

# Path Dependency vs Neoliberal Urbanism: Comparative Governance of urban Redevelopment of Collective Farmland in Chinese and Russian Cities

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**Abstract**—The objective of this paper is to contribute with empirical evidence and conceptualization of the impact of both socialist “path dependency” effects and governance patterns during the neoliberal reforms over the last 30 years on urban farmland redevelopment in Russian and Chinese largest cities. Using the examples of St. Petersburg and Guangzhou, the paper examines governance principles which have led from the same/comparable specific starting point to different results of urban redevelopment of former socialist collective farmland. While neoliberal modernization effects during urban redevelopment of former socialist farmland brought the internationally common urban built environment both in Chinese and Russian metropolises, path-dependent governance models introduced substantially different business, social and administrative structures. In the St. Petersburg farmland redevelopment case, globalizing neoliberal impacts overruled specific “path-dependency” ones in political, legal, economic urban institutions, and both impacts were equally important for the transformation of urban social practices and structures. In Guangzhou, case path dependency specificity turned much more pronounced in political and social practices and structures, while neoliberal and “path-dependency” impacts were probably of equal importance for legal and economic structural transformations. While Russian radical transition model made business the main driver of such redevelopment, diminishing the role of local self-governance and enhancing the role of public activism, under Chinese gradual transition model local administrative and social self-organization played the key role controlling and even overruling interests of business actors.

**Keywords:** path dependency, neoliberal urbanism, comparative governance, redevelopment, collective farmland

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## INTRODUCTION

Till mid-1980s China and Russia (within USSR) were developing through quite similar paths, which at the same time differed substantially from “global” market trends. These similarities were based upon common principles of Socialist governance, which first were elaborated in the USSR and then were adopted, revised, and further developed in China, i.e. de-marketized centrally planned economy and social distribution, almost isolated from liberal international market, lack or absence of the democratic procedures etc. (Axenov et al., 2006; Nolan and Robert, 1995). Neoliberal reforms of late 20th century both in China and Russia facilitated private entrepreneurship and hence brought in new reasons and economic sources for growth and development (Axenov et al., 2006; Zhou et al., 2019). Some researchers of the neoliberal

reforms under the Socialist and “leftist” regimes tend to limit the effect of neoliberal reforms only to the introduction of free market elements, which range from total replacement of central planning to mobilization of the specific “market socialism” model instead of the latter (Harvey, 2007; He and Wu, 2009; Liew, 2005; Wu, 2010). Others emphasize the role of governance, social practices and even discourses as well (He and Wu, 2009; Li and Chan, 2017; Perreault and Martin, 2005). Certain authors claim that “theoretical models of socialism were not able to set “actually existing socialisms” in a more comparative perspective or to render the multiple relations between socialism and postsocialism open to reflection” (Tulbure, 2009, p. 2). Although “neoliberal” explanatory model seems to become the most common “Western” approach to describe the Russian and Chinese reforms

of 1980–1990s, some researches tend to treat it as reductionist and prefer to seek more elaborated and “customised” ones (for example (Chari and Verdery, 2009)). The debates are being held on the efficiency of the “partial” or “wholesale” introduction of “Western” neoliberal practices, degree of democratization applied in governance and its role in modernization process in transition societies (see discussion in (Kinossian and Morgan, 2014)). Assuming that certain urban practices and patterns that originate from “non-Western” world might not be fully explained through straightforward models borrowed from the “West” (see discussion in (Chan et al., 2018)) one needs to prove this statement first, in order to formulate alternative concepts. This study tries to meet these challenges: first by testing the “global neoliberal” theory as an explanatory model by applying the alternative “path dependency” approach. We are far from taking the latter as an alternative explanatory model of urban transformation though. It rather gives objectives for searching different rationale of the urban change. Having no ambitions to formulate the alternative “universal” model, our paper contributes to this discussion by adding the new international comparative data and the authors’ judgements on the topic.

