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University of Glasgow  
School of Social and Political Sciences  
Urban Studies

**Evaluating social housing policy in China's mega cities:  
A comparative case study of Shanghai and Chongqing**

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**Abstract:** In 1998, the focus of China's modern housing system shifted from the welfare-orientated housing to the privatised and commercialised housing. Though this housing reform has significantly improved the living conditions of Chinese people, it has also widened housing inequality, especially in China's mega cities. Accordingly, urban social housing has become a necessity for low-income groups in these cities. In recent years, China's housing policy has increasingly focused on social housing for low-income groups. As a series of policies have been formulated and implemented, whether the actual living needs of low-income groups can be met has aroused a huge concern. Before the evaluation of the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of urban social housing policies in these two mega cities, this paper starts with a discussion of the social background of low-income groups as well as their urban social housing situation in Shanghai and Chongqing in the Chinese 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan. This paper examines the successes and failures of urban social housing policies in Shanghai and Chongqing and discusses the potential policy improvements that may more apply to the actual living needs of low-income groups.

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
Table.....	5
Figure.....	5
1.0 Introduction.....	6
1.1 Urban social housing policy in China’s mega cities.....	6
1.2 Social housing in China.....	8
1.3 Research questions.....	10
1.4 Dissertation Structure.....	11
2.0 Literature review.....	12
2.1 Policy intervention and evaluation.....	12
2.2 The “three E’s”: effectiveness, efficiency and equality.....	16
2.3. A game of central vs local government in China.....	21
3.0 Methodology.....	24
3.1. The comparative case study approach.....	25
3.2. Data and analysis.....	27
3.3. Evaluative framework: indicators and evidence.....	27
4.0 Evaluation of Shanghai’ and Chongqing’s urban social housing policy.....	30
4.1 Roles of Chinese central government and local authorities.....	30
4.2 The success and failure of Shanghai’s urban social housing policy.....	33
On Effectiveness.....	33
On Efficiency.....	36

On Equality .....	40
4.3 The success and failure of Chongqing’s urban social housing policy .....	41
On Effectiveness .....	41
On Equality .....	44
On Efficiency .....	46
5.0 Findings and conclusion .....	49
Bibliography .....	55

## Table

Table 1 The dimensions of evaluation .....	28
Table 2 Social housing completions-Shanghai 2011-2015 .....	34
Table 3 The achievement of Chongqing's urban social housing during 12 <sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan .....	42

## Figure

Figure 1 The social housing satisfaction in Shanghai.....	36
Figure 2 The annual per capital disposable income and residential floor space of urban residents .....	46
Figure 3 Urban house price growth rate in ten Chinese mega cities from 2010-2016 .....	49

# **1.0 Introduction**

## **1.1 Urban social housing policy in China's mega cities**

In 1998 China's modern housing system shifted from the welfare-orientated housing system to the privatised and commercialised housing system (Wang and Murie, 2000; Wang and Gao, 2004). As a result, housing consumption grew rapidly in China's cities. The residential floor area per capita of urban residents in China increased from 4 sq.m. in the 1980s to 36.6 sq.m. in 2016 (Huang and Clark, 2002; National Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Home ownership surged from 10 % (Yu, Sun and Zhang, 2014) to 89.25 % as of March 2014, with 21 % of urban households owning multiple homes (Gan, 2014). Yet housing reform has also increased social inequalities, especially in mega cities. From 2000 to 2016, Chinese urban housing prices rose by 269%. Urban low-income households were unable to afford private housing, which includes rural-urban migrants and new graduates (National Bureau of Statistics, 2016; JRJ, 2018). In addition, problems of social housing in China have intensified public dissatisfaction with the government. These problems include the poor housing design, the hidden dangers of construction and "segregation of residence" (Chen, Yang & Wang, 2014). Today, the middle class and working class are growing rapidly in China's mega cities, and the lack of social housing and the conservatism of social housing policies are threatening China's social and political stability (Forrest and Li, 2012).

To meet the public's demand for social housing, the Chinese central government and local governments have continuously increased the investment in social housing and expanded support for social housing needs. This can be seen in the changes experienced by the Chinese social housing system from the preparation stage of 1994-1999, to the stable period of 2000-2006, to the upsurge period of 2007-2013, and the adjustment period of 2013-present (Tan, 2017). Yet overheated housing prices and urban population growth caused by urbanisation and industrialisation have suggested that urban social

housing remains in short supply. Besides, the metropolitan middle and working classes, with significant civic awareness, have questioned the traditional social housing policy (Forrest and Yip, 2013). The most representative cities are Shanghai and Chongqing.

Shanghai and Chongqing are two cities taking on strong characteristics of China's urban social housing system. Both cities are famous megacities with huge migrant populations. Because of politics, economics and war, Shanghai and Chongqing began to host large numbers of migrants in the 1900s. The migrant population flow stopped in 1949 due to Mao's revolution and restarted in 1978, accelerating especially from 1992 onwards. Under the popularity of the market economy, Shanghai and Chongqing have become the main migrant cities in China once again. Shanghai now covers an area of 6,371 sq.km., with a population of 24.20 million; Chongqing currently has an area of 82,403 sq.km. and a population of 30.16 million (Data shanghai, 2018; Chongqing Statistics, 2018). Though the huge population has driven economic development in these cities, it has contributed to the burden on housing supply and affordability of Shanghai and Chongqing. The growing numbers of local residents and booming immigration have repeatedly pushed up Shanghai's house prices. Shanghai's house price to income ratio has reached 23.5. Though this figure is only 4.4 in Chongqing, many migrants or low-income households are still living in shanty towns due to their terrible economic conditions (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

China's political policy cycle follows the five-year model of the former Soviet Union, called the "five-year plan". The 12th Five-Year Plan period (2011-2015) is critical for China's social transformation. In the process of social transformation, China's urban social housing policy has also changed its original model (Chen, Yang & Wang, 2014; Tan, 2017). Under the new social model, the social housing policy is most worthy of review because it is the main policy model now. The aim of this dissertation is therefore to evaluate the urban social housing policy of China's mega cities, using the cases of Shanghai and Chongqing. It focuses on the period of the most recently completed five-



year plan (China's 12th Five-Year Plan) and comes to some conclusions about the relative successes and failures of urban social housing policy in these two cities. By evaluating social housing policy in Shanghai and Chongqing, it is hoped that lessons can be learned about what works (and what doesn't) when designing and implementing social housing policy in China.

## **1.2 Social housing in China**

Chinese social housing consists of low-rental housing projects, public rental housing, as well as economic and comfortable housing. Most scholars consider 1998 as the starting time of the current social housing programme in China (Wang and Murie, 2000; Lee and Zhu, 2006; Chen, Guo and Wu, 2011). And, some scholars (Yang and Sun, 2005; Yu, 2011) believe that the current Chinese social housing system has been completely established during China's 11th Five-Year Plan, from 2006 to 2010. In 2008, the Chinese State Council issued a policy that required the central government and the local government to provide various types of social housing for households in low income and poor living conditions. To provide some context for the analysis and discussion that follows, the key features of each of these social housing models will now be outlined.

**Economic and Comfortable Housing (ECH)** refers to the affordable housing characterised by “economy” and “applicability” under the support of the Chinese government. Here, “economy” means that the price of housing is moderate, associated with the market price of the same period and affordable for middle and low-income families; “applicability” suggests that the building's architecture and design should meet the quality standards of the same type of housing in the market. ECH commonly resulted in sales to the middle and upper-income class and government officials in the early stage, whereas this situation was to be abandoned progressively. The mode of operation of ECH is that, for ECH built by real estate developers, some scholars (Wang

et al., 2010) survived that the government provides free land and public facilities (these two costs account for at least 40% of house prices). Yet, the government stipulations and restrictions are imposed on ECH sales prices, qualifications for purchase as well as profit of developers. Likewise, to facilitate the implementation of **low-rental housing projects (LRH)** in local government, the State Council decreed that 10% of land sales should be used for the building of LRH. LRH projects are owned by the government or public institutions, and the low-rental houses are leased to low-income people at low rents approved by the government. The low-rental houses are rented and not sold, and occupants have no ownership rights. The local government reviews the eligibility of renters annually. Though the Central Government of China has vigorously promoted the construction of LRH, local governments cannot gain financial and political benefits from the construction of LRH. Real estate developers have a lukewarm response to LRH because it is not profitable.

**Public rental housing (PRH)** emerged as the new form of social housing in 2010, revealing the transition from subsidised market housing to public rental housing. PRH provides affordable housing for migrants, new graduates and retirees with no local registration. **Placement of the housing** (also known as **Transitional Shelter for Relocation of Households, PH or TSRH**), built by the local government, is virtually a compensation of compulsory purchase order. The government will perform the demolition for urban re-planning and land development, the owner of the house to be demolished will receive new housing provided by the government. ECH, LRH, PRH and PH are the four basic forms of social housing in Chinese cities. The main focus of this dissertation is on ECH, LRH and PRH, which are social housing for low-income groups in the city. The applicable population of PH is not fully classified as a low-income group.

Since 2011, the lack of affordable housing has become the focus of central government, suggesting that such a lack could pose a threat to social stability. The Chinese

government planned to build 60 million social housing units from 2011 to 2020, to cover 20% households (Lin, 2015). Huang (2013) thinks this figure is deceptive since it includes different types of affordable housing, e.g., reconstructing dilapidated housing to cater for low and middle-income groups. Some people (Wang, 2004; Chen, Hao and Stephens, 2010) have questioned the quality of the government's social housing, and they believe that social housing for maintaining social stability and economic development does not meet the design and construction standards of private housing.

