

Nowhere Human Beings: A Development Analysis on Displacement Caused by  
Gentrification in Tangjia Ling, Beijing

By  
Yankun Li

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Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Anthony Holland O'Malley

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**Abstract**

Urbanization is irreversible and has proven to be the future of the world. What also comes in this process is the increasing number of the urban poor and growth of informal settlements as 1 in 4 people will be living in slums in recent future. How to properly handle informal settlements within their urban areas has become of vital importance for governments around the world, and is even more challenging for governments in developing countries. What is used most on dealing with informal settlements is gentrification, through which not only informal settlements are replaced by modern condos, but also local governments are able to receive large constant tax revenues. However, what is ignored in this process is resettlement and future livelihoods of the urban poor who are displaced, and the root cause of informal settlements is not tackled. The case of Tangjia Ling, Beijing, China is an example, as the previous informal settlements have been replaced by modern condos, while the wellbeing of the poor people affected was not properly taken care of. Similar cases take place around the world, as the governments ignore the marginalized groups and focus on economic benefits. This thesis is used to discuss the flaws of Beijing Municipal government in the process of gentrification. Detailed investigation, cooperation from the residents, and fairer mechanism of distributing compensation are required to avoid mass displacement brought by gentrification. The Beijing Municipal government has failed to incorporate these measures, which intensifies the difficulties of living of the affected groups.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The broad theme of this thesis will be exploring the challenges and paradoxes in the process of urbanization and development in developing countries. It is estimated by the United Nations that there are currently over 50% of world population living in urban areas in 2018 (UN, 2018a. p.1.). By the end of 2050, there will be almost 70% of world population living in urban areas, estimated according to the urbanization rate right now (UN, 2018a, p. 1). That is to say, the future development opportunities and challenges both lie in urban areas. Therefore, urban issues has become major development issues. In the process, it is the developing countries that take the lead of the trend of urbanization in the process. It is estimated that India, China and Nigeria – together are expected to account for 35 % of the growth in the world’s urban population between 2018 and 2050. Respectively, India is projected to add 416 million urban dwellers, China 255 million and Nigeria 189 million (UN, 2018b, p. 1). Due to the fast pace of development and lack of experience, developing countries are faced with various challenges in the process of urbanization, as one of them is large amount of rural-urban migration and the increase of the urban poor community.

One of the salient feature of urbanization in developing countries is the surge of rural-urban migrants in urban areas. As most of the rural-urban migrants do not possess high education backgrounds, the low wages they receive and the high cost of living in urban areas make them majority of the urban poor, who normally squat in informal settlements. It is pointed out by the United Nations that the global urban population is projected to grow by 2.5 billion urban dwellers between 2018 and 2050,

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with nearly 90 per cent of the increase concentrated in Asia and Africa (UN, 2018c, p. 1). The existence of the large urban poor community and growing informal settlements have become major challenges for urban planners in developing countries, since informal settlements endanger the life security of the residents and social stability, due to the lack of sewage system, spreading infectious disease, and high crime rates. In order to solve the issue of informal settlements, various approaches have been taken globally. However, what is used most is gentrification.

This thesis will focus on discussing the consequences brought by gentrification within urban areas in developing countries, namely how local governments measure the importance between the tax revenue and the livelihoods of the marginalized communities, especially the urban poor. Gentrification is a social process during which the low-income communities who occupies certain neighborhoods are forcefully replaced by wealthier communities due to the drive of market or government policies. In the case of developing countries, most gentrification cases are directly or indirectly related to government policies and development projects, which is referred to as government-led gentrification. The reason why governments in developing countries choose gentrification as their main approach of solving informal settlements is that there will be massive economic benefits in the recent future through land trade, tax revenue, etc. On the other hand, allowing the urban poor community to squat in informal settlements requires a long time period of upgrading the informal settlements, which not only requires more time, but also investments and cooperation from the residents. Here comes one of the classic development paradoxes: should the

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government prioritize short-term economic benefits or long-term social benefits? The former will bring local governments large tax revenue, which can be used for future development, such as improvement of infrastructure; the latter will assure the social justice and equity and avoid large gap between the rich and the poor. Most developing countries, and even in developed countries, are struggling to reach a balance between these two types of benefits.

The main focus of this thesis will be the case of Tangjia Ling, Beijing, China, an already-gentrified neighborhood. It used to be referred to as “the dirtiest urban village in Beijing” by popular media in China, but it has now been replaced by posh condos and ecological parks. China is at the leading position of the global urbanization trend, and will be remaining this position in the recent future. Fang and Yu suggested that there are more than 50% of total population living in urban areas in China, and in 2025, the urbanization level in China will reach 60 % (Fang and Yu, 2016, p. 1& p. 9). Henderson (2009) also confirms that the rapid trend of urbanization will continue in China over the next decade (p. 2). However, in this process, there have been various development issues occurring in Chinese cities, as one of them is overpopulation in several major cities in China, namely Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou.

Similar to other areas in the world, the overpopulation in Chinese cities also results from large rural-urban migration. Due to the lack of education, rural-urban migrants are limited to low-paid jobs, so that they are forced to squat in informal settlements for low cost. The informal settlements have a unique name in China

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known as “urban villages”, which indicates those places to be dirty, messy, and undeveloped. Because of this, dealing with “urban villages” and the urban poor dwelling there have become major challenges for urban planners in China. The Beijing Municipal government even treat this issue more seriously, since Beijing is the capital China. The look of Beijing stands for the look of People’s Republic of China. The strategy applied most is gentrification, which means that the informal settlements tend to be forcefully evicted, and the residents are faced with displacement. Tangjia Ling, as a former “urban village”, experienced gentrification, and the residents who lived there during that period experienced displacement. Even though the environment in Tangjia Ling has been greatly improved, the difficulty met by displaced residents did not receive enough attention, let alone receive any support from the Beijing Municipal government.

To focus my research, I developed the following research question: ***How can urban planners develop policies to include the urban poor as part of urban gentrification, population displacement, and development?*** I will also use this research question to judge the relevance of the literature and data.

My methodology mainly consists of qualitative approach to urban planning, and especially how gentrification processes take place under government policies and development projects. I will take a close look on how governments from various countries handle the paradox between short-term economic benefits and long-term social justice and equity as gentrification takes place in their countries. An emphasis will be put on the experience of low-income communities who are negatively affected

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in the process of gentrification to show what future improvements should be made by governments in developing countries.

As an undergraduate student, I am unable to conduct my own research. That is, the method of data collection will fall on secondary sources. Even though I did not conduct my own research, the life experience I gained by growing up in China and frequent visits to Beijing enables me to critically examine the authenticity of the data and identify possible bias from the researchers. There is a wide variety of the sources of data used in this thesis. I used data from newspaper with credibility in China to show the governments' prospect of the gentrification of Tangjia Ling. I also used ethnographic data showing the real reaction of affected communities when they were evicted by the government as comparison to the blueprint put forward by government. Other data, including government reports, NGO reports, inter-government organization reports, data collected by famous scholar in this area, and news reports from famous websites and magazines, are also involved to show the gentrification in both Chinese and international contexts.

The layout of this thesis will be as follows. The introduction section is aimed to offer a general idea of the topic of this thesis. What is followed is literature review. This section is intended to show the reader a view of current popular views on urbanization, gentrification, and the case in Tangjia Ling, Beijing, China. The next section will be empirical research. This section will use the data collected from a variety of sources, as mentioned above, to examine real-world application of the approaches and theories mentioned in the literature review section. The fourth section



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will be analysis and discussion. In this section, both theories and data that are used before will be linked together to show what lessons are taught. It is aimed to discuss the results of the real-world application of different theories, and the lessons for future urban planners. The final section will be conclusion and recommendations. As is shown by the title, this section will summarize the findings of this thesis, making recommendations for urban planners, and suggesting future study directions based on the case of Tangjia Ling, Beijing, China.

Based on the academic resources and data that I found, and also with the understanding of the ethics of “good development”, I will argue that urban planners should incorporate social justice issues into their planning. The thesis statement is that *it is not a progressive choice for government to evict informal settlements unless there is a process of resettlement as an integral part of the displacement plan, through which equal and just compensation are provided to people who are affected and access to affordable formal housing is also available for those who are unable to find alternative housing after the eviction.*

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**Chapter 2: Literature Review**  
*Urbanization, Rural-urban Migration, and Informal Settlements in Developing societies*

The development of urbanization has reached a high peak in recent years, and close relationship between urbanization, industrialization and economic growth makes the issues in urban areas crucial to be solved in time for the purpose of future development. Regardless of the fact that the current global economic developing trend is in favor of the interests of the Global North, joining in the global market is viewed as a developing opportunities to developing countries, especially urban centers in developing countries. As Gao (2000) mentioned in a background paper prepared for the United Nations which affirms the irreversibility of economic globalization, the participation of developing countries in global markets will help them to “better utilize their comparative advantages, introduce advanced technologies, foreign capital and management experience... eliminate monopolistic behaviors and strengthen market competition” (P. 4). This trend has become even more intensified in more recent years with the advancement in technology. However, it also should recognized that the opportunities normally concentrate in urban areas in developing countries, which explains the growing gap between the rural and urban areas and rural-urban migration.

The current development modes in developing countries are still affected by the urban pull and rural push factors and the rural-urban gap is intensified by the adoption of urban biased policies. As pointed out by Jedwab et al. (2015) in the report for the

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World Bank, standard urban pull and rural push factors still applies to most urban development patterns in the recent urbanization trend in developing countries. The gap between rural and urban areas will be intensified if local government applies urban-bias theory in their policies (p.9). This report discusses how the natural population growth and migration trend have changed in developing countries during the recent decades and how the urban pull and rural push factors shaped both of them. It helps the readers to rethink and redefine the urban pull and rural push factors when urbanization is speeding in most developing countries and emerging economies.

Due to the underdevelopment in rural areas and the overwhelming developing opportunities in urban centers, it is an inevitable trend for farmers to seek jobs in urban areas with higher payments. This phenomenon is called “rural-urban migration” and acts as both source of abundant labor for development in urban areas and the cause of various urban issues. By presenting cases from Ghana, which has the highest urbanization rate in the world, Awumbila, et al. discussed the relationship between rural-urban migration, informal settlements, and poverty reduction in a context of fast-growing cities and increasing urban issues. It is identified by them (2014), “Migration can be a reaction to severe poverty, or a chosen livelihood strategy to improve upon household wealth” (p.9). Such relation even applies to a global context, let alone within a nation itself. Apart from the increase in income, the sufficient infrastructure support in cities, specialization in industry, the huge demand and supply chain in the market are also the common preponderances that cities have over rural areas (Tacoli, et al. 2015: p.12), which are also important reasons why people choose to migrate to

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cities. However, most governments in developing countries are unable to accommodate the surge of population in urban areas, which leads to policies of stopping this trend and a series of urban issues remain unsolved due to the overpopulation in urban areas.

Even though the governments in developing countries may have policies trying to stop the trend of rural-urban migration, these policies tend to fail the expectation since it is highly difficult to stop individuals chasing better livelihoods. The article published by Tacoli, et al in 2015 showed an up-to-date and comprehensive discussion on urbanization, rural-urban migration and the increasing urban poor in developing countries. It is observed by them that “among 185 countries with available data in 2013, 80 per cent of governments had policies to lower rural to urban migration, an increase from 38 per cent in 1996” (p.2). One of the classic example is the *hukou* (户口) system in China. Even with the existence of this policy, several Chinese cities are ranked among the top 10 fastest growing cities, according to a recent report from the Economist in January (the Economist, 2020, n.p.). Due to this, overpopulation has become a major challenge for the urban policy makers in developing countries since it also acts as cause for other urban issues.

