of sociality are indeed taking shape around the use of public space in the model middle-class communities of Chengdu, in the Xi'an and Shenzhen case study villages sociality and the use of public space are largely segregated in practice. Native residents implicitly exert use right priority over newcomers, contravening state plans. However, newcomers who live in cramped apartments also appropriate public space by using it for care practices, thereby forming a social commons and making a claim on the state. These practices are also a way for those without hope of accessing urban citizenship to assert their membership of the community and claim a very different right to the city to that of its middle-class urbanites.

The conclusion recapitulates the book's arguments in favor of an anthropological, pragmatic, and historicized approach to social goods. Looking at actual provisioning practices avoids overstating the differences between commons and public goods, and allows consideration of the importance of both the state as a provider and its failings. Rather than taking the economists' classificatory approach, this approach examines their modes of provision, reveals how public goods are subject to commoning and clubbing practices, and uses rivalry and exclusion as analytical categories. Although Chinese citizens are no longer officially classified as either rural or urban, enduring legacies of this dichotomy weigh on the inequalities and tensions in China's urban villages. Finally, this book's pragmatic approach to graduated provision avoids some of the dead ends of the debate on whether or not China is neoliberal.

Notes

1. The "harmonious society" (*hexie shehui*) motto was adopted at the fourth plenum of the sixteenth Communist Party Central Committee in September 2004 (Ngok and Zhu 2010; Ngok and Huang 2014). Urban-rural integration (*chengxiang yitihua*) was first articulated in the New Socialist Rural Construction Program of the eleventh Five-Year National Economic and Social Development Plan (2006–10) (Ye 2009; Qian and Wong 2012).
2. New-Type Urbanization Plan 2014–2020, http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2014-03/16/content_2640075.htm, China, 2014. It was tied with the Chinese government's twelfth Five-Year Plan.
3. The *hukou* is a booklet that records the details of an individual's identity and their registered residence. As part of the household residence registration (*hujū*) system, adopted in 1958, each Chinese citizen is registered to one locality.

4. As per the definition of the National Bureau of Statistics (Liang and Ma 2004). They totaled 144 million in 2000, 221 million in 2010, and 375.82 million in 2020 (National Bureau of Statistics 2021).
5. By socialized reproduction I mean the way in which welfare, education, etc. (social goods, see below), are financed through channels of pooled-together contributions or taxes, which are meant (at least in theory) to ensure some amount of redistribution, in contrast to self-financed social reproduction.
6. China State Council, "Advice on Further Hukou System Innovation," issued 24 July 2014, http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2014-07/30/content_8944.htm; China State Council, "Interim Regulations on Residence Permits" (Order No. 663), http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2015-12/14/content_5023611.htm.
7. Focusing on welfare in China, Carrillo, Hood, and Kadetz (2017: 1–2) include under the rubric "social welfare" (*shehui fuli*): social insurance (*shehui baoxian*) such as retirement pensions, unemployment subsidies, subsidies for physical and mental health-care, and maternity pay; social services (*shehui fuwu*), i.e., support for the elderly, the disabled, and the left behind, education, childcare, housing support, and legal aid; and social relief (*shehui jiuji*), i.e., assistance for vulnerable people and disaster relief. This book focuses on a limited number of items on this list and adds some urban public goods, such as parks and garbage collection; see below, "Comparing Three Urban Villages."
8. See Castells (1977) and Liu (2002) for critiques of "urbanism."
9. Beijing's famous Zhejiang villages, studied by Xiang Biao (2005) and Zhang Li (2006), are migrant enclaves formed in the second half of the 1980s on the outskirts of Beijing to house the inflow of migrants from Zhejiang Province. Although they prefigured the urban village phenomenon, they differ from it in that even if Zhejiang migrants initially rented apartments from native inhabitants, the latter did not build apartment buildings to accommodate more migrants. Urban villages are usually formed when native inhabitants build houses to host a variety of migrants originating from diverse locales. Urban villages in this latter and most widespread sense multiplied in Beijing from the 1990s onward.
10. Local governments used to control over 70 percent of the total revenue in China before 1994. After the budget reform, the central and local governments shared revenues almost evenly (Lin 2007). See also Wong (1997, 2018).
11. The latter expanded from 8,842 to 36,295 during 1984–2008, an increase of 310 percent (CSSB 2009: 367 cited in Lin and Yi 2011).
12. It is estimated that between 1990 and 2005, 30 percent of the increase in the urban population was due to migration, i.e., to people's changed registered residence, and up to 40 percent to the change in status of people residing in a locality that has become urban (McKinsey Global Institute 2009).
13. As well as the revised Constitution, the 1984 City Planning Ordinance, amended by the City Planning Act in 1989, established China's first comprehensive planning framework. While the act had jurisdiction over designated urban areas, the development of rural land remained under the control of the Planning and Construction Regulations on Villages and Townships (Chung 2009: 254).
14. See fuller discussion in Trémon (2022).
15. This book deals with public goods offered to the inhabitants of cities, which are subject to proximity constraints and therefore exclude potential users based on spatial distance. The public goods considered in this book should be accessible and available to all residents of a spatially limited urban community (*shequ*) if they conform to economists' nonexcludability and nonrivalry criteria.
16. An exception being Gidwani and Baviskar (2011: 43).
17. See also Sylvia Yanagisako's (2012) critique of the novelty of cognitive capitalism.

18. Kip et al. (2015: 15) identify potential commons based on what resource is being managed, the relations between commoners, and who is included in the community of commoners.
19. Public provisioning as distinct from publicizing, discussed in Trémon (2022).
20. On neoliberal urban entrepreneurialism in Western democracies, see Brenner and Theodore (2002); Harvey (2005).
21. Central Committee of the Communist Party of China's General Office, "Communiqué on the Current State of the Ideological Sphere," 22 April 2013. This communiqué (known as Document 9) was leaked and reprinted on the ChinaFile website, 8 November 2013, <https://www.chinafile.com/document-9-chinafile-translation>.
22. However, the effects of this evaluation system are not corroborated by Shih, Adolph, and Liu (2012).
23. Here he points to a clubbing logic that differs from commoning insofar as it gives access to club goods on the basis of ability to buy property in a gated community, for instance; nevertheless, it is true that once the rich have fenced off their community, nothing prevents them from managing their shared resources (gardens, public space, schools, etc.) cooperatively, outside market logics and state intervention, as a commons.
24. The choice of the term "governance" proceeds from the shift from "government" (*zhengfu*) to "governance" (*zhili*) in the Chinese authorities' discourse in the 1990s (Sigley 2007; Ngeow 2011).
25. Wang Bo has a specific interest in the anthropology of waste, which he studied in Tibet for his doctoral thesis at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and Jessica has an inclination toward urban-rural integration politics, which she studied in Chengdu after the 2008 earthquake as part of her doctoral thesis in geography at the University of Toronto.
26. This book refers to the administrative level called *jiedao* (street) in Chinese as "subdistrict."