The most significant change in recent years is the eligibility of rural-urban migrants for social housing. Access to social housing has traditionally been restricted for migrants without the local residence permit (*hukou*). Access to urban social housing for migrant workers is not uniform all over the country. Instead, central government formulates the guidelines for implementing social housing projects by setting the number of housing units and quality standards and establishes some administrative structures to supervise its development. The deeper reason for this change is the process of Chinese urbanisation and industrialisation. Industrialisation has witnessed huge numbers from the rural workforce entering in to urban areas, breaking limitations on population flow, and thus accelerating urbanisation. Under industrialisation and urbanisation, the form, object and structure of current Chinese social housing programmes have been changed.

### **1.3 Research questions**

China currently has great social differences. On the one hand, China has experienced unparalleled achievements in residential development through housing reform and economic development. The per capita housing area of urban residents in China increased from 6.7 sq.m. in 1978 to 36.3 sq.m. in 2016. And the proportion of urban households with multiple homes exceeded 21.0% (Economic Daily, 2014). On the other hand, millions of people encountering poverty are denied basic housing. Huang and Li

(2014, p.3) state that “many [low-income households] have to live in boxy rooms in crumble shacks, low-rises in dusty suburban villages as well as tiny dark dorms in bomb shelters and basements under glossy apartment buildings”. This demonstrates the extent of housing-related inequality in China.

Chinese social housing policy has attempted to address these issues of inequality with varying degrees of success. Official statistics suggest that 40,278,200 units of social housing were started in total during the 12<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan period, of which 28,788,800 were completed, plus 11 million units completed during the 11th Five-Year Plan period. The total social housing stock in China is nearly 40 million units (Tan, 2017). Though the achievements during the 12th Five-Year Plan period are huge, there are still some problems in the urban social housing policy of China's mega cities. The research question in this dissertation is: **What are the successes and failures of urban social housing policies in China's mega cities?** These require a systematic evaluation of urban social housing policies that are usually dimensioned for effectiveness, efficiency and quality.

## **1.4 Dissertation Structure**

The dissertation is comprised of five parts. The next chapter is the literature review, which presents a critical assessment of theory and wider literature around social housing policy and policy evaluation, in order to establish an analytical framework for the evaluation of social housing policy in Shanghai and Chongqing. The third chapter outlines the research methods employed. In the research, Shanghai and Chongqing were selected as comparative cases of social housing policies in China. There is a note on Shanghai and Chongqing's social housing policies, and then this part explains why document analysis was selected as the research method, its limitations and how to obtain reasonable and objective data.

The comparison between Shanghai and Chongqing is considered the core of the research. The analysis of the implementation of social housing policy in Shanghai and Chongqing, as well as the relative successes and failures of social housing policies in these two cities, serve as the main contents. It is noteworthy that the development and implementation of policies is not only about the local government and the Chinese central government acting independently of each other, but how Shanghai and Chongqing implement the decisions of the central government and why they are doing this is also discussed. By comparing social housing in Shanghai and Chongqing, the final chapter concludes with a discussion of the successes and failures of Chinese social housing, focusing on the formulation, implementation and impact of policies. What lessons can be learned from the social housing policy of Shanghai and Chongqing, what works, and why? The answer to this question leads to some recommendations for policy makers and implementers on how they might tackle social housing problems with more success in the future.

## **2.0 Literature review**

This chapter presents a review of literature on approaches to policy evaluation and examines the ways in which others have evaluated social housing policy in China and elsewhere. It begins with the theory of market failure and the need for policy intervention before examining the use of effectiveness, efficiency and equality as concepts or measures of policy success and failure. The chapter concludes by looking at the tensions that exist in the relationship between central and local government in China when it comes to social housing policy.

### **2.1 Policy intervention and evaluation**

The nature of all policy is that the government intervenes in the operation of the market

economy to address "market failure" (Lascoumes and Le Gales, 2007). Whether the introduction of a policy is reasonable and whether government intervention is effective depend on whether it can solve the problem of market mechanism failure in certain areas and whether it can make up for the inherent defects of the "invisible hand" For policy evaluators, to positively evaluate a policy using the "market failure" theory, the issue of "government failure" should also be given more attention (Chang, 2014; Dixit, 2014). In some areas, the market mechanism cannot achieve the optimal allocation of resources, but it is possible that the government's involvement could simply make the situation worse. Government intervention distorts the price signal, which creates rent-seeking opportunities or undermines market fairness. In recent years, the concept of "systemic failure" has also been proposed. There are often overlaps or conflicts between the various policies promulgated by the government. Accordingly, when a policy is studied separately, it is considered to be very effective; but if you look at it in a complex system of policies, its role is questionable. This requires the use of a systematic point of view when evaluating policies, rather than simply discussing the matter (Papa Constantinou and Polt, 1997).

So how do we go about evaluating policy? Turok (1990) identified four different methods to policy evaluation. In these four methods, different styles and scopes are employed for analysis and increasingly complex levels are adopted to monitor the effectiveness of policies. Turok (1990) references the most basic method of policy evaluation as "internal review: administrative effectiveness", which is employed to verify the effectiveness of allocating resources and achieving internal goals. However, this method aims at measuring the performance of the output, rather than the impact or efficiency (Foley, 1992). The second is the "External Review: Financial Efficiency" method, which sets performance metrics based on the ratio of policy output to resource input. Marsh and McConnell (2010) explain that this method is derived from the private sector, which stresses the importance of cost control rather than the performance of the final output. The third is a wider concept, "social accounting", with a major focus on

the effectiveness of the economic and social outcomes of the policy, rather than direct actual results or financial costs. Through some empirical investigations (Liu, 2009), the author found out the impact of policies on different sectors or groups. This method involves the investigation of the secondary impact of policies and the various distributional consequences for individuals and organisations. Responses to this method have been mixed. Foley (1992) praised the method for breaking the narrow scope of previous social accounting methods. Yet, Matthews (1991) feels that this method does not have much effect on solving practical problems. The final assessment type is “understanding and interpretation”. This method involves an in-depth understanding of how the policy works. “Understanding and interpretation” goes beyond the measurement of the impact of simple policies and explores how and why they are generated. Boyne (2003) states that the understanding and interpretation of policies are based on multiple perspectives, and policy evaluation is based on multiple interest groups. Thus, it is difficult to define success or failure in policy evaluation.

Marsh and McConnell (2010) state that the increase in policy evaluation research in recent decades has resulted from the public's accusation that the western neo-liberal “big government” has exhausted public funds and failed to provide effective and responsible public services. Yet policy evaluation research was abandoned in the 1970s. Take economic policy evaluation as an example. Econometric techniques and microeconomic techniques are commonly employed in the evaluation of economic policy. Yet econometric techniques have increased the difficulty of research, and the complexity of the study makes it difficult to understand and disconnected from the policy process. Grant (1983) highlights that applying cost-effective techniques in evaluating financial aid to industry is difficult and inappropriate. The ambiguity of timescales and the combination of multiple policies also make the economic policy evaluations using microeconomic methods more difficult to achieve (Schofield, 1979). One is to evaluate initiatives, and the other is to examine good practice because they are used to distinguish between the terms “efficiency” and “effectiveness” applied in

evaluations commonly. Most of the publications in the Good Practices series finally explain their major focus on “efficiency”. These publications primarily seek to provide information about good practices so that the plan can maximise output (for a given input unit) or maintain the same level of output while reducing input costs (Barnekov et al., 1990). On the other hand, it is more associated with “effectiveness”, i.e., “the degree of achievement of policy objectives” (Yi and Huang, 2014).

The means-tested housing policy is common in the West (Bridge et al., 2003). For instance, the American social housing allocation method was determined as a weaker priority after the investigation (Friedrichs, Galster and Musterd, 2003). In comparison to the West, social housing policy has become a hot topic in China only in the last decade, and policy evaluation has yet to feature strongly in the government’s calculations. Many studies suggest that policy evaluation is critical for improving housing policies and programmes, and independent policy and programme evaluation are required by both the EU and the US government (European Parliament, 1996; Renger, Passons and Cimetta, 2003). China's policy evaluation is limited to macro-level areas, and social housing policies have been rarely evaluated (Wei and Liu, 2003).

Cost and effectiveness are considered two important factors in the assessment of residential policy, whereas the effect may be immediate or long-term (Wang, 2003). Yi and Huang (2014) believe that higher household satisfaction and better socio-economic wellbeing performances, briefly known as efficiency, are the core of a comprehensive urban social housing system. In other words, a better urban social housing policy can be considered efficient under constant costs. In the past decade, equality has become an important topic of discussion in Chinese housing. A growing number of researchers (Du and Li, 2014; He et al., 2014) also focus on the quality of urban social housing policies in China, which often means the impact of policy.

Yet almost all countries’ citizens believe that their government’s social housing lacks



effectiveness, efficiency and equality (Arnott, 2009). Indeed, some of the dimensions of policy evaluation are based on the procedures of policy implementation. For instance, Marsh and McConnell (2010) think the policy success should be evaluated in terms of “process”, “programmatic” and “political” dimensions. Yet as mentioned earlier, urban social housing policies are coherent and integrated, like a system. The evaluation dimension with time or specific steps is aimed at the result of a single policy (Barnekov et al., 1990). Hence, the urban social housing policy evaluation usually starts from the dimensions effectiveness and efficiency, as well as equality. These three dimensions put the evaluation of policies on a larger scale, and the links between urban social housing policies in different terms and the interaction between urban social housing policies and other related institutions are involved in the evaluation. Except for the results at the city level, urban social policy evaluations are often associated with the coordination of local government and central government in urban social housing policies (Milbourne, 1998; Laffin, 2012). The performance of the local government on the implementation of central government policies has not appeared significantly in policy evaluation to date. In other words, the game between the Chinese central government and local governments in social property policies also takes up an important part of the evaluation (Yang, 2015). We now turn to consider the three “E’s” – effectiveness, efficiency and equality – in more detail.