Tickell and Peck outline that most analysts agree to view neoliberalism as a “project”, rooted as early as in the 1970s, to realize the all-encompassing conditions of economic and political globalization by applying “free market” doctrine<sup>1</sup> (Brenner et al., 2010; Das, 2019; Tickell and Peck, 2003). The 2007–2008 financial crisis seems to have facilitated a serious revision of the neoliberal doctrine (Quiggin, 2010; Sheppard and Leitner, 2010). To describe the faltering yet continuing neoliberal “project” some researches even applied such vivid terms as “zombie” or “dead” neoliberalism (Lauermann and Davidson, 2013; Peck, 2010; Quiggin, 2010; Smith, 2009). Due to such a revision, more attention recently has been drawn to the studies of multiple forms and outcomes of this seemingly ubiquitous “project” (Brenner et al., 2010; Das, 2019; Lauermann and Davidson, 2013). To explain diversity in its outcomes, some refer to a cyclic/stadial nature of neoliberal reformation consisting of roll-back and roll-out periods (Li and Chan, 2017; Navarrete-Hernandez and Toro, 2019; Peck and Tickell, 2002). Many authors tend to attribute these numerous forms to the influence of both local socio-economic environment and peculiarities of local governing (Theodore et al., 2011). The latter factors combined with time dimension are usually described as “path dependency” (Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Brenner et al.,

2010; Li and Chan, 2017). What is important for our discussion is that all these contributed to broader recognition of the valuable role of governance and different forms of regulation as opposed to the early neoliberal concepts of the “absentee state” (Hackworth, 2007; Li and Chan, 2017; Navarrete-Hernandez and Toro, 2019; Peck et al., 2010). Some authors emphasize the role not only of central or regional regulations, but of the degree of local “autonomy” or governing choice as well (Hackworth, 2007).

Traditionally, cities are viewed as the most important and primary testing grounds for neoliberal reformation (Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Smith, 2002). Thus, the unifying effects of the market-driven reforms both in Russia and—to a much larger extent—in China, were best felt in the largest cities as leaders of reforms, and often among other effects were characterized by the neoliberal by their origin “reduction of public subsidies and regulations, the aggressive promotion of real estate development, and the privatization of previously public services” (Hackworth, 2007).

Vast discussion on post-socialist (East-European) and market-socialist (Chinese) urban transformation held during last 30 years has introduced two issues, which we consider most important for our research. First, findings suggest that the ongoing contesting of path-dependent and global modernization trends contribute a lot to the diversity of the urban transformation outcomes in such societies (Axenov et al., 2020; Wiest, 2012). Second, it was proved that the pace of different aspects of post-socialist and market-socialist urban transformation (of economic and political institutions, social practices and structures, urban morphology<sup>2</sup>) might differ substantially among these aspects, as well as among different places (Axenov et al., 2020; Sýkora and Bouzarovski, 2012).

One of the most feasible markers of such effects was the rapid growth of urbanized territory around the largest cities, which happened mostly through incorporation, and urban reuse of surrounding farmlands. Both countries had almost the identical unique “path dependent” feature of the starting point before the launch of neoliberal transformation—socialist collective and state-owned big farms’ lands, which surrounded largest cities, and were to be incorporated into cities under the pressure of market-driven urban growth. The reforms of the late 1980s in both countries introduced completely new principles of governance in this process. Under implementation of the new regulation principles in China collective farmlands being incorporated into the cities produced the widely discussed phenomenon of urban villages (Liu et al., 2010; Liu and Wong, 2017; Tian, 2008; Wu et al., 2013; Zhou, 2014). In Russia, such incorporation took quite different forms (Nefedova and Treivish, 2002). The

<sup>1</sup> Out of multiple cultural, structural and governmentality approaches to define neoliberalism (Collier, 2012; Hilgers, 2011) for the purposes of this paper, we shall use this broadest definition of neoliberalism too. We consider it appropriate since we shall oppose it to the “socialist project” experience, which generally rejected free market principles and resisted their global expansion.

<sup>2</sup> Further we shall refer to these different aspects of the socialist/post-socialist neoliberal urban transformation as to “structural transformations.”

paper will discuss the comparative outcomes of this process in two countries.

Our main ambition is to examine what governance principles have led from the same/comparable specific starting point to different results of urban redevelopment of former socialist farmland.<sup>3</sup> What are the main present-day outcomes for urban practice in both models? So, the objective of this paper is to contribute with empirical evidence and conceptualization of the impact of both socialist “path dependency” effects and governance patterns during the neoliberal reforms over the last 30 years on urban farmland redevelopment in Russian and Chinese largest cities.