Because of the limited wages and the high expense on living in urban areas, squatting in informal settlements has become a choice of living for rural-urban migrants who move to the cities. As mentioned before, the trend of rural-urban migration is irreversible and non-stopping, so the scale and number of informal settlements in developing countries are increasing due to the lack of affordable

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housing. By using comprehensive data from both developed and developing countries, Ooi and Phua pointed out the fact that the mismanagement of the governments in developing countries should be blamed for the formation of informal settlements, rather than the migrants looking for better livelihoods. It was pointed out by Ooi and Phua (2007) that the inability of city planners to provide affordable housing for low-income group is the main reason behind the formation of informal settlements (p.30).

The definition of informal settlements used in this thesis goes along the definition provided by UN Habitat, which refers to:

the residential areas where 1) inhabitants have no security of tenure vis-à-vis the land or dwellings they inhabit, with modalities ranging from squatting to informal rental housing, 2) the neighbourhoods usually lack, or are cut off from, basic services and city infrastructure and 3) the housing may not comply with current planning and building regulations, and is often situated in geographically and environmentally hazardous areas” (UN Habitat 2015: p.3).

The reason why I would like to follow this definition is that besides pointing out the common appearance of informal settlements, the first feature explains why the tenants in informal settlements are highly disenfranchised in the process of gentrification, which is that they tend not to any legal support due to the lack of land tenure.

Therefore, they are put in an extremely vulnerable position, and are in need for either resettlement or enough compensation to look for secure housing resources after the displacement.

The social issues brought by the over-crowded informal settlements give local governments strong incentives to deal with them in the fastest way they could. The overcrowding and poorly maintained housing condition contributes to most of the issues in urban slums. These issues have been studied in details by various scholars,

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including the spread of disease, and the threat to vulnerable communities such as children and women. Informal settlements speed up scale of infectious diseases, such as HIV (Wekesa and Coast, 2013:p.1); they negatively affect the health and academic performances of children who are living in there due to the malnutrition (Srivastava, et al. 2012: p.1-2); and they also pose a bigger threat to women due to the poor maternal health care and domestic violence (Salam, et al. 2006).

The policies of how governments deal with the issue of informal settlements in developing countries experienced a series of change. It was pointed out by Arimah (2010) that most developing countries chose to not take actions and expected the market would ultimately solve this issue in 1950s when informal settlements appeared as a social issue in their countries. Such attitude was referred to as “benign neglect”. It was not until 1970s that governments in developing countries realized that market was not able to solve this issue, and it actually became severer with the effect of land competition. That is when gentrification and forced clearance of informal settlements started to be used as a main tool (p.2-3). Two things are revealed from it. Firstly, the involvement of local government is crucial since the market will not be able to solve it. Secondly, it shows that gentrification or forced clearance without resettlement are not solutions to put an end to the growing informal settlements.

I would argue that more attention should be given to the city dwellers who squat at informal settlements since they are highly disenfranchised in the process of policy-making. More importantly, the non-stop tendency in developing societies to gentrify the informal settlement for the sake of more tax revenue will not only unable

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to solve the problem of the existence and expansion of informal settlements, but also even could lead to more serious social security issues, such as increase of homeless people on the street and social conflict between different groups.

### *Gentrification, Land Competition, and Displacement*

Gentrification refers to a social phenomenon which is the “a spatial and social practice that results in the transformation of a working-class or vacant area of the central city into middle-class residential or commercial use” (Zuk, et al. 2015:p.12). Zuk and his colleagues gave a comprehensive literature review on the classic theories and cases in the history of gentrification. There might be some disputes in academia about whether displacement should be considered as an inevitable result of gentrification; however, for the purpose of this thesis, displacement is recognized as a major feature of gentrification, which is also a development issue needs to be solved. As for displacement, I would like to use the well-known definition used by George Grier and Eunice Grier in the 1970s, which is:

Displacement occurs when any household is forced to move from its residence by conditions which affect the dwelling or immediate surroundings, and which:

- 1) are beyond the household’s reasonable ability to control or prevent;
- 2) occur despite the household’s having met all previously-imposed conditions of occupancy; and
- 3) make continued occupancy by that household impossible, hazardous or unaffordable.” (Grier and Grier, 1978, p. 8)

By recognizing the relationship between gentrification and displacement, it should be concluded that the urban poor people with little or even no economic security, let alone housing security, have no say in the process of the intense urban land competition, which forces them to be trapped in the vicious cycle of living in informal settlements and being displaced.

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One conceptual nuance should be clarified here is the difference between revitalization and gentrification. The positive impact of investment in a neighborhood should be recognized, which includes more attractiveness on the neighborhood and the upgrading the property value. Both revitalization and gentrification could achieve these results. According to the study conducted by Dr. Bates in 2013, which discussed the relation between gentrification and displacement and possible solutions, it is pointed out that, the key distinction between revitalization and gentrification is whether there are involuntary residential displacement caused (Bates, 2013, p. 4). Even though her study focused more on the situations in developed countries, this distinction still applies in developing countries. As mentioned before, governments in developing countries tend to have poor urban plans, which do not include process of resettlement or even compensation. The current issues and inequality in their societies will even be intensified; therefore, gentrification is the common method used in developing countries, rather than revitalization.

Another nuance I would like to clarify is the differences between “slum upgrading” and gentrification. Slum upgrading is a relatively new concept put forward by UNHABITAT in recent years, which is exclusively aiming at solving the issue of informal settlements in developing countries. Generally speaking, slum upgrading means to improve the overall living condition in informal settlements. Typically, it includes the following strategies:

installation or improvement of basic infrastructure such as water reticulation, sanitation, waste collection, road networks, storm drainage and flood prevention, electricity, security lighting and public telephones; regularisation of security of tenure; relocation of and compensation for the residents (both men and women)



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dislocated by the improvements; housing improvement; construction or rehabilitation of community facilities such as nurseries, health posts and community open spaces; improvement of access to health care, education and social support programmes to address issues of security, violence, substance abuse, etc; removal or mitigation of environmental hazards; provision of incentives for community management and maintenance; enhancement of income-earning opportunities through training and micro-credits; building of social capital and the institutional framework to sustain improvements (UNHABITAT 2014, p.16)

In other words, slum upgrading is meant to delivering services to poor people who are living in informal settlements. On the contrary, gentrification focuses on replacing the current poor community with wealthier ones, which leads to displacement of the former poor community. According to the calculation done by UNHABITAT in 2014, the actual cost of slum upgrading is much lower than forced eviction and involuntary relocation (P. 15). However, the process of slum upgrading takes a much longer time than eviction and the cooperation from the community plays a crucial role. In developing countries where more attention are paid on the pace of development, slum upgrading seems less attractive than gentrification to the cities planners. Apart from that, due to mismanagement of governments in developing countries, several slum-upgrading projects have finally turned into gentrification and resulted in displacement, which went against their original intention.

The reason behind gentrification is the high scarcity of land resources in urban areas, so the governments in developing countries would rather serve the community who will bring more economic benefits than considering the society as a whole. In other words, in the process of urban planning, the preference of local government on certain projects has major influence at the final results. Clerc in 2016 in a study about gentrification in Cambodia deliberately shows the close relation between land

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competition, gentrification and related policies, and the displacement of the urban poor people. It was pointed out that when investors discovered the value of a piece of land occupied with informal settlements and low-income community, local governments tend to offer the land to the investors for bigger economic interests, rather than preserve anything for the low-income community who squat there (Clerc, 2016, P. 2). As Bates pointed out in 2013, the turnover in the neighborhoods will upgrade the neighborhood from only serve low-income communities into a place which can attract more high-income customers. Also, by lifting the services provided, more jobs will be created, which not only somehow provide more job opportunities, but also increase taxes (p.9). As shown by Smith (2010) that migration, population growth, and urbanization are all underlying causes of land competition, and institutional capacity and governance are institutional factors that will affect the local land competition (p. 2942). Based on this, it is clearly shown that gentrification has been used by governments in both developed and developing societies as a method to increase tax revenue. However, in developing countries, communities displaced in this process are faced with harsher future due to the lack of sufficient social welfare support. In short, with the fact that resources are rather scarce in urban areas in developing countries, land and housing resources is one of the top ones for its high value. Due to this fact, the urban poor will have to involve in the competition on land once the value of the land they occupy is discovered. However, since they do not have any resources or land tenure, they tend to be in an extremely vulnerable position in the process of competition.

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Displacement of the urban poor caused by gentrification will bring huge social impact to the society due to the amount of people affected in the process. A major and immediate one is the resistance from the communities affected by gentrification, which could later on lead to more severe social stability issues. Durand-Lasserve in 1999 stressed the importance of regulating informal settlements. It has been identified by him that the identification of rights of land and the conflicts related tend to be the major obstacles in the process of regulating informal settlements (Durand-Lasserve 1999, n. p.). However, he did not give enough attention on the necessity of resettlement of the effected communities. The famous case presented by Robinson (1995) shows the grassroots resistance in the Tenderloin neighborhood in San Francisco. They were so powerful that they have established their own nonprofit industry, and the government at the end would have to consider their requirements (p.489-491). However, in developing countries, situations are much less friendly to the urban poor living in informal settlements. They also have the incentive to protect their livelihoods and resist to the changes made by the government, but they tend to be powerless in the process of eviction. According to González, the anti-gentrification movement in Latin America is powerless and almost invisible. The powerlessness of the urban poor in developing countries when faced with gentrification will even make the government put less consideration on their livelihood in the future (González, 2016: p.1249).

There are also long term effects brought by mass displacement of urban poor. The first of them is that there is a huge possibility these people will end up on the

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street and become homeless people, which will become another issue of the society. In the case presented by Potts in 2008 discussing the Operation Murambatsvina in Zimbabwe, the displaced population were end up on the street and brought even deteriorate reputation to the neighborhood (p.57-58). Such phenomenon is a direct result of gentrification without resettlement. If looking through a more optimistic perspective, such result might bring more attention from the local government to the problem of the lack of affordable housing resources in the urban area. However, the underdevelopment and deficiency in the governments in developing countries should also be recognized, which may extend the time period of solving the issue of mass displacement entirely.

Secondly, the displacement will lead to more difficult access to resources and service to the urban poor people affected. It is true that most informal settlements are highly limited access to the daily-needed resources, namely water, electricity, and sanitation system. However, some early-established informal settlements are able to provide the dwellers with some resources. The city dwellers who are displaced might either end up on street or transfer between temporary shelters, where the situation are even worse than the ones where they used to live. It was pointed out by Megento (2013) that considering the cost of temporary shelters, the resources and services provided there are highly limited, which expose them to bigger chance of being infected by various diseases (p.138).

Additionally, displacement cuts off the social network which is established by living in an overcrowded informal settlements, which makes the urban poor lose their

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social capita. It may not be a difficult task for the people living in informal settlements to know their neighbors due to the high proximity of population. Such social network plays an important role in their lives, including making friends, and even looking for jobs. However, displacement tends to make them lose their social contacts, which leaves them in a more desperate situation after being displaced. It was shown by Megento in 2013 that the social connections that the urban poor established in the informal settlements plays a key role in their social lives and the sudden detachment will increase their emotional burden and hardship (p.138).