## **2.2 The “three E’s”: effectiveness, efficiency and equality**

Effectiveness suggests whether an existing policy or goal has been achieved. Efficiency refers to whether the formulated policy or goal is achieved with the lowest cost and maximum return. Also, the four general principles of equality are as follows: equal payments, equal outputs, equal inputs as well as equal satisfaction of demand (Savas, 1978). In general, the simplest examination of whether social housing policies are effective is to review the changes in social housing in recent years, which include the area of social housing, the number of units as well as the number of people living in

them. From the data, China's social housing policy has high effectiveness (People, 2014). China planned to build 36 million social housing units during the 12th Five-Year Plan period, with an actual construction of 39.7 million units. Yet this method may have a big difference with the actual results, since the results of some policies would not appear soon, and the data may be deceptive (Wang, 2003). The direct purpose of China's housing policy is to curb excessively rapid house price increase and provide low-income people with affordable housing. Yet the increasing house prices have raised questions that whether social housing policies in China are effective (Li, Wei and Zhang, 2013; National Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

Lux's (2003) study of housing policy in six countries in Central and Eastern Europe suggests that the most effective subsidies were implemented in the context of the overall policy for the leasing model combined with decentralisation/deregulation of the leasing sector. The worst results appeared in those countries with almost consistent policies (a single model), and these countries have no power to decentralise/free up rented housing. Yet the situation has become different in developed countries with mature markets. Public-public partnerships are positively associated with effectiveness, efficiency and fairness, whereas public-private partnerships are negatively correlated with efficiency and fairness. Public - Non-profit partnerships are not correlated with performance (Andrews and Entwistle, 2010). In China, public-public partnerships are considered to produce bureaucracy, with insufficient supervision and unfair social property distribution system. In addition, public-private partnerships are considered prone to corruption (Chang, 2011). Indeed, cross-sector cooperation can increase effectiveness, efficiency and equality, whereas the prospects for public service improvement may be dependent on the sectoral choice that organisations make (Andrews and Van de Walle, 2013). The underlying reason for the loss of effectiveness in Chinese social housing is that the central government has not coordinated the interests of all parties involved. Take ECH as an example, the government stipulates that the profits of developers must be less than 3%, which is much lower than the profit of private housing. The developer's

reasonable input and enthusiasm for technological improvement were suppressed even if the government provided a lot of incentives (Chang, 2011). The game between central government and local government also affects effectiveness and efficiency. This part will be reviewed later.

The final effectiveness and efficiency evaluation method is the social housing policy method. People are generally expecting more flexible social housing policies (Hills, 2007; Oxley and Smith, 2012) around the world, which are also considered to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of policies. Quigley (2000) demonstrates that US housing policy has shifted from project-based housing support to housing subsidies, thus increasing its efficiency and effectiveness. The demand-side income-related housing subsidy schemes are generally more effective in providing decent and affordable housing for people in need compared with public housing and other supply options.

The second point (on efficiency) attaches importance to the household's residential satisfaction and socio-economic wellbeing in different social housing policies. For instance, social housing for the low-income households are always located in places faraway from the city center, and such programmes are big in scale so that poor people are clustered together (Zhang and Zhang, 2010). Social housing areas also tend to lack access to adequate jobs (Evans, 1998; Kleit, 2001). The spatial match hypothesis was first proposed by Kain (1968). His research in the USA suggests that black residential areas have fewer job opportunities than white residential areas. The evaluation criteria for social housing household satisfaction also include the completeness of the infrastructure (He and Li, 2008; Zheng, 2014), accessibility (Apparicio and Seguin, 2006), security (Yang, Zhang and Wang, 2009) and social housing management (Huang and Zhu, 2010). Yet subjectively, the dissatisfaction of social housing occupants with social housing policies also originates from their own economic discrimination and low social status (Wu and Chen, 2013).

Rex & Moore (1967) proposed the famous “housing class” concept when analyzing race and conflict in the United Kingdom. They highlight that people’s access to and use of housing resources can be considered as a sign of their class status. Research suggests that nearly 40% of occupants living in concentrated social housing communities feel isolated (Li, 2010). The concept of “housing career” (Kendig, 1984; Forrest, 1987) explains the change of residence satisfaction from the perspective of occupants, i.e., people’s housing forms have close association with their careers, family cycles as well as changing rhythm. On the other hand, it also indirectly indicates that the accuracy and rationality of social housing policy objectives have close correlation with household satisfaction. Social housing occupants living in owner-oriented housing, single family houses and better housing and communities are more satisfied (Yi and Huang, cited in Rent and Rent, 1978; Rohe and Stegman 1994), which means the ideal social housing policy is to make social housing the same as ordinary housing (Fan and Tang, 2011).

Another efficiency evaluation point is the overall impact of social housing policies on the housing market. Social housing policy has a significant impact on house prices, and social housing policy also determines the attractiveness of new immigrants to the city, i.e., housing demand (Wang and Wu, 2015). The supply of price elasticity is very low since the price elasticity of demand for low-income families is relatively low, and the market reacts to supply-side adjustments through vacancies (Yi and Huang, cited in Barnett and Lowry, 1979; Malpezzi and Maclennan, 2001; Mills and Sullivan, 1981; Rydell, 1982). From another perspective, the total amount of social housing is limited by the government in China as the infrastructure and municipal facilities of social housing are difficult to completely bear by the government. Hence, the government can only build appropriate social housing in the appropriate areas (Yang, 2017). Only the construction of a large-scale social housing community can affect the market's rental prices, rather than house prices (Chen, 2009). People often worry that social housing negatively impacts the value of property of nearby housing. For example, Nguyen

explains that “opposition from community members toward the siting and construction of affordable housing in their community has interrupted and/or completely terminated the development of affordable housing projects” (cited in Pendall 1999, p.16).

The reasons for the resistance to social housing are varied and complex. Community members are worried about the quality and design of structures. Social housing may change the characteristics of the neighborhood, which increases negative externalities (such as violence and drugs). “Troublemakers” might enter the neighborhood and the general anti-growth mood can lead to resistance to social housing (Pendall, 1999; Anthony, 1992; Turner, Popkin and Cunningham, 2000; California Planning Roundtable, 1999). In the West, more than a dozen studies have looked at the impact of affordable housing on housing prices, but found no obvious negative effects (California Planning Roundtable, 1999; Green and Malpezzi, 2003). Nguyen (2005) states that social housing may negatively impact the residential value of neighboring communities, whereas this depends on many factors: the design and management of social housing, the compatibility between social housing and host neighborhood, as well as the concentration of social housing.

Those responsible for analyzing and formulating public policies are usually responsible for determining whether the current system is fair or not. However, equality does not mean that every service must be provided to everyone in equal amounts, since individual’s needs and capabilities of services will vary (Brown, Brewer and deLeon, 1983). In this regard, equity allocation can be considered from horizontal equity and vertical equity. Horizontal equality is the equal treatment of people with equal status. Vertical equality is the unequal treatment of unequal people. The more vulnerable the people, the less they will be paid (McDaniel and Pepetti, 1993). But vertical equality is often used to evaluate an approach rather than a policy, because policy is a programmatic principle rather than a specific approach. Headey published a Western housing policy study in 1978. He finds that the Swedish government allocated housing

in almost fully equal method. The government provided good community and land planning for all residents, as well as satisfactory housing, and then implemented a plan to redistribute large amounts of housing to support low-income groups. But this is based on the Nordic model, a state model of high welfare and high taxes. On the other hand, Headey (1978) believes that the U.S. and U.K. governments are more inclined to equality of liberalism (equality of opportunity) and have implemented social housing programmes that produced results corresponding to the elitist group of equity. In other words, U.S. and U.K. governments have refused to leave the market mechanism for equitable housing distribution, which reduced government's help for low-income household. As a result, vertical inequalities have been intensified, and public policies have also created serious horizontal inequities.

Hong Kong's sustainable development model adds a new dimension to the equity debate (Chiu, 2002). This model stresses that the importance of different social groups' rights is the same in urban social housing. Given that the poor households lack the right to speak or act in a free market condition due to lack of financial advantage, Badshah (1996) believes that equality also includes allowing the poor to choose their own home. Yet he also reminded society to continue to improve the quality of life of low-income families but not to violate the interests of other social groups and future generations.

### **2.3. A game of central vs local government in China**

As mentioned above, there are some games between China's central government and local governments on social housing policies. In this section, we primarily review the relationship between the Chinese central government and local governments in social housing and discuss whether the central government and local governments have synergies in urban social housing policies. In the public policies formulated by the state, the local governments serve as the executor. For a long time, though the central government of China has strongly encouraged social housing policies, local

governments have not proactively implemented these policies. After 2010, the central government began to increase its support for social housing and strengthened its control over local governments, which has significantly increased local execution of social housing policies (Ai and Wei, 2013). In general, the high economic returns resulting from private housing development and China's political system are considered the causes of the game (Lin, 2015). China's non-elected local government officials need to demonstrate good performance to advance in their careers. In the meantime, the development of private housing not only increases local tax revenue, but also drives the development of other industries through the "Spillover Effect". The underlying cause is the ever-increasing imbalance between the power of the Chinese central government and the local government, and the debt of the local government has reached an alarming figure. As the 2009 audit report suggests, China's 18 provinces, 16 cities and 36 counties were heavily indebted, with the amount over CNY 2.79 trillion. Yet the construction of social housing in 2011 required CNY 1.3 trillion, and local governments did not want to undertake it (Chang, 2011). This game is being changed slightly. The central government has made concessions through the tax reform, and local governments have also regained social housing as an effective tool to attract talent and labor. The two may eventually converge (Tang, 2013).