## DATA AND METHODS

As the common specificity for both the Russian and Chinese Socialist “path” we took the phenomenon of the former collective and/or state-owned farms’ lands,<sup>4</sup> which were to be incorporated into the city under rapid urban sprawl facilitated by neoliberal reforms of the late 1980–1990s using the example St. Petersburg, Russia and Guangzhou, China. These two cities were chosen as being the leaders of the reforms, who proved to find themselves among the first innovators in implementing of both new principles of governance as well as neoliberal business practice. Being second-order metropolises in their countries, they are free of the possible “capital city” specific effects, thus being potentially more comparable with the other largest national urban centers (Axenov et al., 2006, 2020; Lin, 2004). Location of the farmland near major cities in both cases, determined a high demand for it by real estate development companies, in contrast to remote villages, where the same institutional settings might have led to land abandonment rather than redevelopment.

According to the above-mentioned approaches and objectives and using our case studies we shall thus concentrate on testing and comparing the “unifying” and “globalizing” effect of the introduction of neoliberal free market principles in the former de-marketized centrally planned economy, as opposed to differentiating impacts of local governance models and “path” traces of both Socialist and reforms periods in the results of the urban transformation of the former collective farmlands.

<sup>3</sup> Here we apply the broadest understanding of “redevelopment” as making misused and disused land more available and usable (Jacobs and Levine, 1957). Availability and usability could be measured not only by parameters of physical environment but also by social, economic, regulation etc. practices being established locally. Since farmland could not be treated as “raw” unused land, we do not apply the term “development” to describe its inclusion into urban use.

<sup>4</sup> As we shall show, these agricultural lands in both cases have undergone stages of nationalization, collectivization, de-collectivization and re-collectivization before or during the reforms. Keeping this in mind for technical reasons only we shall further refer to them as “collective” (farm)lands.

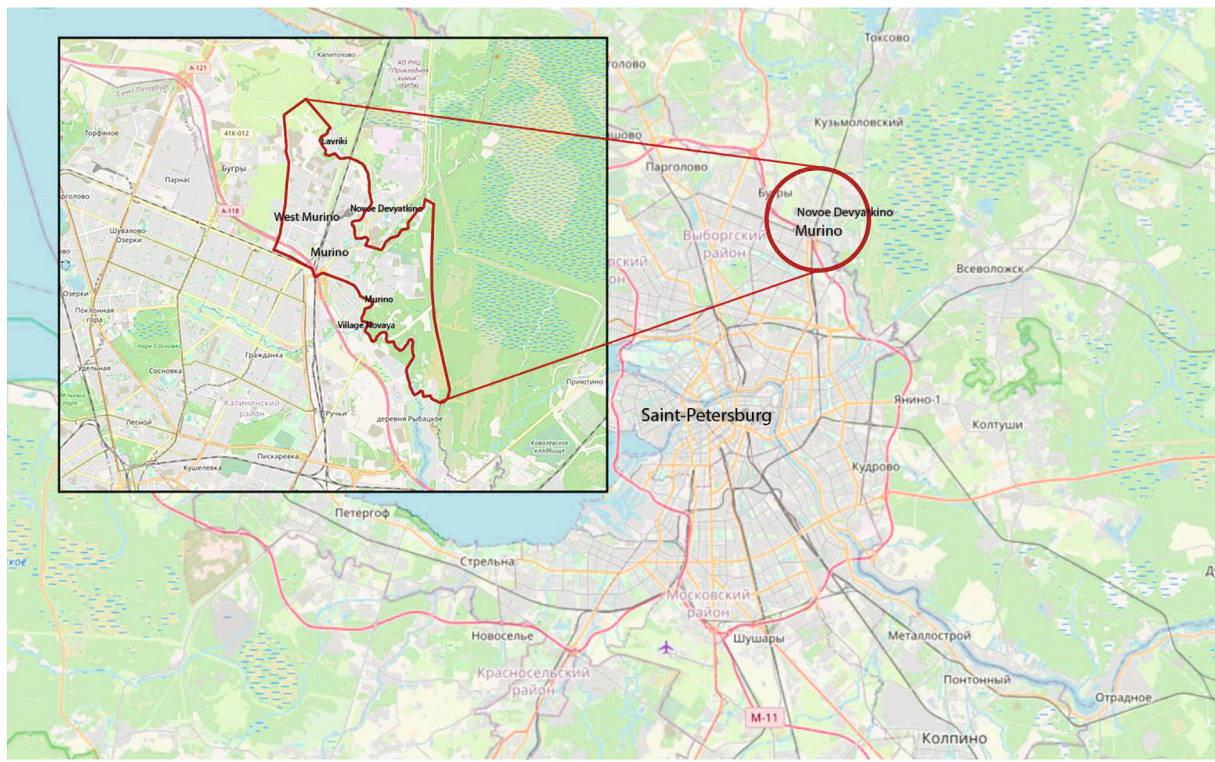
Further discussion is therefore split into three major sections. First, we shall compare policy context concerning collective farmlands in both countries and its changes during the pre- and post-reform periods. In particular, we shall inquire the main changes in policy and institutions around collective land between different stages; the reasons to drive these policy changes; the intentions behind these changes, i.e., productivity growth, social control etc.; spatial, economic, social and political outcomes of these changes. We assume that this will enable us to reveal important for our discussion unique and uniform components of the “paths” which both countries have gone through.