What I would like to argue in thesis is that that gentrification is not inherently immoral to the society, but rather the lack of resettlement or proper compensation makes its negative effects outweigh its positive impact. Gentrification does bring economic benefits to the societies in a short term, including improving the surroundings of a neighborhood, providing more services, and increasing the tax revenue for the government. What makes gentrification negative is that people who are dispossessed from where they live tend not to be well relocated. The lack of resettlement process or enough compensation will never end the vicious cycle of displacement of the large amount of urban poor people. The loss of previous livelihoods and social network is almost destructive to the urban poor people who are already at vulnerable positions in the society. Therefore, a more comprehensive and just process of resettlement is of high importance to alleviate the negative impact of gentrification.

*Informal Settlements, Gentrification and Displacement in Tangjialing, Beijing, China*

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China, as one of the largest world economic entities, has enjoyed a high-speed of urbanization, especially after the “reform and reopen” revolution in late 1970s. It is pointed out by Fang and Yu (2016) that urbanization in China has entered a rapid development period, with over 50 % of the population living in urban areas (p.1). The key motivator behind is the development of manufacture; and it is the great rural-urban migration that provides the industry with abundant labor, which keeps the labor price low. Chan (2012) argues that “without the epic-scale migration of peasants – which supplies almost infinite low-cost human labor to power the China economic engine – the ascent of China would be totally unthinkable” (p. 187). That is, rural-urban migration has huge impact on urbanization development in China.

Indeed, rural-urban-migration in China is the main motivator of the urbanization process, rather than the natural population growth in urban areas. It was suggested by Zheng et al. (2009) that rural urban migration takes responsible for 70 percent of the urban population growth (p.2). The percentage is even much higher recently based on the increasing job opportunities in big cities affected by the new “One belt& one road” economic policy. Beijing, as the capital of China and one of the major cities with a large economy, has naturally become the destination for a large number of migrants from rural areas and even some small cities. The main reason behind that is more job opportunities and better income. It was pointed out by Li and Cai in their study (2013) that about 40 percent of migrants in Beijing are seeking better income, and 20 percent are driven by the poverty in their villages (p.270).

Even though moving to big cities means possibly getting better paid jobs than

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engaging in agriculture for most rural-urban migrants, the municipal government in Beijing is clearly unable to accommodate the continuing growth with the current resources they have or even with the development in social welfare resources. That is to say, the rural-urban migrants in the Beijing do not necessarily live better lives than what they have in their villages due to their low level of education and the restriction of *hukou* system. This point was also validated by Li, Chen, and Hu. They pointed out that these migrants usually engage in low-paid jobs and live in poorly maintained housing (Li, Chen & Hu 2016, p.3). Broadly speaking, they also point out the mental stress of these migrants and more integrating social structure should be built. Yu and Cai showed their sympathy for the rural-urban migrants who are forced to live in informal settlements and urges for better management policies in Beijing by showing that the average living floor per capita of migrants is only one third of the local permanent residents' (Yu and Cai, 2013, p.270). To sum up, what rural-urban migrants in China face with is high economic insecurity caused by the jobs they have and the lack of support of social welfare system. The major reason behind is the rigidness of the *hukou* system.

The *hukou* system is known as a main method of population controlling. It was pointed out by Liu (2005) that *hukou* system was initially implemented to maintain social peace and order, but it became a major solution of the Chinese government to secure farmers on their land and restrict any unplanned rural urban migration in 1955 (p.3). Even though rural urban migration has played a major role in the urbanization process in Chinese society, especially after the “reform and reopen” in late 1970s,

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there have been few changes upon the differentiated services and resources based on whether an individual has an urban or rural *hukou*. In other words, until nowadays, the different types of *hukou* between the permanent residents in Beijing and the migrants from other parts of China are still the main basis of the unequal services and resources they are able to receive from the Beijing government. Liu pointed out in 2005 that the *hukou* has generated institutional inequality and discrimination based on where you were born. Therefore, migrants with rural *hukou* in Beijing were faced with restrictions in applying for jobs and social welfare, which means that they tend to be forced to choose low-paid jobs and are faced with bigger economic insecurity (Liu 2005, p.18). This phenomenon is still ongoing nowadays and there are few effective policies intended to solve this inequality. Based on this, it could be concluded that rural-urban migrants in Beijing also do not have access to the affordable housing resources, namely that they may be not eligible to apply. Due to these restrictions and the income they tend to earn, informal settlements in and around the urban centers has become a popular choice for most rural migrants.

Informal settlements in China have slight differences with the popular perception of slums in academia and have a special name called *chengzhongcun* (城中村--urban villages). This phenomenon firstly appeared in 1980s in southern China and later expanded to inland cities as a byproduct of urbanization (Lang, Chen &Li 2016:p.1). The term “peri-urbanization” was put forward by Zhu and Hu in 2009 to describe the development and urbanization model of the rural areas around the big urban centers in China, which “refers to a process in which rural areas located on the



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outskirts of built-up cities become more urban in terms of their physical appearance, economic structure, and social fabric, while the areas in question still, by and large, remain village communities” (p.1). Since these lands are usually collectively owned by villagers, so when they are unable to exercise agricultural activities on them, they tend to build cheap apartments on these lands illegally, then rent them to the migrants who cannot afford better housing. The issue of ambiguity of land ownership was also put forward by Yang et al. in 2018, by saying that the lands in rural areas were collectively owned by the villagers and the land in urban areas were owned by the state; however, during the urban expansion, the previous rural land turned into urban land, but there tends not to be official land ownership transfer (p.4). The phenomenon of informal settlement was also noticed by Deng and Huang (2004), as they described the informal settlements as “ghetto-like, sprawling migrant enclaves” on the city fringe (p.1). The reason they put forward was the uneven land reform, which means that farmers are unable to transfer or develop the land in the context of the fast-paced urbanization, so the only feasible choice they have is to build illegal housing and use rent to replace their previous livelihood (Deng & Huang 2004: p.15). Based on this, it is shown that the ambiguous land ownership in the process of urbanization hinders the normal land exchange in the market. More importantly, such ambiguity on land ownership may not have huge impacts on owners, but the tenants who live in the informal buildings there are faced with no legal support and tend to be excluded from compensation.

As mentioned before, informal settlements tend to post negative impacts to

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urban areas as a whole, including increasing criminal rates, pollution due to the lack of hygiene system, and the damage of city appearances. It was mentioned by Wong, Miao and Wei (2018) that these informal settlements bring along various social issues, including “the costs of a dilapidated environment, security risks, unfair income distribution, public revenue loss and a lack of social cohesion” (p.3). Therefore, local governments tend to have high incentives to remove them. One common method used is gentrification. By gentrifying the whole neighborhood, new businesses will be set up and more revenues will be collected. It should be pointed out that the mass scale of displacement and gentrification was triggered by the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing. Watt discussed the gentrification in London caused by the 2012 Summer Olympic Game (2013). Based on the previous actions of central government in China, it should be able extrapolate that the 2008 Summer Olympic Games were used as a trigger. The link between the mass evictions of informal settlements was implied by Liu and Wong (2018), by showing the short time gap between the evictions and international events (p.164). The mass displacement and gentrification placed huge impacts on the urban poor population who live there, the villagers who collectively own the land, and the city in general.

The gentrification in the informal settlements in Beijing did bring positive impact to the city, but at the same time, due to the lack of sufficient resettlement and unequal distribution of compensation, mass displacement was caused and the root cause of informal settlement is not dealt with. One unique feature of the gentrification in China, which is different from the cases in western society, is the heavy

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involvement of local government. It was described by Shin (2016) that “The redevelopment was heavily top-down and the district government was ultimately responsible for the residents’ displacement and land assembly” (p.478). Therefore, faced with the powerful state apparatus, people who live in the informal settlements have little choice but to cooperate ultimately. Community resistance occurs from time to time, but will be oppressed by the government at the end. Another issue that stands out is the unequal distribution of compensation. As mentioned before, the *hukou* system in China generates systemic discrimination against the rural migrants. This discrimination also applies in the distribution of compensation. Wong, Miao and Wei (2018) harshly point out that fact that in the process of redevelopment the indigenous villagers will be compensated well while the tenants are evicted without any compensation (p.599). However, the number of tenants is far higher than the number of the indigenous villagers, therefore, how to resettle the tenants and provide them with either compensation or affordable housing resources is the key to solve the issue of informal settlements in China.

Having reviewed of the major issues and literatures in my thesis topic field, I would like to now proceed to look at data, which will allow us to evaluate the current literature on gentrification and urban development.

I would like to remind the reader of my Research Question, which is:

**How can urban planners develop policies to include the urban poor as part of urban gentrification, population displacement, and development?**

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### **Chapter 3: Empirical Research**

#### *Urbanization, Rural-urban Migration, and Informal Settlements in Developing Societies*

This section will mainly use empirical evidence to show how urbanization leads to inequality in urban areas. On the issue of housing, gentrification is not able to solve informal settlements, and the population displacement caused by it is even a severer social issue. I start with recognizing the current leading position of developing countries in the speed and scale of urbanization and explain the reason behind this phenomenon. What follows is an examination as to whether the “urban bias” theory is shaping the way of modernization and development in urban areas in developing countries. After that, urban pull factors and rural push factors will be discussed as the most obvious contributors to rural-urban migration, which acknowledges the disparity of development and funding between urban areas and rural areas. As a salient phenomenon in most developing countries, rural-urban migration is not only a motivator for further development in urban areas, but also the main reason behind overpopulation in urban areas, which leads to various social issues due to the scarcity of urban resources in the face of a surge in population. Housing is one of the main necessities for people and is also one of the scarcest resources in urban areas. Therefore, the increasing number and growing scale of informal settlements has become one of the most non-negligible issues in most developing countries.

I will also argue in this section that gentrification is not able to solve the issue of informal settlements, especially given the circumstance that there is a lack of

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compensation and resettlement processes. Gentrification may even trigger other social issues, such as the increase of homeless people on the street due to the forceful eviction of informal settlement.

### **Methodology**

My methodology is limited to secondary sources, although many of these secondary sources contain primary data generated by the researchers, amongst majority are quantitative data, with the support of some qualitative data. In some cases, by triangulating the data that I found in the empirical literature, I have been able to use urban policies, and NGO reports, including government policy plans, reports from different United Nations' programs, and researches done by some other independent NGOs and charities, to support, or invalidate, certain low-level generalizations about urbanization and informal settlements. I have focused particularly on the Tangjia Ling District in Beijing; although finding primary data in the literature on this District proved challenging, I feel that in conjunction with my other sources I will be able to make useful conclusions. I believe I can show that even though informal settlements in that area were replaced with condominiums and ecological parks, the issue of lack of affordable housing for rural-urban migrants has been not solved. A fairer and more just approach of distributing compensation and a process of resettlement are the key solutions to the issue of informal settlements. This will be discussed further in the next section of this thesis.

### **Urbanization**

The trend of urbanization is inevitable in the process of modernization. It is

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pointed out by the United Nations that there have been more than half of the population, precisely 55%, living in urban areas, and they predict that there will be roughly 70% percent of the population living in urban areas by 2050 (UN 2018a: p.1). More importantly, the main contributors in this process are countries in Asia and Africa, which are two continents primarily constituted by developing countries, contributing to 90% percent of the growth of urban population from 2018 to 2050 (UN 2018c: p.1). It is predicted by the United Nation that during 2025-2030 the annual increment of the urban population of less developed regions will exceed the annual increment of the world population (UN 2018c: p. 15). Also, the world's ten largest cities in 2030 are predicted to be located in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and only one of these cities will be from a developed country (UN 2018c: p. 4). The major reason behind the fast speed of urbanization in developing countries is that urban development has direct relationship with national economy and development.