In the process of Chinese economic transition, neoliberal reforms have duly brought various stakeholders together – e.g., employers, property developers, banks and private lenders – with local authorities in the provision of public housing (Wu, 2008). In this integration, the state minimised intervention in local government's policy formulation and strategic management. It no longer constructed social housing directly and only undertakes the responsibility for housing the low-income households. Since then, China's housing supply has become the three-tier supply model for introducing private equity into social housing supply. In this model, the country stands at the top of the hierarchy to determine the guidelines. In general, the state influences housing supply in three ways: land and housing planning, local government supervision, and national

bank control. The local government stands in the middle, establishes the institutional environment and strategy for housing supply, and negotiates with other participants for housing construction and distribution. Though they usually do not build their own houses, local authorities play a central role in providing housing. They control land distribution, taxation, bank loan guarantees and financial subsidies. Enterprises, primarily state-owned enterprises and real estate developers, serve as implementers, raising funds from the capital market and even providing housing land (Li and Zhou, 2005). Neoliberalisation is considered the major impetus for the poor implementation of public housing policies in Western countries and China, and in each society has shown great spatial variations and path differentiation (Harloe, 2011; Zou, 2014).

The lack of social housing has become one of the biggest challenges faced by Shanghai and Chongqing. The Shanghai municipal government has strived to expedite the recovery of the public housing department. It has introduced an ambitious plan for public housing construction with the aim to reduce the negative impact of the global economic slowdown since 2008; in the meantime, it has responded to huge inflation and achieved a harmonious society development strategy (Chen, Yang and Wang, 2014). Shanghai is trying to use the new social housing model to improve its advantage in global competition now (Shen, Yang and Tian, 2018). The Chongqing government has a serious shortage of fiscal and land resources for social housing, local authorities were largely unable to activate construction on an adequate scale. Nonetheless, the city of Chongqing introduced a model to supply public rental housing on a massive scale from 2011 to 2013 (Zhou and Ronald, 2016). The largest group of social housing users in Chongqing is migrant with a short work cycle (Li, Liu and Liu, 2017).

In brief, there has been very limited research of social housing policy evaluation in China, let alone specific cities. Existing evaluations of social housing policies are focused on the problems in and challenges faced by social housing policy. To date, the evaluation methods used are mostly concerned with comparing China's social housing



policy with other countries or the evaluating the status of a single city's social housing policy. This dissertation aims to fill the literature gap by comparing social housing policies in two key cities: Shanghai and Chongqing. Accordingly, this study evaluates the success and failure of urban social housing policies in these two cities to generate insights (and maybe learn lessons) about urban social housing policy in China's mega cities.

### **3.0 Methodology**

The preceding literature review leads us to the following research questions: How can we evaluate social housing policy in China? How do we account for policy divergence between China's mega cities? How do we define and measure the success and failure of social housing policy in China? How successful has social housing policy been in Shanghai and Chongqing? What lessons can be learned for future housing policy in China?

To answer these questions, the dissertation employs the comparative case study approach and qualitative document analysis research as methodology. The scope of the research focuses on the comparison of social housing policies in different Chinese mega cities drawing on evidence from government documents, official statistics and media reports. As mentioned above, the focus is on Shanghai and Chongqing as case studies. The case study is limited to the evaluation of urban social housing policy in Shanghai and Chongqing from the year of 2011 to 2015 (China's Twelfth Five-Year Plan). China started its 21<sup>st</sup> century reforms during the period of the 12<sup>th</sup> five-year plan, the form of social housing was broadened, and private capital was also introduced in social housing. In this period, China's society and economy were more open and free. China's civic awareness has been unprecedentedly high, and China's emphasis on the economy has shifted from quantity to quality. Since policies are usually completed prior to the

implementation, and policies have a continuous impact, the literature selected by the author may be beyond the selected time of research.

This chapter is divided into three sections: first there is some discussion of, and justification for, the chosen comparative case study approach; second, consideration is given to data and analysis; and the third section draws on the literature review to develop an evaluative framework to be used in examining social housing policy in Shanghai and Chongqing.

### **3.1. The comparative case study approach**

The aim of this study is to discover the successes and failures of the urban social housing policy in two fast-growing Chinese mega cities and to learn lessons for the future development of Chinese mega cities. Case study research and desk-based literature research methods are commonly employed in social sciences. Yet some people think that theoretical knowledge is more important than practical knowledge, and one case study cannot contribute to scientific development. Besides, some scholars are unwilling to conduct case study research because the case study may be dominated by the subjective judgment of researcher (Ennis, 1989; 1993). Another common problem with case studies is that, a single case usually does not fully represent the state of the research field.

Critical thinking can help to eliminate this subjectivity. After viewing the success and failure of policies from various perspectives of different policy stakeholders, the subjectivity of the authors of the literature will be significantly reduced. For the second problem, Flyvbjerg (2006, p.225) states that "predictive theories and universals cannot be found in the study of human affairs. Compared with the vain search for predictive theories and universals, concrete and context-dependent knowledge is therefore more valuable." Furthermore, case studies can stress the particularity of policy, which may

serve as the dominant factor in success or failure of policy (Eckstein and Gurr, 1975; Flyvbjerg, 2006). For the third problem, case studies are sufficient to find the universality of a field. As Flyvbjerg (2006, p.230) highlights, "One can often generalise based on a single case, and the case study may be central to scientific development via generalisation as supplement or alternative to other methods. Formal generalisation is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas "the force of example" is underestimated." In terms of efficiency, the desk-based literature research and case study research methods are less efficient. The assessment of urban social housing policy involves multiple stakeholders, regions and levels. The desk-based literature research is capable of accessing and processing the information covered in the literature from different perspectives. As mentioned above, literature research listens to a wide range of voices, in particular the professional and academic voices. Ordinary justice is not a complete understanding of policies, especially the formulation and implementation of policies. Thus, primary data does not apply to this study.

Shanghai and Chongqing served as examples in a large number of previous social housing and Chinese housing studies (He and Li, 2010; Wang and Murie, 2011; Lafarguette, 2011; Wang, 2012). The reason for studying these cities is that Shanghai has a large migrant population each year, and Chongqing has considerable amount of people going out to work. The migration of population has impacted the culture and economy of the local society, and these changes are also influencing the making, the implementation as well as the impact of policies. Furthermore, it is difficult for these migrants to have their own houses in working cities, and they are the major force of social housing demanders. While Shanghai and Chongqing have attracted modern and traditional migrants due to different social contexts, the choice of these two cities can deepen the impact of different development models in China on urban social housing policies. Finally, both Shanghai and Chongqing are the pilot cities for social housing reform initiated by the Chinese central government. Accordingly, the two cities not only orientate China's urban social housing policy, but also reflect the relationship between

the Chinese central government and local governments in urban social housing policies.

### **3.2. Data and analysis**

The data sources for this dissertation are mostly official data and secondary data, of which official data takes up the majority. Official data is derived from the state and official documents of private sources. Official data comes from official documents deriving from the state, producing considerable amount of statistical information (Bryman, 2016, p.552-553). Though the official data has no explanation, it can reflect the interest choices and policy attitudes of policy stakeholders. For instance, the investment of the government in a policy can act as evidence that the government changes its policy attitude. Yet the government's data will be biased as well. The government usually presents objective data, whereas the way it presents data is primarily consistent with its own interests. In this dissertation, the reliability of the official documents derived from private sources will be examined, and the context will be applied to selectively use the data to eliminate the subjectivity of the data provider. It is necessary to conduct a secondary analysis of qualitative data, which originates from academic works and reliable non-academic works. When a data set from different populations, geographic locations, time periods, or contextual backgrounds undergoes a secondary query, it will be likely to more accurately represent a phenomenon of interest by showing the implications of the original inquiries (Bryman, 2016, p.569). The author also searched for a wider range of qualitative data to check for phenomena that were not considered relevant in the initial study period, which may achieve more valuable findings from more perspectives. This is also a qualitative secondary analysis considered efficient and effective.

### **3.3. Evaluative framework: indicators and evidence**

This evaluation study was carried out from the macro and micro levels. The macro

refers to the roles of Chinese central government and local authorities about urban social housing. The micro refers to the success and failure of urban social housing policy of the local government in terms of effectiveness, efficiency and equality, and micro level evaluation is the core of this study. The following table draws on the literature review to outline the evaluative framework used in this analysis. The choice of indicators is informed by the literature review.

Table 1 The dimensions of evaluation

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
<b>Effectiveness</b>	Degree of achievement of set goals	Shanghai and Chongqing's 12 <sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan Development Plan, Yearbooks of Shanghai and Chongqing governments, media releases, and academic works.
	Reason for completion or non-completion	Academic analysis, government internal analysis report, media releases and academic works (eg. Zhang, 2014; People, 2016.).
<b>Efficiency</b>	Policy making process	Different opinions from relevant stakeholders, e.g. The view point from Shanghai

		Municipal Commission of Housing, Urban-Rural Development and Management, China News, Mei and Liu.
	Policy implementation process	Local social housing household's residential satisfaction and academic review (eg, Yan 2014 and Fan 2017), Zeng' and Guo's social development report, and media releases from People and others.
	Policy impact (housing market)	Local housing price status, Yearbook of Shanghai and Choqnging, stakeholder's opinion and report (eg, Zhongyuan Real Estate Company), and academic works.
<b>Equality</b>	The allocation of urban social housing	Media releases (China Economic Net and China Central Television), academic works (Cai 2010), local

		household's opinion and government document.
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Source: Adapted from Marsh & McConnell (2010)

The dissertation now moves to apply this framework to the analysis of urban social housing policy in Shanghai and Chongqing, respectively.