A further reason behind the connection between urban development and the national economy of developing countries is that cities tend to be where capital and labor concentrate, which are two key elements for economic growth. It was pointed out by Annez and Buckley (2008) that it is highly difficult for countries to reach an income levels of \$10,000 per capita before reaching about 60 % urbanization (p. 3). Also, examples from China, Brazil, and Kenya also show a positive relationship between urbanization rates and GDP (Buckley 2008:p. 5,-7). As mentioned before, the concentration of labor and capital are the main motivators driving the prosperity in urban areas. The World Bank pointed out that African urban areas contain 472 million

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people, and that number is expected to double over the next 25 years (WB 2017: n.p.).

### **Urban Planning**

However, the proper settlements of such huge populations in urban areas can be a challenging task for local and even national governments in developing countries. A recent report published by UN-Habitat and the OECD countries shows that countries which have National Urban Plans are the minorities in their regions. Only 25% of African countries have specific National Urban Plans, and 29% in Asia and the Pacific (UN-Habitat & OECD 2018: p. 17). The lack of urban plans in developing countries will be a great hindrance for their sustainable development in the future.

It is important to note that a common issue in developing countries is a lack of macro urban development plan, but that does not mean there is no development projects or funding in urban areas. That is, there are intensive investments in urban areas both from the governments themselves and multinational corporations. The lack of development in rural areas and the overwhelming investments in urban areas intensify the gap between rural and urban areas, which is a major reason that contributes to the push factors in rural areas and pull factors in urban areas. Michael Lipton put forward his famous notion in the 1970s that there was a preference for development in urban areas in developing countries. In other words, the lack of funding in rural areas results in the underdevelopment of agriculture and lack of infrastructure; however, the intense investments in urban areas indicates more job opportunities with better wages and better infrastructure in general. A research done by Thet in 2012 discussing push and pull factors in rural-urban migration in Monywa,

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Myanmar showed that 90% of migrants came from rural areas around this city and 40 % of them were seeking better jobs, better living conditions, and better public service (The 2012: p. 6-8). The development plans from governments in developing countries also reflect their high attention on urban development but a lack of emphasis in rural areas.

According to a major development plan of Lagos, Nigeria, their urban population will reach 28 million by 2020, which shows the urgency of building more and better infrastructure in urban areas to meet the needs(Lagos State government 2013: p. 1). And indeed, the importance of sectors including manufacturing, transport, building and construction and communications are highlighted in the plan. However, there was no mention in the document of providing funding to agriculture even if 70% of its rural residents are farmers (Lagos State government 2013: p. 57-58). In short, “urban bias” is still shaping the development plans in developing countries, partly due to the close connection between urbanization and economic growth. However, the gap between investments in urban areas and rural areas intensifies the distance between their development, which even forces rural population to migrate to urban areas due to low income, lack of opportunities, and difficult access to necessary services in rural areas. Nevertheless, the surge of urban population in developing countries leads to overpopulation, which has become a root cause for various urban issues.

### **Population Growth**

Rural-urban migration is a main trend in most developing countries, but it is also important to note that most countries in the world have conducted policies to



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restrict rural-urban migration with the purpose of preventing rural depopulation. What Herranz (2019) pointed out in her recent blog is that, of 185 countries with available data, 80% of governments had policies in place in 2013 to reduce rural depopulation, which was a 38% increase compared with 1996 (n.p.). Such policies were intended to prevent rural population loss and urban overpopulation. However, without effective policies which facilitate rural development, the outcome of policies aiming at preventing population mobility are below expectations.

Even though urbanization not only means population growth in urban areas and the increase in the ratio of urban population in the national population, it also means land expansion. However, the issue in developing countries is that the speed of urban land expansion and infrastructure construction are not compatible with the speed of population surge, caused by both natural growth and rural-urban migration. According to the most updated data from the United Nations (2018), the increase of the percentage of the urban population residing in urban agglomeration with 300,000 people or more in 2018 in Asian and African countries can reach up to 70% while the average annual rate of change of urban agglomerations with 300,000 people or more in 2018 in Asia and Africa can only be as high as 5% (UN 2018d: n.p.). Due to this gap, there tends to be high population proximity in urban areas in developing countries, which could also be addressed as overpopulation.

### **Informal Settlements**

Due to the lack of space and poor urban planning in most developing countries, a direct consequence of urban population is the growing informal settlements in urban

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areas. This has already become a severe social issue itself, but also results in other urban issues, such as the spreading of infectious disease, and high crime rates in that neighborhood. According to the research done by Habitat for Humanity (2020), there are currently 1.6 billion people living without adequate shelter; 1 in 7 people on the planet currently lives in informal settlements. More astonishingly, it is estimated that there will be 1 in every 4 people who will live in a informal settlement by 2030; 1 in 3 urban residents live in informal settlements in developing countries. In some countries, as much as 90% of the urban population live in informal settlements (n.p.).

The fast growing of slums and population living informal settlements have also gained attention from the United Nations. According to the Urbanization Prospect published in 2018, "...the number of people living in slums actually increased from 807 million to 883 million over this period. The majority of those living in slums are located in three regions: Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (332 million), Central and Southern Asia (197 million) and sub-Saharan Africa (189 million)" (United Nations as cited in Urbanization prospect 2018b: p. 3-4). Publications from the World Bank also showed the severity of lack of adequate housing resources in urban areas in developing countries. In their book which discusses poverty and informal settlements in Africa, Lall et al. pointed out that only 16% of urban population in Africa have permanent roofs above their heads (Lall et al 2017: p. 48). In short, it is clearly shown that the urgency of solving the issue of informal settlements in developing countries

It is undeniable that the large amount of rural-urban migrants in developing countries concentrate labor in urban areas, which is a crucial asset for future

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development. However, it also should be recognized that these migrants tend to be in a vulnerable position in the competition of resources in urban areas, and housing is one of them. Worse still, the policies of local governments towards housing issues are not likely to be in favor of them. What is used most when dealing with informal settlements is the act of gentrification, which could even marginalize the city dwellers more due to the loss of residence.

### *Gentrification, Land Competition, and Displacement*

It has been recognized that gentrification is a global phenomenon (Lees 2015: p. 1). The main reason behind this is the fact that urban land is considerably limited compared with the population residing on it, especially in developing countries. Also, it is a rational choice made by governments to use the limited spaces for bigger economic profits. In New York, which is one of the most developed cities in the world, a study conducted by the University of California, Berkley, found out that, in 2016, over 1/3 of low income households across a 31-county region – totaling over 1.1 million low-income households were living in low-income neighborhoods. They were at risk of or have already experienced displacement and/or gentrification pressure (UC Berkley 2016: n.p.). The trend of gentrification is even more salient in developing countries, since many of them are urbanizing at a high speed. A news report of the Guardian written in 2014 discussed the forced eviction of low income communities around the newly-built international airport in Turkey for the sake of building more luxury hotels and shopping malls. It was reported that more than 5600 buildings were planned to be destroyed without any consent from people living there

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(Lepeska 2014, n.p). In short, gentrification is the strategy used by most governments in the world because of the limited land resources in urban areas and land competition.

Due to the limited land in urban areas, the competition over land has become more challenging than ever. There has already been a tension between agricultural-used land and non-agricultural land use due to the fast urban expansion in developing countries. The competition upon land within urban areas themselves is also scorching. Large and constant investment in cities attracts labor and drives the price of land higher. The case of contemporary development in Cambodia is an example. Clerc pointed out that the real estate sector has been the main motivator for the prosperity in Cambodia. Investments from local and foreign investors in real estate sector in Phnom Penh since mid-1990s has attracted 1.7 million people since 2013 representing more than half of the urban population. During this period, more than 600 buildings of more than 5 stories, and almost 100 residential cities (*boreys*) were built, as well as three towers (OCIC Tower, Vattanac Tower, Gold Tower 42). Five major projects, or satellite towns, are under construction (Garden City, Grand Phnom Penh International City, Camko City, Diamond Island and Boeung Kak Project); and three are in preparation (Chruy Changvar City, Mekong Renaissance and AZ City) (Clerc 2019, p. 3).

The competition of resources is also reflected by unequal access. Inequality between the rich and poor is a social issue globally. It was pointed out the UN Habitat in 2011 that the richest 1 per cent of households now earns more than 72 times the

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average income of the poorest fifth of the population, and 23 times that of the middle fifth in the US (UN Habitat 2010: p. 80). The inequality in urban areas within developing countries is also severe. According to the report from UN Habitat in 2010, the cities with highest Gini coefficients, which are the most used index to measure inequality, are located in South Africa, which could reach up to 0.71. What follows are countries in Latin America, which could be as high as 0.6 (UN Habitat 2010: p. 73). The specific situation may vary from countries to countries, but the competition and unequal access to resources in urban areas apply to all cities. In this competition, the urban poor tend to be at an extremely disadvantaged position due to their low income and insufficient welfare support.

In the face of intense competition of resources, the urban poor are at an extremely vulnerable position, including getting access to life necessities, such as food, water, and shelter. The rapid growth of urban population poses a huge financial burden on local governments in developing countries when it comes to improving infrastructure for those who are most in need. It was pointed out by Badiane (2020), a former director in UN Habitat, in Africa, a poor can pay their water more than 50 times more than the rich due to the lack of water networking system in informal settlements (n.p.). He also estimated that Sub-Saharan cities are preparing to welcome more than 340 million more inhabitants over the next twenty years and it will cost around USD 45 billion a year for necessary investments for relevant land developments. The possibility that local governments in Sub-Saharan region are able to afford this cost is low, based on their national income. Therefore, the urban poor in developing

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countries are faced with huge difficulties to get access to resources in urban areas.

Among all life necessities, affordable housing is one of the major ones and one of the scarcest, due to the limited spaces and heated competition on housing and urban land.

Housing resources itself in most urban areas are scarce considering the cost, and the affordable housing resources to which the urban poor have access to, are highly limited. As mentioned before, the Gini coefficients in some African countries could be as high as 0.7, which means shows great inequality on the distribution to wealth. Put differently, wealth in these nations are largely concentrated among elites, and the mass majority remain poor. They barely have disposable income for shelter, especially in urban areas where favorable living conditions tend to be expensive, which forces them to live in informal settlements. Also, as mentioned before, in many developing countries, the high price of land was driven by investments and the by development of real estate sector. In other words, land is used as a resources to generate profit. Local governments tend not to have projects for cheap and affordable housing for the urban poor since it is against the rule of profit. As Renaud pointed out in 1987, 90 % of housing supply was coming from private sector without necessary infrastructure. It is the local governments' responsibility to find a way to develop affordable and efficient neighborhoods for the urban poor community (Renaud 1987: p. 65).

Reasons for gentrification are abundant based on the social issues caused by overcrowded informal settlements. Overcrowding increases the chance of being infected by communicable diseases, and the lack of clean water in most informal

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settlements in developing countries intensifies this issue. It is pointed out by Lall et al that diarrhea, which is caused by the lack of access to clean water, is responsible for an estimated 21 percent of deaths among children under five in developing countries — 2.5 million deaths a year (Lall et al 2017, p. 41). It is also reported by the Unicef that the infant mortality rates in informal settlements was 124 per live birth, while in other places is only 73 (Unicef 1997, p. 51). Security is also a huge issue in informal settlements. Due to lack of education and pressure of earning money, juvenile delinquency is at a high rate in informal settlements in developing countries. The Unicef report indicated that the youngest kid engaging in illegal alcohol brewing was only 5 years old (UNICEF 1997, p. 70). Based on a series of negative impacts brought by informal settlements, local governments tend to have strong incentives to erase the existence of informal settlements.

### **Local Urban Government and Gentrification**

There are many approaches that local governments can take to deal with informal settlements, however, what is often chosen is gentrification due to the economic benefits it will bring. I would like to re-bring the definition of gentrification which I am using in my thesis, which is “a spatial and social practice that results in “the transformation of a working-class or vacant area of the central city into middle-class residential or commercial use” (Zuk, et al. 2015: p.12). That is to say, by replacing current urban poor residents with middle-class, local governments will be able to collect more tax revenue from them based on the rise of land price and more consumption in the neighborhood. One example is the Da-an Public Housing Estate in

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Taipei. Due to the building of Da-an Forest Park, the price of land occupied by Da-an Public Housing, whose residents were not economically affluent, jumped to 134% and caused some displacement of its original residents (Huang 2015, p. 235). There was no large scale displacement caused due to government intervention, but the surge of price of land shows economic benefits can be brought through gentrification.

There have been both direct gentrification policies and redevelopment plans on certain urban areas which result in gentrification surrounding. For example, the development plan of Nairobi showed that one of the “ultra-low income and high density” region, which much likely locates informal settlements, is in the middle of the city (Nairobi City County 2014, p. 6-23). Among the prioritized industry in the development plan, real estate and rent, hotels and restaurant are two of them (Nairobi City County 2014, p. 6-20). That is to say, if the Nairobi government want to redevelop the central part of the city, gentrification is inevitable, which tend to cause displacement.

There are also development plans in recent years in developing countries aiming at “upgrading informal settlements” to avoid large scale displacement. However, the truth is that it is highly difficult for governments in developing countries to follow their initial plans, which actually results in gentrification and population displacement. A famous example is the case in Kenya. The famous “KENSUP” project, known as Kenya Slum Upgrading Program, was initiated by the Government of Kenya and UN-Habitat in 2004, as a way to improve housing condition of the urban poor and achieve the Millennium Development Goals (State



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Development of Housing and Urban Development 2017: n.p.). In their main strategy document, the severity of informal settlements was clearly recognized by urban planners. It was pointed out that 60-80% of urban population live in informal settlements depending on which city. In the case of Nairobi, 60 % of urban population live in informal settlements which occupies 5 % of total land area (UN Habitat 2008, p. 10). The project is estimated to require at least 13 billion US dollar and at least 5.3 million city dweller's living conditions are expected to be improved by the year of 2020 (UN Habitat 2008: p. 13). Among all the strategies, the construction of low-cost housing comes first and foremost (State Department of Housing and Urban Development 2017, n.p.).

What is sad about this project is that the outcome has gone against its original purpose, which is the improvement of living conditions of the urban poor. What actually comes out is gentrification and displacement of the residents. It is reported by Opala in 2017 that the compensation which should have been sent to people affected never reached to their hands. Worse still, the construction of promised low-cost housing are far behind the expectation. According to Opala, the planned 45 000 "units annually" was not delivered anywhere. By 2015, only the afore mentioned 624 apartments were completed in Soweto East Zone A, and they are mainly occupied by much wealthier communities since cars park everywhere around the buildings (Opala 2017: n.p.). The failure of this program has been recognized academically. A research done by Karari in 2009 showed that 27 out of 33 of the participants in the survey believed the program has failed (p. 24).

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The impact of gentrification goes along with the reasons behind it. It is positive that gentrification will bring economic benefits to local governments, which could be used later on investment. Regardless of what is gentrified, informal settlements or low-income neighborhoods, the land price and property value will increase, which bring up property taxes received by governments. The simple logic behind gentrification and increasing land price and property tax is that “gentrification increases demand for owner-occupied housing, thereby increasing prices, which in turn increases the market values of comparable homes in the neighborhood, which increases the assessed values of those homes recorded for tax purposes, which—given a fixed property tax rate” (Marine and Beck 2018, p. 36). The increased property tax is able to bring more tax revenue to local governments. Also, the increased land price will bring up the price of housing, which means only people with certain purchasing power are able to afford them. The taxes received from purchasing housing and consumption in the neighborhoods will also be a major part of local government income. Herzer et al showed that apartment price per square meter in Buenos Aires went up from 320 USD in 1977 to 1888 USD after a series of gentrification (Herzer 2015, p. 2017). In this process, the income made by real estate sector contributed a major part to local and even national economy.

### **Market-led vs. State-led Gentrification**

Market-led gentrification takes place more often in developed countries since they tend to have a more complete market with less government intervention. Many cities in the US are faced with gentrification and mass displacement afterwards. For

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example, in Boston, investors like MG2, the Quincy-based firm bought the building on the corner of Meridian and Lexington streets for \$1.9 million, which was neighborhood concentrating mainly low-income communities (Conti 2017: n.p.). Such action drove up the rents for tenants, which forced them to leave. Even though Martine and Beck pointed out that the current quantitative literature on gentrification provides little direct link between gentrification and the effects on homeowners, it can be conducted that the increasing property tax could be a burden for home owners, especially for those who have a fixed low income. (Martine and Beck 2018, p. 38). Even in the case of government-led gentrification programs, in which there are more control on the process, there is still a clear trend that the interest of the poor communities affected are ignored in this process.

On the contrary, state-led gentrification takes place more in developing countries as a direct or indirect results from state-led development plans. In this case, what are affected tend to be informal settlements with high density of population, which means that there will be a large scale of displacement caused by gentrification. It was pointed out by Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) in their 2019 report that based on their analysis of nearly 600 of the World Bank's resettlement plans, published between 2014 and 2017, it was estimated that more than 130,000 people at risk of displacement in 77 countries. Most of the projects assessed were in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and East Asia and Pacific, where there tends to be a lack of adequate resettlement process (p. 86). Such situation take place widely in developing countries. In the report of IDMC mentioned, it was reported that more

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than 30,000 people were evicted from an informal settlement in July 2018 to make way for a road in Nairobi, Kenya (IDMC 2019, p. 88). Furthermore, the urban poor communities squatting in informal settlements are considerably powerless compared to the powerful state apparatus. The anti-gentrification movement in Istanbul, Turkey takes place rarely when vulnerable urban poor communities are faced with powerful urban planners and the governments.

Gentrification has been used as policy tool in developing countries as a way for governments to achieve urban development and increase tax revenue, and it is also understandable that there is strong incentives for local governments to erase informal settlements in their cities. Even in the case of government-led gentrification, in which the process is under more control, what is still lacked in the process is the incorporation of the urban poor communities, since there tend to not be an adequate resettlement process following. Without resettlement, the displaced urban poor will be at an even more vulnerable position, and their need of housing have never been actually satisfied in the process of gentrification. I will use the case of Tangjia Ling District in Beijing, China to show that without fair compensation or resettlement, the issue of informal settlements will only be intensified after gentrification.

#### *Gentrification and Displacement in Tangjia Ling, Beijing, China*

China is one of the most developed developing countries which has experienced high speed of urban growth and urbanization, especially after the “reform and reopen” policy in late 1970s. It is pointed out by Li, Chen and Hu (2016) that “the urban

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proportion of China's population grew from 17.9 % in 1978 to 54.8 % in 2014, an annual growth of 1.02 %. In 2014 alone, the number of permanent urban residents increased by 18 million. Also, over 60 % of China's population will live in cities permanently in 2020, which will exceed the world average urbanization rate (p.516). The sixth national census (2010) in China showed that urban population have taken account for 49.68 % of the national population (National Bureau of Statistics 2010, n.p.). The main contributor to such high speed of urbanization and urban growth is rural-urban migration in China.

### **Rural Urban Migration**

Rural-urban migration in China has become a major motivator for urbanization and urban growth. It was pointed out by Wakabayashi (1990) that annual urban population has been increasing from 30-50 million persons since 1985 (p. 1). Rupelle et al (2008) estimated that 94 million increase in urban population in 2002, which affected as much as 12 % of the total Chinese workforce. Chan (2012) also pointed out that an estimated 200–250 million rural residents have moved to cities and towns within China during the last three decades, and this number is much higher than the volume of the Great Migration from Europe to North America from 1800 to the First World War, which was total of 50 million persons (p. 1). The huge amount of rural-urban migration provides abundant labor for labor-intensive sectors in cities, such as manufacture and construction, which pushes forward the urban development and prosperity in urban areas.

Among all the cities with prosperity, Beijing has become one of the top choices for

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rural migrant works based on its abundant job opportunities and completed public services. Beijing currently enjoys an enormous economy and is still developing steady. In 2018, GDP of Beijing amounted to approximately 3.03 trillion Yuan, compared to about 2.8 trillion Yuan in 2017 (Statista 2020, n.p.). It has been recognized as the powerhouse of the national development in China. The fast growth in economy has a mutual connection with the increase in population. According to World Population Review (2020), it is estimated that more than 20 million people living in Beijing in 2020, with a growth of 44% over the decade. Also, some experts predicted that the population in Beijing will reach 50 million in 2050 (World Population Review 2020: n.p.). At the same time, the urban expansion in Beijing is also developing at a high speed. Deng and Huang (2003) pointed out that Beijing's urban built-up area has increased from about 62.5 km<sup>2</sup> in 1949 to 391 km<sup>2</sup> in 1988 and 488 km<sup>2</sup> in 1996, and there was a total planned area of development zones as large as 113.44 km<sup>2</sup> (p. 227). In 2009, the Beijing Metropolitan Area (BMA) was officially recognized as 1,086 km<sup>2</sup> in size (Zheng et al 2009: p. 427). The huge population in Beijing is a crucial asset for the further development in Beijing as labor. However, the improvement of infrastructure is much behind the speed of population growth. More importantly, the *hukou* system, known as the main approach to prevent rural-urban migration, has become a major hindrance for rural-urban migrants to apply for social welfare support in cities.

Rural-urban migrants have composed a major part of labor force in Beijing. He (2003) pointed out that there was a large scale of migration to Beijing during the early

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1980s to the mid-1990s, and since that time, they have constituted roughly 1/4 of the total Beijing population. Official statistics also showed that nonofficial registered citizens in Beijing numbered 3.281 million in 2001 (p. 199). The number has kept going up in recent years, which has made the migrants in Beijing become a major part in the whole labor force in Beijing.

### **The Hukou System**

The *hukou* was invented to prevent population mobility and secure farmers on their land. However, due to the changes in developing strategies after the “reform and reopen” policies, *hukou* system not only prevent free mobility of population, but also put hindrance on migrants from acquiring equal social welfare support from the governments after they move from their hometowns to cities. There were inherent inequality at the intention of this system. Cheng and Selden (1994) pointed out that *hukou* was invented in 1950s. It created a spatial hierarchy of urban places and prioritizing the city over the countryside by controlling population movement up and down the spatially defined status hierarchy and preventing population flow to the largest cities (p. 644-645). Zheng et al (2009) pointed out that the mean monthly income of migrants in the survey is 1,984 Yuan, compared to a mean income of 3,876 Yuan for the labor force in Beijing as of 2007 (p. 430). Liu (2005) estimated,

Individuals who obtained an urban *hukou* at or before the age of 15 earn, on average, 2.4% more in total gross income and 3% more in wage income. The estimated coefficients on HKAGE imply that every 10 years of delay in obtaining an urban *hukou* lead to a 1.8% decrease in total gross income and a 2% decrease in wage income. Hence, total gross income (wage income) of an individual who obtained an urban *hukou* at the age of 30 is 5.2% (6%) below that of another individual with identical qualifications except for being a native urban person (p. 147).