## **4.0 Evaluation of Shanghai' and Chongqing's urban social housing policy**

### **4.1 Roles of Chinese central government and local authorities**

Before comparing Shanghai and Chongqing in the effectiveness, efficiency and equality of social housing policies, the role of local governments and central government should be understood. Central government of this a centralised state ensure effective policy implementation using administrative incentives and penalties for local leaders. The State Council collects opinions from various central departments on urban social housing policy issues and formulates a complete policy. These departments include (1) National Reform and Development Commission (NRDC): overall planning; (2) MOHURD: making long-term and annual planning, formulating principal guidelines and supervising the progress of public housing (PH) at provincial level; (3) Ministry of Land Resources (MLR): setting annual target, formulating principal guidelines and supervising the allocation of land resource to PH at provincial-level; (4) Ministry of Finance (MF): formulating and supervising the allocation of fiscal funding and capital using to PH; (5) People's Bank of China, China's Central Bank (POB): formulating preferential policy and supervising the allocation of capital market funding to PH). Each central government department is responsible for different aspects of the policy and deepens the implementation of the policy to local branches. Local-level policy

coordinators are local governments, and local governments are primarily responsible for the formulating and implementing local urban social housing policies. The departments of the central government supervise the formulation and implementation of these policies (Chen, Yang and Wang (2014).

Chinese central government normally formulates the national policy of social housing, and it is also engaged in the formulation of long-term social housing policy of provinces and major cities. In the beginning of 2011, Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao announced that the Chinese government is committed to building 36 million units (taking up nearly 20% of all new housing programs) of public housing in the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2011–2015) (Chen, Yang & Wang, 2014; Yang, 2015). However, these tasks are not distributed in an even manner or in line with population proportion. These tasks are in accordance with the economic and social conditions of each province (Tan, 2010). Take Shanghai and Chongqing's social housing achievements in the 12<sup>th</sup> five-year plan as an example. The Shanghai Municipal Government provided 87,700 units of public rental housing, 110,000 units of low-rent housing and 66,000 economic and comfortable houses, while local government release a public loan (nearly CNY 296 million) to 660,000 households to support their house-buying. The Chongqing Municipal Government built 152,600 public rental housing units and provided social housing to replace 147,700 households' dilapidated housing (Chongqing Municipal Government, 2017; Shanghai Municipal Government, 2017). In general, the Chinese central government's social housing policy is the guideline of every provincial and municipal government, whereas they also have their own inclinations.

The evaluation of urban social housing policies in Shanghai and Chongqing depends not only on performances but on the relationship with central government's urban social housing policy. Cai (2009) concluded the two reasons for the contradiction in the urban social housing policy between central and local governments: 1. The competition for fiscal resources; and, 2. The objective and strategy of urban social housing are different.



In the West, central government and bank loans are the primary sources of funding for social housing. While in China, social housing funds originate primarily from local governments (Chen, Yang & Wang 2014; Ministry of Finance of the People's Republic of China, 2018). Most of local government's fiscal revenue should be turned over to central government, and subsequently central government will return some of the revenue in line with the local fiscal status. Thus, local governments in richer area (Shanghai) can invest in social housing projects favoured by local governments, while poor areas (Chongqing) must invest funds in social housing projects designated by the central government since these funds are supported from central government. Furthermore, the local government has expanded public–private partnerships since 2012 to provide an effective financial model for the social housing program. Accordingly, urban social housing in Shanghai has introduced more private wealth than Chongqing. Indeed, Shanghai with more fiscal power does not mean it has a more successful urban social housing policy than Chongqing, but Shanghai's policy formulation and implementation at the city level are more flexible. Chongqing is closer to the central government. Cai (2009) believes that social housing is of huge significance to daily necessities in the poor areas, while social housing in richer areas is a temporary alternative option. In this regard, Chongqing, relying on considerable amount of central financial support to build conventional social housing, has not lost.

The second friction lies in the objective of urban social housing policy. In brief, the central government seeks to stabilise the political environment by increasing the scope of social housing. But in many places of East Asia, social housing is a means of promoting economic and social development other than a national welfare. For instance, early social housing in Hong Kong is mostly located in the factory area (Forrest and Li, 2012). If local governments implement the central government's policies to develop the economy or gain more revenue, the sustainability of local urban policies is challenged (Wang and Murie, 2011). In Shanghai, private housing is considered the most valuable investment, while commercial private housing development can bring huge tax revenue

to the government and further boost Shanghai's GDP growth. In the 12<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan, Shanghai significantly increased the amount of housing subsidies and housing purchase loans to ensure that residents can access social housing and achieve a win-win situation for both the government and enterprises (Bao and Wu, 2013). The situation in Chongqing is relatively special. A survey (Zhou and Yang, 2010) suggests that the comfortable lifestyle in southwestern China (e.g., Chongqing) makes local people reluctant to invest in housing purchases, which has largely led to the local stable housing prices. As mentioned above, Chongqing has built considerable social housing in the 12<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan, which significantly reduces the willingness of local residents to purchase houses. Shanghai's policy on the central government is obviously less practical than that of Chongqing, but it is unlikely to judge that Shanghai's policy is less sustainable than Chongqing in the short run. Since China's urban social housing policy system is still being established, and Shanghai's leading role may make the central government's policy strategy close to Shanghai, the success and failure of urban social housing policies in Shanghai and Chongqing should be compared at a city level in various contexts.

## **4.2 The success and failure of Shanghai's urban social housing policy**

### **On Effectiveness**

In 2012, Shanghai determined that the urban social housing policy of the 12<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan is to use social housing as one of the means to adjust the balance between supply and demand in Shanghai's housing, expand social housing coverage and roll out marketisation in the social housing system. The goal of Shanghai's urban social housing in 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan was to construct 62 million square meters and 920,000 units. The following data on completion rates for Shanghai's 12<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan urban social housing programme were extracted from government documents and media reports.

Table 2 Social housing completions-Shanghai 2011-2015

	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
<b>ECH</b>	Construct 5.41million square meters and nearly 80,000 units	NA	NA	NA	NA
<b>PRH</b>	Construct 2.26million square meters and nearly 40,100 units	NA	Construct 1.38million square meters and nearly 22,300 units	NA	NA
<b>LRH</b>	Add 12,000 households	NA	NA	NA	NA
<b>PH</b>	Construct 9.84million square meters and nearly 116,100 units	NA	NA	NA	NA

<b>Social Housing</b>	NA	Construct 12.92million square meters and nearly 167,000 units	Construct 7.85million square meters and nearly 110,000 units	Construct 9.69million square meters and nearly 139,000 units	Construct nearly 197,000 units
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Source: *Yearbook of Shanghai 2012-2016, Shanghai 's 12<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan for Housing Development Plan*. Shanghai: Shanghai Municipal People's Government, East Day, 2015 & China Daily, 2017.

Obviously, the set goals have slight difference from the actual completions. Though there is no accurate urban social housing-built area, the Shanghai authorities report that construction units are nearly 878,000 from 2011 to 2015 (Shanghai Municipal People's Government, 2017), and the *Yearbook of Shanghai (2011-2015)* suggests that nearly 847,900 units are completed and available. The completion rate of goals is over 90%, whereas most of this depends on the construction of PH. The completion tasks of ECH, LRH and PRH have not taken up 70% of the original plan. Yi and Huang (2014) believe that local governments are not subjectively motivated to urban social housing, and local government continues to stress economic development with the limited financial and land commitments. The proportion of public expenditure on social welfare in Shanghai dropped from 11% in 2010 to 8% in 2015. The non-tax revenue of Shanghai, primarily based on the sale of land, surged from CNY 25.711 billion in 2011 to CNY 66.13 billion in 2015 (Shanghai Bureau of Statistics, 2017). For instance, Shanghai's total public revenue was CNY 410.951 billion in 2013: 55% of this income (i.e., CNY 226.23 billion) originated from land sales (Zhang, 2014). Yet the land sold does not include social housing land. The land supply for social housing is not enough to meet the goals of Shanghai's 12<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan due to the limited scale of land supply each year. Besides, Shanghai's ambitious urban social housing policy seems to stress the role of

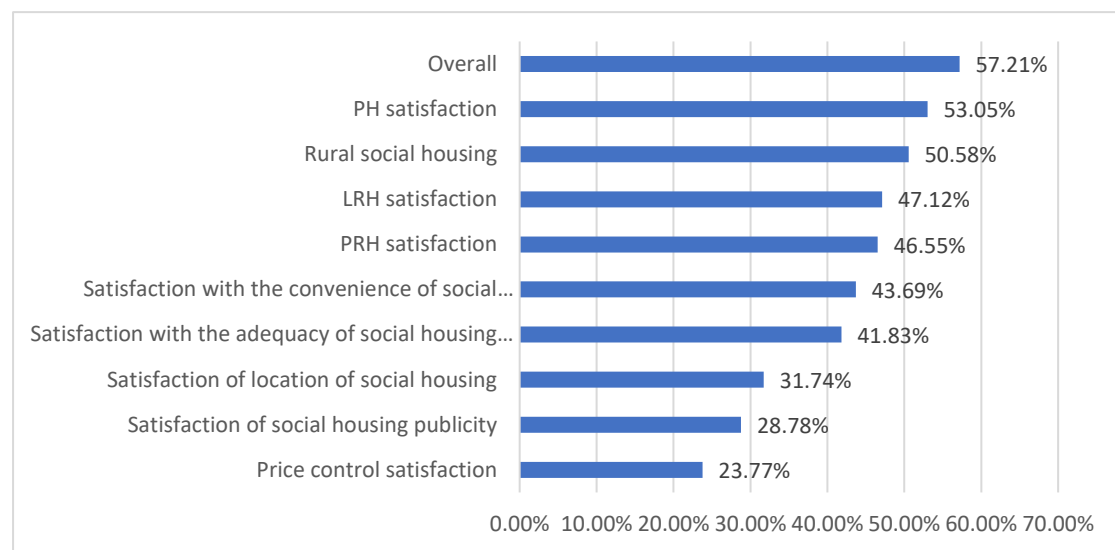
the market. The Shanghai government plans to build 200,000 social housing units in five years for immigrants who need housing assistance, whereas around 50,000 units have actually been provided (Shanghai Municipal People's Government, 2016). In other words, most migrants should still afford their own housing. As a result, the number of immigrants in Shanghai fell for the first time in 2015, a drop of 1.5% (147,700 people). Shanghai Mayor Yang Xiong acknowledged that most of the migrants belong to low-income groups in the manufacturing and retail industries (People, 2016). They are unable to afford high housing costs and cannot obtain social housing. On the whole, though the number of urban social housing built by Shanghai in the 12<sup>th</sup> period reached over 90% of the goals, the vast majority were targeted at local registration residents. The social housing goals of non-residents taking up nearly 40% of the urban population are ineffective, especially rural-urban migrants.

## **On Efficiency**

The previous section discusses why Shanghai did not fully complete the initial set goals of their urban social housing policy in the 12<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan. Yet is this goal reasonable? This section discusses the making, the implementation as well as the impact of policies. Indeed, Shanghai's social housing goals in 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan are beyond the actual acceptable range. Under no drastic changes in supply and demand, Shanghai has lowered the goals (45 million square meters and 550,000 units) of urban social housing in the 13<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan (China News, Shanghai Municipal Commission of Housing, Urban-Rural Development and Management, 2017). It has proven difficult to find any information concerned with the policy making process for the 12<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan for social housing in Shanghai. This goal is considered consistent with the central government's goal that "the social housing coverage reached nearly 20% at the end of 2015", whereas the meaning of 20% is not clearly explained (People, 2015). Accordingly, Shanghai's ambitious plan did not have a clear positioning at the

Figure 1 The social housing satisfaction in Shanghai

beginning due to the lack of communication between the upper and lower levels of government.



Source: Fan 2017. Note: The overall score was adjusted by regression techniques.

Besides policy making, Shanghai's implementation of urban social housing policy has shown both success and failure. Efficiency in the implementation of urban social housing policy in Shanghai is determined by examining household residential satisfaction and socio-economic wellbeing status. Fan's research (2017) suggests that Shanghai residents' social housing satisfaction in Shanghai ranks the 8th among the 10 provincial-level administrative regions in eastern mainland China, with an average satisfaction rate of 57.21%. The measured data are shown in Figure 2. Yet Fan's research also notes that the level of modernisation and urbanisation of residences has a negative relation to residents' satisfaction with social housing. The satisfaction rate of the social housing policy in eastern China reaches 64.54% in rural areas, 61.57% in urban suburbs and 54.46% in urban centres. Thus, the high degree of urbanisation and modernisation in Shanghai is an objective reason for the low satisfaction of urban social housing policies. Figure 2, Shanghai residents' satisfaction with social housing.

Besides the scoring of a single type of programme, public dissatisfaction with Shanghai's urban social housing primarily focuses on the incidental part of social

housing. When analysing the races and conflicts in Britain, Rex and Moore (1967) proposed the famous concept of “housing class”, highlighting that the form of people's access to and use of housing resources can lay a solid basis for determining their class status. Wu and Chen (2013) found that Chinese social housing residents are generally discriminated as “second-class citizens.” Nearly 40% of social housing residents feel isolated, and the government overlooks the urban social housing resident's life quality. Some of the social housing residents in Shanghai must spend more than 2 hours traveling to the city centre (Shanghai Municipal People's Government, 2014). As the most economically vibrant city in China, Shanghai has attracted many skilled labourers (also known as white collar labour) with a stronger aversion to social discrimination and inconvenient living conditions. Conventional Shanghai low-income families originally live in the center of the city, and research by Yi and Huang (2014) suggests that they have a natural resistance to social housing away from the city centre. In the meantime, Social housing in Shanghai is considered an incentive to attract skilled labours, and these people are primarily employed in financial and service companies in the city centre even if local registration residents who need social housing in Shanghai are mostly working in Shanghai. Accordingly, for most people, social housing concentrated on the periphery of Shanghai's is to provide a place to live rather than to improve the quality of life.

Shanghai's urban social housing policy has also brought some success in efficiency terms. Indeed, the principle of Shanghai's urban social housing is “*ying bao jin bao*” (which means all low-income households who need housing help should be covered by the social housing system). A government document (Shanghai Municipal People's Government, 2016) suggests that the social housing situation in Shanghai is improving continuously, with an almost established social housing system. The ECH application rate is maintained at nearly 90%, and a review mechanism is introduced to recover the ECH of urban households that do not meet the standards at this stage. The age and income restrictions of applicants for ECH and LRH projects have been lifted. For the

PRH, the Shanghai government has generously loosened the household registration restrictions. The official Shanghai perspective tends to confirm that the supply and demand of social housing in Shanghai are basically balanced or close to equilibrium. Based on this perspective, Shanghai has been efficiently satisfying the needs of a wider range of people for social housing. Cai (2010) considers Shanghai's first break of the household registration restrictions on social housing in the 12th Five-Year Plan as a remarkable breakthrough. The social housing issue is introduced from the administrative geographical level to the local sustainable development level. Unlike social housing in Western countries, i.e., a state welfare provision, China's social housing acts as a tool to propel local development (Groves, Murie and Watson, 2016). The flow of labour and talent is an indispensable factor in urban development. Thus, Shanghai's continuous expansion of urban social housing policy scope on social housing occupants has been successful in improving urban social housing's coverage.

A major role played by urban social housing in China is to curb the rapidly rising housing prices, as in Shanghai (Xuan, Xu and Zhao, 2006; Chen and Ge, 2011). From the data provided by the Shanghai Municipal Government and professional real estate companies, contact in Shanghai's housing prices and social housing supply is difficult to find. Indeed, PRH, ECH and PH are for Shanghai residents with local household registration, and merely LRH is for migrants without Shanghai household registration. In the 12th Five-Year Plan, the population without Shanghai household registration took up nearly 40% of Shanghai's total population. They were the major purchasing power in Shanghai's housing markets. The lack of urban social housing and the huge demand are in stark contrast. Finally, most of Shanghai's urban social housing is concentrated in newly developed areas on the periphery of the city. The house price of this area itself is lower than that of other parts in Shanghai (Guan and Zhang, 2014). Accordingly, the specific impact of social housing in Shanghai on the housing prices of the surrounding communities is difficult to judge, whereas the establishment of social housing in these newly developed areas has propelled the development of the area to a certain extent. In



general, social housing has a very limited inhibitory effect on Shanghai house prices.

## **On Equality**

Shanghai, due to the huge population and limited resources, cannot allocate housing to residents as equally as some Nordic cities. As a result, urban social housing has become the only form of public assistance for low-income families and those who need housing assistance. The principle of Shanghai's urban social housing is "*ying bao jin bao*" (which means all low-income households who need housing support should be covered by the social housing system). as documents issued by the Shanghai government suggest (Shanghai Bureau of Statistics ,2017; Shanghai Municipal People's Government 2017), Shanghai has loosened the application restrictions so that almost all low-income residents with Shanghai household registration can enjoy the equality to basic social housing assistance. The ECH application rate is maintained at nearly 90%, the age and income restrictions of applicants for ECH and LRH projects have been lifted. For the PRH, the Shanghai government has generously loosened the household registration restrictions. The official Shanghai perspective tends to confirm that the supply and demand of social housing in Shanghai are basically balanced or close to equilibrium. In this regard, Shanghai has been efficiently satisfying the needs of a wider range of people for social housing.

Cai (2010) considers Shanghai's first break of the household registration restrictions on social housing during the 12th Five-Year Plan period as a major breakthrough. The social housing issue is introduced from the administrative geographical level to the local sustainable development level. Though this breakthrough is a milestone, the policy coverage is low. The performance of PRH was first disclosed in Shanghai's 2013 yearbook, and the number of PRHs employed in that year was 7,990 units. In 2014, this amount increased to 15,500 units, whereas only 6,581 units were provided by government, and the remaining housings were provided by employees' companies

subsidised by the government. In the past three years, the government has provided only around 45,000 PRHs, while the non-registered population in Shanghai has reached over 9 million (Shanghai Municipal Government, 2016). The average house price ratio is 14.0 in Shanghai (house price ratio = total housing price per household/total annual salary per household), and ordinary non-local registration immigrants cannot afford their own private housing though there is no average salary of the non-local registration people (China Economic Net, 2016). Thus, policies should be long implemented to solve the problem, yet the sharpness of the social housing conflicts of Shanghai immigrants cannot be avoided.

### **4.3 The success and failure of Chongqing's urban social housing policy**

#### **On Effectiveness**

In January 1992, Chongqing launched the housing reform, primarily covering the rent of public housing and the sale of public housing. The subsequent "*Management Measures for the Sale of Public Housing in Chongqing*" proposed the privatisation of public housing, initiating the construction of urban social housing system in Chongqing (Liang and Fan, 2015). The ultimate housing goal of Chongqing is to build an urban housing supply system that "provides social housing to the low-income class, middle-class class can buy private housing, and high-income class purchases must be constrained (Liang and Fan, 2015, p.169)." Based on this goal, Chongqing's urban social housing policy plan in the 12th Five-Year Plan stresses the supply and coverage of social housing and the establishment of a social housing system. Chongqing's specific goal is to build out 40 million square meters with social housing to cover 30% of the urban population and to provide housing support for low-income groups, new graduates as well as rural-urban migrants. Chongqing's urban social housing is dominated by PRH, LRH and PH. Due to a series of troubles, the Chongqing municipal government determined to stop the ECH project in 2009 (Chongqing Municipal

People's Government, 2011).