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The disparity on income limits the living quality of rural migrant works. The institutional discrimination against their rural *hukou* exclude them from the social welfare support from the municipal government in Beijing.

The existence of *hukou* also prevent local governments to know the actual number of their population, which makes them unable to improve infrastructure in time to meet the demands of the growing urban population. It was estimated by Song et al (2007) that in the city of Guangzhou with a population of over 8 million, there were 277 urban villages with approximately 1 million inhabitants in 2000 (Zhang et al as cited in Song et al 2007, p. 314). Shenzhen with its official population listed at around 9 million, there were 241 urban villages with a total land area of approximately 43.9 square km and total inhabitants of approximately 2.15 million in 2000 (Song et al. 2007, p. 314). Such situation is common in most large cities in China, including Beijing. The hindrance of *hukou* system prevents the municipal governments acknowledging the existence and accurate number of city dwellers, let alone delivering services to them.

With the circumstance that the institutional discrimination against rural migrants who has become a major part of labor force in Beijing, there are still no changes in *hukou* system which facilitates integration. Instead, there are even policies aiming at preventing the trend of rural-urban migration. Zhao and Chapman (2010) pointed out that, in Beijing, the Third Travel Survey report showed that migrants spent on average 11 minutes more accessing their workplaces than workers with local *hukou* (p. 366). They also pointed out that the jobs in the state and collective sectors accounted for



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35.9% of the total jobs in 2009, and these jobs are not available for migrant works without a Beijing *hukou* (Zhao and Chapman 2010: p. 368). Based on this, rural migrants tend to be excluded from jobs with higher stability and wages. They are also unable to receive any financial support from the Beijing Municipal government. Based on this, they have a bigger economic burden to live in Beijing and less economic stability compared to people who hold a Beijing *hukou*.

### **"Urban Village" Informal Settlements**

The low wages of rural migrant works in Beijing limited their housing choices on informal settlements. Zheng et al (2009) estimated that there were there were 867 urban villages in BMA in 2008, mostly located in the suburban districts. These urban villages occupy 181 km<sup>2</sup>, accounting for 49.5 percent of the total residential land in BMA (p. 428). Among all these urban villages, Tangjia Ling was one of them. It went through the state-led gentrification process under the order of Beijing Municipal government in 2010. It was reported that people whose *hukou* was registered in Tangjia Ling were around 3000, but the actual resident population was more than 50,000 people (Su 2010: p. 1). As mentioned before, since Beijing Municipal government does not register where migrant workers live, it was highly difficult to acquire the accurate number of urban villages in Beijing. The rent cost there was also considerably lower than other places. Wu et al (2013) pointed out the rent cost in Tangjia Ling ranged from 300 Yuan to 700 Yuan depending on the quality of the room (p. 1927). Su (2010) reported that the affected people found that rent cost in other places in Beijing was at least 1000 Yuan (p. 2). The connection between low-

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income community and livelihood in informal settlements is unbreakable, unless local governments are willing to invest in affordable housing for low-income communities.

The reconstruction of informal settlements in Tangjia Ling was put in place in 2010. Total land of planning is 186,000 square meters. Among them construction land accounts for 130,000 square meter, and more than 10,000 square meter for green space (China Tendering 2010: p. 34). The rent of apartments in Tangjia Ling went up quickly in recent years. According to Anjuke (2020), one of the leading leasing website in China, it takes more than 2000 Yuan for one room per month inside of an apartment located in Tangjia Ling (n.p.). Part of the reason that contributes to the rise of renting is because of the gentrification process.

There are abundant reasons to justify gentrification in China. Firstly, as mentioned before, taxes from real estate sector, property tax and other consumption activities around bring huge economic benefits to local governments. In 2012, the governments and banks gained over 4791.7 billion Yuan from renting the land. The second earning is from the 20 % property transfer tax (if the property was sold in the market). The third earning is from property tax. The fourth earning is from inheritance tax. Apparently, in this mode, the local governments have benefited enormously from the development of real estate abducting urbanization, the majority of the citizens, on the other hand, doesn't. (Fang and Yu 2016: p. 19). Hsing (2010) pointed out that land-derived revenue accounted for 30-70 % of total revenue in the late 1990s for most municipal and submunicipal governments (p. 47). It is also pointed out by Fang and Yu (2016) that urbanization quality was stressed by the Central Government's

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Economic Working Conference stressed the importance of promoting New Urbanization in 2012 and 2013 (p. 53). Such emphasis triggers the later on gentrification, which turned informal settlements into ecological parks. Considering the scarcity of land resources in urban areas, gentrification will push forward the prosperity of the real estate sector which is not only a main motivator of the economy in China, but also the crucial source of national income.

Another apparent reason is the negative effects brought by informal settlements. As discussed before, due to the high proximity in informal settlements and a lack of necessary hygiene systems, informal settlements poses huge threat to public health and social security around. China, as a country which put much emphasis on its national image, could not tolerate the existence of informal settlement. Wu and Wong (2017) pointed out that more than 100 urban village renewals were planned by the Beijing municipal government as a key part of the city regeneration program in preparation for the 2008 Olympics (p. 215).

What follows gentrification in China tends to be mass displacement on population. Beck (2007) reported that there were more than 1.5 million of population displaced for the preparation for the 2008 Olympic Games. However, the official report from Beijing Municipal government said only 6037 people were affected. The situation remains horrendous until recently (n.p.). Wu (2017) reported that a forced eviction in one of the urban villages in Beijing caused 200,000 people displaced in one week (n.p.). Hsing (2010) pointed out than more than half of a million of households in Beijing experienced relocation between 1990 and 2004 (p. 72). The mass amount of

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forced displacement of population will not only increase insecurity in their lives since they are unable to find cheap housing soon, it also increases insecurity in the society due to the growth of homeless people on the street.

What is caused by forced displacement will be community resistance and even social insecurity in the short term. Even though living condition in informal settlements in Beijing is as horrendous as others in the world, the high proximity facilitates a sense of “belonging” to people living there. Therefore, when they are forcefully evicted, the social network and sense of belonging established in those informal settlements also break, which is a great mental loss for people affected. It was recognized by both Su (2010) and Wu (2013) that, through their survey, most participants showed great unwillingness to move and dissatisfaction to the demolition policy (p. 2) & (p. 1927). Hsing noted that the protest against demolition could date back to 1990s and in 2000, 10,357 plaintiffs sued Beijing Municipal Housing and Property Management Bureau. This incident was known as “Grand Litigation of 10,000 Plaintiffs” (wanren dasusong 万人大诉讼) (p. 72-82). The sudden forced eviction of informal settlements in Beijing and mass displacement of population not only take away the residence of city dwellers, but also break part of their social network and put huge emotional burden on them. It may even trigger protests and other social unrest. In all, the forced displacement in Beijing poses threat on society in general, which could be another challenging task for the government to handle.

The long term effect of gentrification of informal settlements in Beijing is that people in most need never receive actual help so that informal settlements still exist to

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satisfy their needs for cheap shelter. That is, the displaced urban poor will have to look for new places to establish new informal settlements or go to the ones that are not evicted yet. Homeless people on the street has already become an issue in Beijing. According to a recent article from the Economist, there have been several hundreds of long-term homeless people in central Beijing and the reason behind tend to be forced eviction (the Economist 2019, n.p.). There are also some good news on land tenure and affordable housing. According to Deng et al (2014), that the Chinese government plans to construct 36 million affordable dwellings from 2011 to 2015, that is about 7,2 million each year, and 19.5 million affordable dwellings had been completed during 2010 to 2013 (p. 13). However, based on the number of informal settlements and city dwellers in Beijing, such speed is too slow to solve the issue. Also, it poses questions like: where the land will come from and whether gentrification has to take place first. Furthermore, considering the case of Kenya, there is a possibility that these affordable housing will finally turn into condominiums that the urban poor are not able to afford.

The next part, Analysis and Discussion, will use the literature and data mentioned so far to suggest a possible solution for issues similar to this one. The importance of equal treatment to migrant workers will be stressed, and a necessity of resettlement process will be unpacked. What I would like to discuss more in this thesis are the negative impacts brought by gentrification, since it is mainly low-income communities are disproportionately affected in this process.

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#### **Chapter 4: Analysis and Discussion**

This chapter will connect the literature and empirical data used in previous chapters and aims at analyzing the actual issues, discussing potential solutions to these issues, and suggesting possible directions for future urban planning policy making. More specific recommendations will be provided in the Conclusions.

##### *Informal Settlements, Gentrification and Displacement in Tangjia Ling, Beijing, China*

The most obvious issue comes from gentrification and displacement in Tangjia Ling is that compensation was not distributed equally and fairly. Those who were in the most need are also the people who were ignored in the process. The case of Tangjia Ling, Beijing, shows the relationship between the urban poor and the formation of informal settlements, given a circumstance there is an institutional discrimination against rural migrant workers. The gentrification policy of the Beijing Municipal government indicates the strong government involvement in the process of urbanization, which is a common phenomenon in developing countries. Most importantly, this case stresses the importance of fair compensation and resettlement, since the issue of informal settlements and city dwellers in Beijing remain unsolved and even have triggered other social unrest.

The root cause that led to this issue is the *hukou* system in China. As the country with the biggest population in the world, how to manage population growth and movement have been among the top priorities to all national leaders in China.

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Therefore, *hukou* system was introduced as the major method to control population movement, especially rural-urban migration. According to Liu, *hukou* system was established in 1955 as a major way to maintain social and space order, and one way of achieving it is through extremely dis-encouraging rural-urban migration. Such way worked out when the economies in urban areas and rural areas were both weak and there were no big difference between the living standards in urban and rural areas. In other words, the main reason why this system worked out was because there was no strong incentives for rural population to move to urban areas by then. However, things changed overnight in 1978 when the state policy “reform and reopen” was announced. Several urban centers developed rapidly, while rural areas in most parts of China remained undeveloped. Since then, the disparity between urban and rural areas has grown. Living in urban areas means better and more jobs and opportunities; while living in rural areas means staying poor. Based on this, it is a natural trend for rural population to develop strong incentives to move to urban areas, and large amount of them did so. However, the *hukou* system remained unchanged. In short, *hukou* system has lost efficiency on controlling rural-urban migration in China when the trend of urbanization in China is fast and inexorable. Instead, what in creates now are discrimination against people who holds an agricultural “*hukou*” when they look for job opportunities in urban areas, and hindrance for people from rural areas seeking social welfare support after they move to urban areas.