Table 3 The achievement of Chongqing's urban social housing during 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Urban social housing goals	NA	NA	NA	Construct 20,000 units and complete 83,000 units	Construct 40,000 units and complete 83,000 units
The actual situation	NA	NA	NA	Construct 20,500 units and complete 84,800 units	Construct 42,000 units and complete 100,100 units
PH goals	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
The actual situation	Construct 5.055 million square meters and 62,800 units	Construct 5.39 million square meters and 61,000 units	Construct 7 million square meters and 39,800 units	NA	Construct 703,300 square meters and 9,700 units
LRH goals	Add 173,300 units	NA	NA	NA	NA
The actual situation	Construct 7.89 million square	Construct 0.5687 million	Construct 0.545 million	Add 41,000 1,600 units	Complete 81.4000 square

	meters and 174,200 units	square meters and 12,000 units	square meters and 11,300 units		meters and 1,600 units
PRH goals	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
The actual situation	Add 24.92 million square meters	Construct 20.01 million square meters	NA	Add 15,500 units and provide subsidies to 3022 households	Construct 44.75 million square meters and 88,800 units

Source: Annual report on land and housing management in Chongqing 2011-2015, Chongqing Municipal People's Government. Note that though there is no clear goal, the Chongqing government has confirmed that PH and LRH has completed 102% and 100% of tasks in 2012. PH completed 178.6% of the task, and LRH completed 102% of the task in 2013.

Statistical data suggests that the number of urban social housing units built in the 12th Five-Year Plan in Chongqing was nearly 5.6 million units, while the peak of urban population in Chongqing in the 12th Five-Year Plan reached 18.3841 million in 2015 (Chongqing Statistics Bureau, 2016). Thus, the actual completion of urban social housing in Chongqing only exceeded targeted to cover 30% of the urban population. Furthermore, the newly established Chongqing Municipal Public Rental Housing Authority has managed all urban social housing issues in Chongqing, which complete the establishment of urban social housing system. The effective government-led large-scale urban social housing policy in Chongqing originates from the strong support of the Chongqing government and the government's control over all urban social housings. Yang (2011) found that all urban social housings in Chongqing were supplied by the government, and the construction of social housing was mostly completed by state-owned companies. Liang and Fan's (2015) research is clearer, highlighting that the

Chongqing municipal government provided urban social housing land free of charge and bore all social housing construction and management costs (the government's fiscal expenditure takes up 20% of the cost, and the rest is obtained by government loans). The financial report of the Chongqing Government also suggests that in 2011-2015, Chongqing's expenditure in social housing took up nearly 4%-7% of fiscal expenditure (Ministry of Finance of the People's Republic of China, 2016), while the level of developed countries was usually ranged from 3% to 8%. Accordingly, the Chongqing urban social housing policy, completely dependent on the government, is effective and has achieved the set goals.

## **On Equality**

Maintaining the housing quality of Chongqing residents may not lead to Chongqing's large-scale construction of urban social housing. Yet the urban social housing policy of the Chongqing government objectively ensured the people's living equality in the 12th Five-Year Plan. The application conditions for social housing in Chongqing are very loose compared with those of other Chinese cities, and it is the most livable city in China's mega cities (China Central Television, 2011). The Chongqing government (The State Council of People's Republic of China, 2011, p.1, Liang and Fan, 2015) stipulates that the application conditions for urban social housing are “all residents aged over 18 years who have stable employment and income sources in the main urban area of Chongqing and have no housing or housing area below the urban housing security standards.”

The specific explanation is that the per capita housing area of the applicant's family should be no more than 13 square meters, and the applicant's family annual disposable income should not exceed CNY 18,000 per head. The annual disposable income of the individual should not reach over CNY 24,000. A significant proportion of Chongqing residents can apply for urban social housing, as suggested in the data on the per capita

disposable income and per capita housing area of Chongqing urban residents provided by the Chongqing government. Taking per capital disposable annual income as an example, the Chongqing government's yearbook suggests that the number of people with annual disposable income below CNY 18,000 of urban residents in 2013 took up 35.6% of the urban population. In 2014, the median per capita disposable income of urban population in Chongqing reached CNY24,082. Under the economic development, Chongqing has gradually increased the amount of minimum disposable income per capita (Chongqing Municipal People's Government, 2012-2016). Thus, it is estimated from the known information that the coverage should be around 10%-20% though no data indicates the coverage of social housing in Chongqing. Equality is generally considered associated with the amount of resources available, whereas the number is not as high as possible and should be selected in a reasonable range. Accordingly, urban social housing in Chongqing has satisfied the basic housing needs of many people, whereas the quality of social housing still needs improvement. On March 28, 2011, Chongqing first provided social housing in the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan. It plans to supply 67,000 units social housing, yet there are only 20,000 applicants. Besides, rural-urban migrants, considered as the largest demand group, take up only nearly 25% of the applicants. The urban social housing policy of the Chongqing Municipal Government ensures the equality of local residents. Yet whether this policy considered to be efficient will be evaluated in the following section.

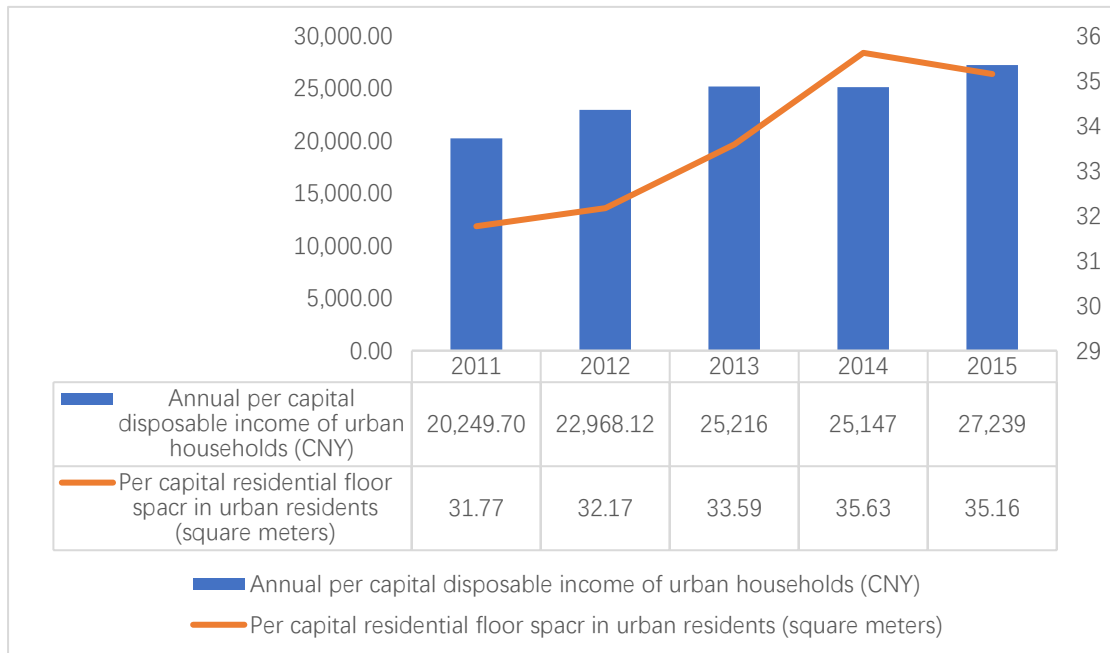


Figure 2 The annual per capital disposable income and residential floor space of urban residents

Source: Chongqing Municipal People's Government, 2012-2016.

## On Efficiency

Though the Chongqing Municipal Government has made the huge investment in the urban social housing policy of the large-scale expansion, has it received an equivalent return? This section evaluates the efficiency of Chongqing's urban social housing policy. The first evaluation point is still Chongqing's urban social housing policy making. The current literature is rarely associated with the policy making of the Chongqing authority. Thus, the author sorts out several key points of Chongqing's urban social housing policy from government documents and some academic works. It can be found from the existing government documents (Chongqing Municipal People's Government, 2012-2016) that the formulation of urban social housing policies in Chongqing still follows the top-bottom model, i.e., the local government abides by the principles formulated by the central government. This policy-making model is normally based on data and report analysis provided by the government, and the participation of

the public is extremely low. Mei and Liu (2013) consider the housing policies of many local governments in China as the policy experiments of the central government. Accordingly, the opinions of public and stakeholders are rarely absorbed by the government. The researches of the China development research foundation (2012) and Liang and Fan (2015) suggest that the urban social housing policy of Chongqing's large-scale government-led construction is a tentative measure by the central government to suppress excessively high housing prices and improve labour efficiency. Thus, the purpose of Chongqing's social housing policy is to find the optimal solution to the problem, and the efficiency of this method still needs a long time to test.

A study by Southwestern University of Finance and Economics (2016) in China suggests that household's housing satisfaction in China's provincial capital cities has a negative correlation with local house prices. Chongqing's overall housing satisfaction was 77.6%, ranking the 11th out of 31 cities. Yan (2014) created a questionnaire and found that 75% of urban social housing users in Chongqing recognised or neutralised the social housing living environment. The traffic satisfaction rate was nearly 82%, whereas the satisfaction rate of accessibility of commercial and public resources was below 40%. A media news in 2011 (People) noted that the application rate was extremely low, and the satisfaction rate of social housing users was not high since the social housing in Chongqing was mostly remote. The improvement of social housing residents' satisfaction in Chongqing undoubtedly reveals the improvement of policy implementation. Seng and Guo's (2012) survey suggests that rent, traffic access and location, community environment and support are the top three priorities given by Chongqing's social housing respondents in the choice-making of housing. They also found that Chongqing gradually dispersed the social housing community into various areas of the urban area to avoid concentration. Yan also stated (2014) almost all social housing links to public transportation networks (e.g., subways and buses). Accordingly, the improvement of social housing satisfaction can be considered the result of the optimisation of social housing location as well as the



improvement of traffic accessibility.

Another idea holds that Chongqing's urban social housing policy seeks to eliminate the barriers between residents of various housing classes. Yet for some reasons, social housing in Chongqing remains far from urban centres, and social housing residents cannot enjoy the same social services as private housing residents do. There is a heated debate on Chinese society in 2017 (Xinhua News, 2017). A Chongqing resident asked for a swimming pool in his social housing neighbourhood, and Chongqing officials responded by implying he moved out of the social housing neighbourhood (Chongqing is the hottest city in China, the average summer temperature is 28 degrees). There is a view that the improvement of the socio-economic status promotes the commercialisation behaviour around the social housing community. These commercialisations make up for the shortcomings of the government's insufficient investment in the social housing community. Thus, most of the increase in residents' satisfaction originates from the development of social economy. The community public investment of Chongqing Municipal Government still has a class concept (China development research foundation, 2012).