Apart from that, a more inclusive and integrating social atmosphere should be established in Beijing considering the amount and percentage of rural-urban migrants

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account for. Beijing is relatively less inclusive and friendly to people who are not originally from there compared with other urban centers in China. It has a long and relatively recent history of being the capital of China, and this historical background contributed to its prosperity in the past and right now. Newly-developed urban centers, such as Shenzhen, are much more inclusive than Beijing since it developed from a small village to one of the biggest cities in China based on the contributions made by people from all over the country. Also, compared with other urban centers, Beijing, as the capital of People's Republic of China, shoulders more political responsibilities than others. That is to say, the control on population movement in Beijing is stricter than other urban areas for the sake of social stability. Regardless, concern on social stability is understandable, but it should not build upon exclusivity and discrimination against people who are not from there. The disparity of opportunities for people with a local *hukou* and people without a local *hukou* is extremely salient in Beijing, and it is also highly difficult for people from other parts of China to get Beijing *hukou*. As mentioned before, job opportunities with stability and good financial support, such as working in state-own companies in Beijing, are only available for people who hold Beijing *hukou*. Some school in Beijing only accept children with Beijing *hukou*. Such phenomenon takes place in almost every aspects in the society of Beijing. Based on this, what is faced by rural-urban migrants is limited financial stability and resources. Affordable housing, as one of the scarce resources in Beijing, is certain inaccessible to rural-urban migrants, which forces them to live in informal settlements, known as "urban villages" in Chinese context.



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The problem in the gentrification process in Tangjia Ling is that Beijing municipal government used the easiest way, which is *hukou*, on distribution of compensation, without realizing structural exclusivity *hukou* system created. They did not conduct enough investigate on how large the population their project is going to effect, let alone figure out who are the most in need. As mentioned earlier, the number of population who hold *hukou* registered in Tangjia Ling is not difficult to know. What is challenging is how many people actually live in that area, under the circumstance there was a lack of formal leasing registration system and high population mobility. The numbers given earlier were all based on estimation by reporters, rather than records from official documents. It is fair to deduct the Beijing Municipal government also did not know the accurate number of the living population there. The lack of detailed research in actual residents in Tangjia Ling district showed the attitude from the Beijing Municipal government. They would considered only people whose *hukou* were registered in Tangjia Ling were eligible for compensation. Surely it is fair to compensate them, especially some of them owned small pieces of land or apartments. However, they are not yet the most in need. It is the urban dwellers who squat there are the most in need. It has mentioned that the major reason they chose to live there was because of the low rent cost. Forced eviction without compensation not only means the loss of shelter and increase on their financial burden, it also cut off their social network and sense of belonging.

The incident of the fire in informal settlements in Daxing district in recent year shows that the attitude of Beijing Municipal government did not change. The fire was

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used as an excuse to evict the city dwellers living there. A BBC report showed that tenants living there were required to move out in three days, with the threat of cutting off electricity and water (BBC, 2017, n.p). This incident aroused heated debate and even anger in China and globally. It is fact that most of the tenants there did not went through formal leasing procedure, let alone land tenure. However, forced eviction should be used as the last resort when dealing with informal settlements. It should not be normalized and practiced frequently on the most vulnerable groups.

A major reason that contributes to the gentrification in Beijing that is slightly different from other parts of the world, which is the purpose of beautifying the city. The administrative power that the Municipal government has even made the residents in informal settlements less likely to fight against, or even just ask for compensation. It is a rational choice made by Beijing Municipal government, especially considering Beijing's political roles. However, the problem is that the whole process take place too fast. It is mentioned earlier that more than hundreds of thousands of people were displaced for the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in a short period of time. Firstly, it is difficult for these displaced people to find affordable housing in a short time. It is even worse when there were suddenly a large number of people looking for affordable housing, which will drive up the housing price. Secondly, it is almost impossible for government to extend compensation to the affect people in such a short period. Considering the large population affected, if there is compensation allocated for them, it will still be a huge number for local budget. In short, if displacement is an unavoidable consequence of gentrification, what must need even before the beginning

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of the whole process is the preparation of taking care of the affected population, including budgeting enough money for compensation, providing accessible and affordable housing resources, and allowing enough time period for the affected population to relocate.

A major lesson learned from the case in Tangjia Ling, Beijing, is that displacement does not necessarily lead to chaos or more homeless people on the street unless there are a fair and just mechanism of distributing compensation and a process of resettlement. What policy makers need to understand more is how many people will be affected by a certain project, and more importantly, how many people will be negatively affected by that project. In other words, what is needed the most before dispossessing people from informal settlements is to thoroughly investigate the number of people affected, and especially their economic background so as to figure out who are the most in need. By introducing this humanitarian perspective into decision-making process, how to allocate or compensate the affected people will be one of the major concern in the process. And that is what exactly is missing in the gentrification projects in Beijing. The vulnerable people who are forcefully evicted from informal settlements are considered as “not important”, which leads to an unjust and unfair distribution of compensation, nor solves the issue of informal settlements.

### *Gentrification, Land Competition, and Displacement*

The empirical data on gentrification-caused displacement in developing societies shows that the project tends lack of consent or participation from the residents. In

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other words, such types of displacement are forced displacement, and normally negatively affect the former residents' lives. The data suggest that the livelihoods of marginalized communities are ignored by the policy makers on purpose, so as to seek more and quicker economic benefits. It is fair to argue that economic benefits are important when planning projects. However, the livelihoods of marginalized communities should also be taken into concern. The short-term economic benefit may bring a sense of prosperity to the society, but only focusing on short-term economic return will intensify the inequality in society, which poses threat to future development.

What is behind the lack of consent or participation from the affected population is the intense competition for land within urban areas, since the government or the private investors do not want to risk spending a long time on negotiation or miss the opportunity of acquiring the land. Eliminating the participation of residents also means low cost in the process of the project. In the cases mentioned earlier, the gentrification in Turkey, which turned a low-income community into luxury hotel and shopping malls, gained nearly no consent from residents. That incident gained international attention since violence was involved in the process of eviction. The case in Kenya, which was designed to be an upgrade to informal settlements, but finally turned in to gentrification, and led to displacement and loss of shelter for residents living there. The interviewees in that report mentioned that the information given to them was confusing from the very beginning, and the amount of compensation was not clear, either. Worse still, the compensation actually never reached to them. In

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short, the issue here is that there tends to be an over-heated land market and land competition within urban areas in developing countries associated with the lack of national urban plan and over-concentrated investments in urban areas. Due to this, it is highly possible for urban planners or private investors focus too much on short-term economic benefits, without enough consideration on marginalized communities, which is shown as not getting consent from residents and the lack of participation of residents.

The urban dwellers squatting in informal settlements are extremely vulnerable and tend to have little bargain rights when faced with gentrification, and normally what is waiting for them is displacement since they do not secure land tenure. Under this circumstance, government intervention and protection to these people become vitally important, since they cannot seek others for help. The government intervention and protection does not mean to stop the project and keep the residents living there, but rather means to slow down the process, allowing more time for residents to find alternative housing, and arranging resettlement process for those who cannot find other shelters after the residents are evicted. The case mentioned earlier in Taipei showed how government intervention protect vulnerable communities from forced displacement to some degree. In short, the vulnerability of urban dwellers not only come from their poor economic background, but also the lack of secure land tenure. At the time, the protection from the government is their last resort. It is intended to minimize the strike caused by the sudden forced displacement to their lives.

There have been notions globally of “slum-upgrading”, which are intended to

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improve the living conditions in informal settlements and avoid displacement of the low-income communities living there. However, most of them turned into gentrification, and caused mass displacement, which is against their original intention. The issue here is that the governments which practiced these projects are too eager to see the outcomes, in other words, they still choose short-term economic benefits over long-term social equality and justice. What gentrification means is to replace the low-income communities by wealthier ones, so that the government will be able to collect a variety of taxes, including property tax, consumption tax, etc. In other words, gentrification represents short-term economic return. However, it is mentioned before that the reports of UN-Habitat actually shows that the cost of gentrification is higher than the cost of slum-upgrading, but the time spent on gentrification is much less than slum-upgrading. The long time length and the uncertainty of success of slum-upgrading projects means that local governments would rather choose gentrification for short-term economic return.

The success of slum-upgrading projects requires the cooperation of the urban dwellers who live in informal settlements. More specifically, they should be allowed to participate in decision-making process, and monitoring the project. The reason why “KENSUP” was considered as failure is that residents never gained enough information from the government officials, let alone fully understanding or participating. Beyond that, the construction of the site was slow, and the completed part was occupied by wealthier communities. In short, the cooperation of the residents in informal settlements is important if the government does want to avoid mass

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displacement at the beginning. It will not only help the government officials understand the how big the scale of population will be affected, but will also place monitor on the working process, which will avoid slum-upgrading changing into gentrification. Beyond that, it is also a good opportunity for local government to take some sorts of registration and regulation on the informal settlements, which will set the basis for regulation on safety, future resources delivering, and even tax collection.

In short, what we can see from this discussion is that economic benefits have become the focus of attention for the urban policy makers in developing countries. The outcomes of urban bias theory and the overwhelming investments in urban areas push policy makers and private investors to expect economic benefits in a short-term. This is especially true in the urban land market where land is one of the most important resources. What is ignored in this process is the well-being of the marginalized communities squatting in informal settlements. It is impossible to argue that economic benefits should be given up, but the livelihoods of the marginalized communities are also equally important at any stages of the development. It would be good choice if the governments in developing countries are able to slow down the pace of chasing high urbanization rates and GDP, and make more conscientious decisions when projects affect the livelihoods of the marginalized communities.

*Urbanization, Rural-urban Migration, and Informal Settlements in Developing Societies*

It is undeniable that urbanization rate is an important indicator when assessing

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how developed a country is, and a country with high urbanization rate also tends to be developed and possess high economic strength. However, what is also common with those countries is that most of them have through long time periods of industrialization and modernization. Put differently, the relation between urbanization process and modernization is non-linear. It is not urbanization that leads to development, nor vice-versa, but they grow together when industry grows so that urban population increase due to the labor needs of manufacturing. The main issue among some developing countries right now is that urbanization is viewed as the motivator to further development and economic growth. It is believed by local governments that as long as more people live in urban areas, that is, the urbanization rate is growing, the national economy will grow faster than when more people in rural areas. Thinking this way is not necessarily wrong, but is flawed. Firstly, when agricultural sector remain underdeveloped due to lack of labor and investment, the food security in urban areas is under huge risk since there would no stable food surplus available within the country. The huge urban population will have to rely on food import, whose price could be unstable. Secondly, when the speed of urbanizing is too fast, which means that the development and improvement of services and infrastructure in urban areas are not able to meet the needs of urban population all the time, all the pull factors, including better living conditions and more services, actually turn into “push factors” since they are not able to meet the expectations of the migrants. Thirdly, when urbanization is driven not by industrialization, but by political policies, what is ignored in this process is how poor communities will be able



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to survive in the intensive competition on resources in urban areas. As mentioned in the second point, there will be a deficit of resources and services in urban areas, so that only privileged people will be able to have access to various resources.

Marginalized communities will be forced to use informal means, such as informal settlements, to survive. In short, urbanization plays a key role in a country's development process, but pushing urbanization too fast will not only be unable to achieve more development, but will even create more social issues due to the lack of resources in urban areas and the mismanagement between urban and rural areas.

The implementation of "urban bias" theory is the reason why some developing countries prioritize urban development so much and ignore rural development, which later results in large scale rural-urban migration. I am not suggesting that investing in urban areas or prioritizing development in urban areas is wrong. What I would like to argue is that most developing countries lack an overall urban development plan, which provides a systemic instruction for their national and regional urban development. It means not only the investments could be allocated randomly or under full control of private investors, social justice issues, such as how to accommodate rural-urban migrants are normally not taken into consideration. As mentioned earlier, most developing countries currently do not have national urban development plans to mediate their national urbanization in a full picture, with only 25% of African countries and 29% in Asia and the Pacific, according to OECD reports. That is to say, when investments concentrate at urban areas, policy makers tend to lack the vision of bigger pictures or longer term effects. What will be prioritized will be the projects that

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can receive bigger economic return in a short term, and policy makers consider this types of prosperity as “development’. And people who are involved in these projects will be the ones who are economically privileged. In other words, marginalized communities, especially those who come from poor background, are excluded in such approach of development, and they will remain at the vulnerable position if there is a continuous lack of national urban development plans which will be able to take care of the issues of social injustices in the process of urbanization. In short, whether to prioritize the development in urban areas in developing countries is still a debatable issue among scholars. What is certain is that without a well-organized national urban development plan which will cover not only economic benefits, and also social justice concerns, the investments in urban areas will only benefit those who are already in a privileged position, and inequality will be intensified in the process, which leads to other urban issues, such as informal settlements.

The current approach used by most governments in the world to coordinate rural and urban population is to prevent rural-urban migration. This is a rational choice; however, without development in the agricultural sector, migrating to urban areas has become the major way to earn a livelihood for many people in developing countries. Pull and rural push factors are the classic dichotomy that are used to explain the reasons behind migration. It means that destinations have certain traits that attracts people and origins have certain traits that drive people out. On this sense, urban pull and rural push factors are used to explain the reason behind rural-urban migration. However, recent scholars has extended this theory into “migration drivers” (Van Hear

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et al 2018), which is able to cover both structural and individual reasons. It is important to note that mobility is part of nature of all human societies, that is, the population movement between rural and urban areas is a natural phenomenon that should be expected under all circumstances. O' Reilly (2013) emphasized that migration is not a new phenomenon because human beings has moved as individuals and groups since the appearance of human kinds. What should be stressed here is that migration is not only shaped by physical surroundings such as living conditions and social services, agency of individuals also plays a key role in the process of migration. In other words, moving to urban areas from rural areas not only means a better income, but more opportunities in the future and even for their next generations.

However, such notion makes sense when it applies to single individuals. When a large amount of people act this way, it is a challenge for the government to accommodate them at where they prefer. It is a natural desire that human beings seek for better places, where there are not only better physical surroundings, but also more potential opportunities for individual development, to inhabit themselves. It is too ideal to argue that policies designed to prevent rural-urban migration is against human nature, since it is also government's responsibility to coordinate population nationwide to avoid overpopulation at some areas and depopulation at other areas. As discussed earlier in the literature review section, there have been scholars arguing that rural-urban migrants should not be blamed for the overpopulation in urban areas in developing countries. Instead, it is the mismanagement of local governments caused this issue. The main issue in developing countries when governments try to hinder the

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trend of rural-urban migration is that rural areas are too undeveloped to be an option for livelihood or future development. In short, individual movement and government regulation are both understandable choices. This issue in developing countries is that rural-urban migration is relatively forced compared to the case in more developed areas. And when governments in developing countries try to control this trend, it is still the vulnerable people who come from poor background, which are the majority of rural-urban migrants in developing countries, are affected most in the process.

Informal settlements within urban areas in developing areas is a consequence of the reasons mentioned above. Urban dwellers who squat in informal settlements are clearly victims due to the lack of the consideration of them when policies are made. However, what is worse in most developing countries is that urban poverty and informal settlements are viewed as a development issue, rather than a social justice issue. In other words, when governments in developing countries try to solve these issues, attitude applied in the process is likely to be "out of sight out of mind", so that the policies are not designed to target the roots causes of issues. One example could be the eviction of informal settlements. However, it is also clear that such solutions are not sufficient to solve the issue of urban poverty and informal settlements. They may be invisible in the society for a short period, but will still exist. It has been mentioned in the earlier chapter that most developing countries have high Gini coefficients, which means high inequality of the distribution of wealth in their societies. Also, as Ooi and Phua (2007) mentioned earlier, it is the inability of urban planners to provide enough affordable housing for low-income communities that

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caused informal settlements (p. 30). In short, urban poverty and the existence of informal settlements within urban areas in developing countries are the consequence of unequal wealth distribution and the ignorance of urban planners regarding poor communities. It is more than a development issue which could be interpreted and solved by change of numbers, but a social justice issue whose solutions requires the change of mindsets of the policy makers in developing countries.

The lesson taken out from this section is that more comprehensive urban developing plans are needed in developing countries so that various issues could be considered even before they take place, such as the growth of informal settlements in urban areas. Doing so requires the change of mindset if policy makers and structural changes which lead to fairer wealth distribution. The importance of urban development have been widely acknowledged and the trend of urbanization is irreversible. The major issue in the path of urban development in developing countries is that there is a lack of inclusive understanding on the basis of urbanization. Urban development requires more than just population growth in urban areas; it also requires a strong agricultural sector as a backup and urban infrastructure as a support. Without a comprehensive national urban plans which coordinate rural and urban development and population control, investments in urban areas will intensifies the inequality and poor rural-urban migrants will be push into desperate situation by both inequality in urban areas and migration regulation that does not favor them.

To summarize this section, urbanization has become a predominant trend globally, and for those emerging economies in developing societies, rural-urban

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migration is an expected phenomenon in their countries. Investments and development in urban areas have been prioritized, while rural development and poor communities are ignored. This disparity will intensify the social inequality in their societies. What is required in this process is an inclusive perspective that concerns both urban and rural development, both privileged and marginalized communities.

Urbanization is an irreversible process and it is non-surprising to see some developing countries are urbanizing at a fast speed. Rural-urban migration is both reason and consequence to the urbanization process in developing countries. It is the growth of urban population that pushes the urban development, and more and more people move from rural areas to urban areas for better paid jobs and more opportunities. In this process, it is unavoidable in many developing countries that social inequality is intensified, especially in urban areas. It can be shown that even though hundreds of thousands of people squat in informal settlements, the governments or private investors would rather choose to gentrify this area to serve wealthier communities and gain more economic benefits. Or sometimes, the government choose to gentrify informal settlements for a better city look. It is unrealistic to argue that economic concern is not important in the process of development design; however, what is equally important is the social justice concern, namely concern on marginalized communities. It is important to introduce the humanitarian perspective to city planners when dealing with issues like informal settlements, since they are not only development issues, but also social justice issues.

In conclusion, in a perfect world everyone will live comfortably without facing

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the risk of being displaced by gentrification. It is too ideal to argue that government should take care of everyone's needs and satisfy all of them. However, it is fair to argue that the effects on marginalized communities are important when decisions are made about social projects. It has proved by various cases that due to the overlook to the needs of poor communities in informal settlements, mass displacement takes place after and leads to other major negative impacts. To individuals, it means loss of livelihood, and social network; to the society, it means the possible increase of homeless people on the street and even social conflicts. This discussion and next chapter, conclusion and recommendations, aim to offer suggestion on how to avoid mass displacement as a major consequence of gentrification, but they do not argue that government or private investors should totally give up economic benefits, nor does any other part of the thesis. A practical approach will be applied so as to generate more effective solutions for urban planners when they are faced with issues of gentrification and displacement. Debating about whether gentrification is good or not is meaningless since it takes place everywhere in the world. What worth attention is how to alleviate the negative impact gentrification brings, especially displacement, due to the importance of shelter to human lives.

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## **Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations**

With the fast-paced urbanization trend going on in developing countries, governments in developing countries are faced with all sorts of development issues and challenges in this process, especially in urban areas. The existence and growth of informal settlements in urban areas is one of them, as it reflects the importance of incorporate the urban poor in the process of urban development and the consequence of failing to do so. As is shown in the previous sections, specific situation varies in each developing countries due to the differences on socio-economic contexts. However, there are also common lessons that should be alert to all developing societies.

I have shown that gentrification reflects how urban planners achieve balance in paradoxes during urban planning. The first and foremost is whether urban planners should prioritize short-term benefits, namely economic benefits, or long-term benefits, usually social justice and equity. Most cases mentioned before, including different scenarios from Asia, Africa, and South America, have shown that most developing countries have prioritized short-term economic benefits over long-term social justice and equity. The failure of include social justice concerns in urban planning will continue to hinder the urban development in developing countries.

The case of gentrification in Tangjia Ling, Beijing, China reveals two key issues in urban planning. Firstly, everything that take place in urban areas and every person living in urban areas should be considered as part of the urban planning. What the Beijing Municipal government did was using *hukou* as the only standard to



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distribute compensation, and only those who have a “Beijing *hukou*” will be compensated; while the large majority of rural-urban migrants squatting there were evicted in a short period of time without any compensation, since the Beijing Municipal government was aimed to drive them back their home by doing so. The strict differentiation of *hukou* between an agricultural one and a “Beijing” one should not be used as an excuse to exclude the rural-urban migrant workers from urban planning in Beijing. As mentioned earlier, urbanization is an irreversible process so driving people out of cities will never truly solve development issues in urban areas. Secondly, it is important for government to realize that people who are in disadvantaged positions can be negatively affected by projects which are designed for future good for all. Therefore, it is essential to include these people at the beginning of urban planning and compensate these people instantly when they are affected so their well-being are not “sacrificed” without their consent. It is understandable that Beijing Municipal government wishes to solve the issue of informal settlements as quick as possible to build a better city look, but this does not justify the mass displacement caused by gentrification and the loss of shelter of the tenants who are largely likely already under huge economic burden.

There are several principles that should be followed so as to alleviate the negative impacts of gentrification. Firstly, it is important for urban planners to understand that rural-urban migrants are contributors to urbanization, rather than thieves who take away the urban resources. Therefore, it is important to incorporate them in the process of urban planning rather than “othering” them and exclude them

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from opportunities and prosperities. Secondly, it is a fact that gentrification will bring major tax revenue increase in short time and it is also a legitimate choice for any government considering the importance of tax revenue. However, the process should be slow down so that the livelihoods for those who are affected will be under concern. Specifically, before the actual projects start, it is important for local government officials to take deep investigations in the planned neighborhoods so as to establish a clear concept of how big the affected groups are and how many people are living in poverty. Also, the residents who are likely to be affected should be educated about the projects and the changes in their lives so that they can plan for moving out or apply for financial support from the government. At the end, the government should not discriminate any one from the affected communities because of their birth places, races, etc, in the process of distributing compensation. And for the individuals or family who are in the most need, there should be extra support provided for them so that they will be able to make through the process of displacement.

Gentrification remains to be one of the major topics in development studies as it reflects how governments make trade-off between short-term economic benefits and long-term social justice. This thesis suggests that social justice concerns should be included at the beginning of gentrification process, and specific suggestions have made on how to avoid forced displacement. It will be helpful if there could be studies on how government can avoid the existence of informal settlements in the first place, and how the residents can actively participate in the process to upgrade informal settlement and achieve similar goals as gentrification.

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As Deng Xiaoping once suggested “We should allow some people and regions get rich first, so that others will be brought along. Through this process, common prosperity of the entire population will be gradually achieved”. The world has witnessed the huge economic development in China with a rapid trend of modernization and urbanization. It is important to note that common prosperity of the whole nation is the ultimate goal so no one should be excluded in this process. Gentrification without compensation or resettlement for those affected is a perfect example of those who got rich first trying to exclude those who have not yet become rich. The government intervention is crucial from the beginning so that the well-being of the marginalized groups will be considered and the social justice issues will be remained incorporated during the whole processes.

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