Since 2010, house prices across China have generally experienced a sharp rise, and those leading mega cities were taking the lead in 2010-2015. Chongqing is an exception. The following chart below suggests the average increase in house prices in China's major mega cities during 2010-2016, while China's inflation rate reached 3.73% (China Index Academy, 2017). Chongqing is the only city in which the house price increase of the city is lower than that of the inflation rate, and it is also the city with the lowest housing price in the noted ten cities. Though Chongqing's stable urban house prices result from several factors, its urban social housing policy has undoubtedly been critical. According to data from the Chongqing Municipal Government (2016) , as of 2015, the cumulative supply of social housing in Chongqing has reached over 39 million square meters, and the land supply of social housing nearly 10% of the residential land

supply. Besides, Chongqing's public rental housing is broadly used, not subject to household registration restrictions only. Most of new graduates, rural-urban migrants, professionals, talents and workers can apply for public rental housing. This has significantly satisfied the housing needs of the residences and has exerted a certain crowding out effect on the private housing market, making the private housing market difficult to heat up.

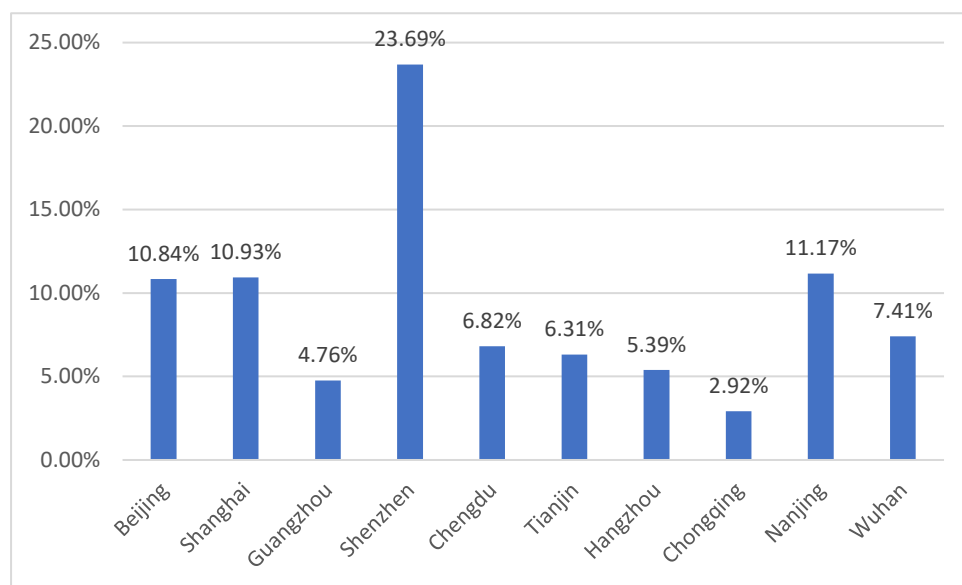


Figure 3 Urban house price growth rate in ten Chinese mega cities from 2010-2016

Source: China Index Academy, 2017.

## 5.0 Findings and conclusion

The significant differences between urban social housing policies in Chongqing and Shanghai in the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan are, on the one hand, to the close association with the cities' social economic context. On the other hand, the urban social housing policies of Shanghai and Chongqing also show the common characteristics of the world urban social housing policy and are under China's special national conditions. The preceding analysis yields several findings through the comparative evaluation of urban social housing policies in Shanghai and Chongqing.

First and foremost, the urban social housing policies of Shanghai and Chongqing abide by the principle of urban social housing of the Chinese central government. Accordingly, the policies of Shanghai and Chongqing can be considered as the means to achieve the same goal in different ways under local actual conditions. This centralised and decentralised policy model warrants the convergence of policy goals, and it is because of this convergence that the policies of Shanghai and Chongqing are closely bound to the central government's goals. Yet a significant shortcoming of this model is that the central government and the provincial government have no clear communication. For instance, the central government's target is set at 20% coverage rate as the goal of China's urban social housing policy in the 12th Five-Year Plan. Yet Shanghai and Chongqing with different interpretations understand “20%” differently. Shanghai believes that 20% refers to the total housing area and Chongqing considers it as the population. During the evaluation, both Shanghai and Chongqing policies demonstrated ambiguity and irrationality, and the root of these shortcomings was poor policy communication.

Second, urban social housing policies in Shanghai and Chongqing are largely for local economic development though the central government emphasises that the role of social housing is to maintain political stability. The West and the East present an interesting dialogue on the development of social housing, which is an east-west comparison between developmentalism and welfarism in social housing intervention. Western society, for instance, European social housing developments is close to state welfare, while in the East, it is closely associated with the development of the country. Accordingly, the starting point of the social housing is close to economic development rather social welfare. This type of economic development-oriented urban social housing policy is the reason for the difference between Shanghai and Chongqing policies as well as the content of the third finding.

Third, the difference in urban social housing policies between Shanghai and Chongqing is reflected in the participation of local governments. Housing of low-income groups in Shanghai is shared by society, individuals and the government, and the Chongqing government has taken over the housing of most low-income groups. Given the historical evolutions of housing policies in various countries and current experiences, all types of social housing policies follow the trends: policy objectives shift from quantitative to residential quality, community development and other comprehensive objectives; the combination between supply-side subsidies and demand-side subsidies now is internationally basic payment model of social housing policy; the effective operation of the social housing system relies on the incentive mechanism of the government's fiscal, financial, taxation as well as other policy segments.

According to the noted trend, Shanghai's policy is more mature than that of Chongqing. Yet Shanghai cannot be considered better than Chongqing in urban social housing policies, and vice versa. This is because the success and failure of urban social housing policies in Shanghai and Chongqing are relative or controversial.

By assessing urban social policy in Shanghai's 12<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan, it is clear that the biggest failure is that Shanghai authorities have concentrated housing welfare on a small group and pushing the non-registration residents to the market. In this context, the Shanghai government should increase urban social housing using free land allocation, capital allocation and low-interest loans. Second, the Shanghai government can rent social housing and its affiliated commercial buildings and sell social housing for social housing construction funds. In the meantime, the Shanghai government should also adopt subsidies for housing monetization of various income levels, reduce loan interest rates, extend loan terms, reduce housing taxes and fees, and support non-profit organizations to develop low-cost housing for low- and middle-income groups. The biggest failure of Chongqing's urban social housing policy lies in the rigid policy resulting from the government's strong leadership. Chongqing's urban social housing

policy overlooks market factors and strengthen government's financial burden though it has improved the housing welfare of local residents. Second, Chongqing's single urban social housing construction funding source has seriously hindered urban social housing construction. Due to the special social attributes of urban social housing, the government public sector can be engaged in the construction and operation of urban infrastructure projects by building Public-Private Partnerships with private capital. Besides, the government collects the investor's funds through public issuance of beneficiary certificates or stocks, and the special investment institutions manage the social housing and then allocate the comprehensive income of the investment to the investor's trust fund in line with a certain proportion. Finally, to avoid the deception of social housing applicants, strict access audits are required. To increase the efficiency of the use of public rental housing, the exit supervision mechanism should also be improved.

Shanghai stresses the role of the market, and the government employs the efficient urban social housing system as a temporary supplement to the market. For resource allocation and administrative efficiency, the Shanghai government has undoubtedly achieved optimal disposal. The government's public funds are invested in the groups that need housing assistance most, with private housing to alleviate the shortage of social housing, and then social housing to suppress the excessively high private housing prices. Yet the success of the policy cannot be achieved in the effectiveness and equity of the policy. The excessive worship of the government on the privatisation has significantly reduced the implementation effect of the policy. The housing quality is also concentrated in the local registered population and a very small number of skilled labour. In other words, Shanghai's policy success is only for a very small group of Shanghai residents, and most of whom are still struggling with housing. The situation in Chongqing is exactly the opposite. The success in urban social housing policy is that it ensures the housing equality of most Chongqing low-income residents. The government-led large-scale urban social housing community construction satisfies the

housing needs of nearly 20% to 30% of residents in Chongqing, which is unimaginable in other China's big cities. Thanks to the strong leadership of the government and the singleness of urban social housing and construction participants, Chongqing was able to complete considerable amount of construction within five years and successfully exert the effectiveness of the policy. Yet these actions may be considered a failure in the future though they are identified to be successful, satisfying the current local households' needs and reducing the burden on Chongqing residents. With the development of economy and society, residents have higher demand for social housing, especially urban social housing, to enjoy the same public services and social treatment as private housing communities. This is exactly what the current urban social housing community in Chongqing cannot provide. The government's single-led policy also makes social housing projects lacked in diversity, and project funds may pose huge risks.

In general, as the most crucial way to protect the low-income group's interests, social housing should not only reflect the welfare speciosity but also present the actual needs of social housing occupants and applicants. Back to beginning of questions, the best dimensions of urban social housing policy assessment in China's megacities are effectiveness, efficiency and quality. They are main criteria to define success and failure in social housing policy in China. Effectiveness is about delivering on targets; efficiency is concerned with how policy is made, implemented as well as its outcomes; equality is concerned with allocations –A policy is successful when it achieves its objectives, is well implemented and equalizes the distribution of low-income families. The differences in urban social housing policies in different megacities in China are due to partial with do with relationship between central and local govt and the local economic factors that determine degree of flexibility. Furthermore, recent history suggests that China tends to do things in different ways. China has become a hybrid system, market processes are dominant, whereas they are impacted by heritage and are transformed by strong national policy and conventional systems. As some have said,

social housing policies cannot be determined by success or failure but can only satisfy the actual needs of local and social housing residents. The best social housing is that there is no gap to private housing.

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