Second, brief comparison of the two cases chosen will give the empirical evidence of the outcomes of neoliberal reforms combined with specificities of “path-dependency” impacts. Mentioning in brief locational, historical, socio-economical, institutional etc. background, we shall describe and compare major components of redevelopment process: its initiation and main phases, conflicts and governance as state-business-community interaction, spatial, social, and economic outcomes.

For empirical case studies we have chosen two typical villages which have been swallowed by urban built environment through the process of urban sprawl: Liede village (Guangzhou, China) and Ruchyi/Murino village (St. Petersburg, Russia). Both villages were controlled by the socialist collective/state farms before the reforms. After neoliberal transformation and inclusion into urban built environment Liede village passed the stage of classical Chinese “urban village”<sup>5</sup> which was then exposed to redevelopment and converted into the high-rise urban residential and business quarter (Liu et al., 2010; Tian, 2008; Wu et al., 2013). Murino village and its big state farm Ruchyi after the reforms went through re-collectivization, privatization and rapid redevelopment, being converted into the new town of Murino which was also incorporated into the main city environment (Nezhinskaya et al., 2020) (Figs. 1, 2).

Finally, conclusions will be made on similarities and differences of the two cases which were exposed to the impacts of unifying “neoliberal” transformation trends and differentiating effects of governance models and “path-dependent” legacy.

<sup>5</sup> “Urban villages” remained collectively owned lands in urban areas with village style self-governance structure in the course of urban expansion (Tian, 2008; Wu et al., 2013; Zhou, 2014). Being not exposed to the city regulations, villagers often build high density and low-quality residential quarters, which perfectly match the needs of low-income urban in-migrants (Liu et al., 2010; Liu and Wong, 2017). Due to all these, people in urban villages suffer uncomfortable, unhealthy, risky, and somehow illegal lifestyles; informal employment, crimes and safety accidents and other social problems are common in these areas (Tian, 2008).



**Fig. 1.** Location of Murino town near St. Petersburg at present. Compiled by authors based on <https://www.openstreetmap.org/>.

## RESULTS

The two countries were passing through the socialist “path” at different time: Russia/USSR since 1917 revolution and until the start of neoliberal reforms and complex sociopolitical transformation in late 1980s, and China since 1949 and up until nowadays, incorporating neoliberal reforms into the specific “market socialism” model (Harvey, 2007; He and Wu, 2009; Li and Chan, 2017). Such a time-lag allowed China to choose and adopt major socialist policy solutions which were already tested in the USSR at a much more rapid pace. Policy on collective farmlands to a great extent followed this catching-up trend as well until the break of 1970–1980s when first neoliberal reforms took place in China. The reforms in Russia started about 10 years later, so the “leader” on the new common neoliberal “path” changed. Global neoliberal economic trends started to misplace common socialist legacy, but governance of political and social aspects of development started to differentiate “paths” in the two countries.

Further on we shall give the brief overview of policy implementation on agricultural land in these countries for both pre- and post- neoliberal reform periods. The overview has the same logics and structure to enable further comparison: each period outlined in agricultural land policy implementation after socialist revolutions in Russia and China is presented both at national

as well as local levels using examples of the selected cases, so that the practical results of their development can be compared with each other as well as with the features of the general specificities of each stage.

### *Agricultural Land Policy Implementation in Russia and Ruchyi/Murino Town, St. Petersburg*

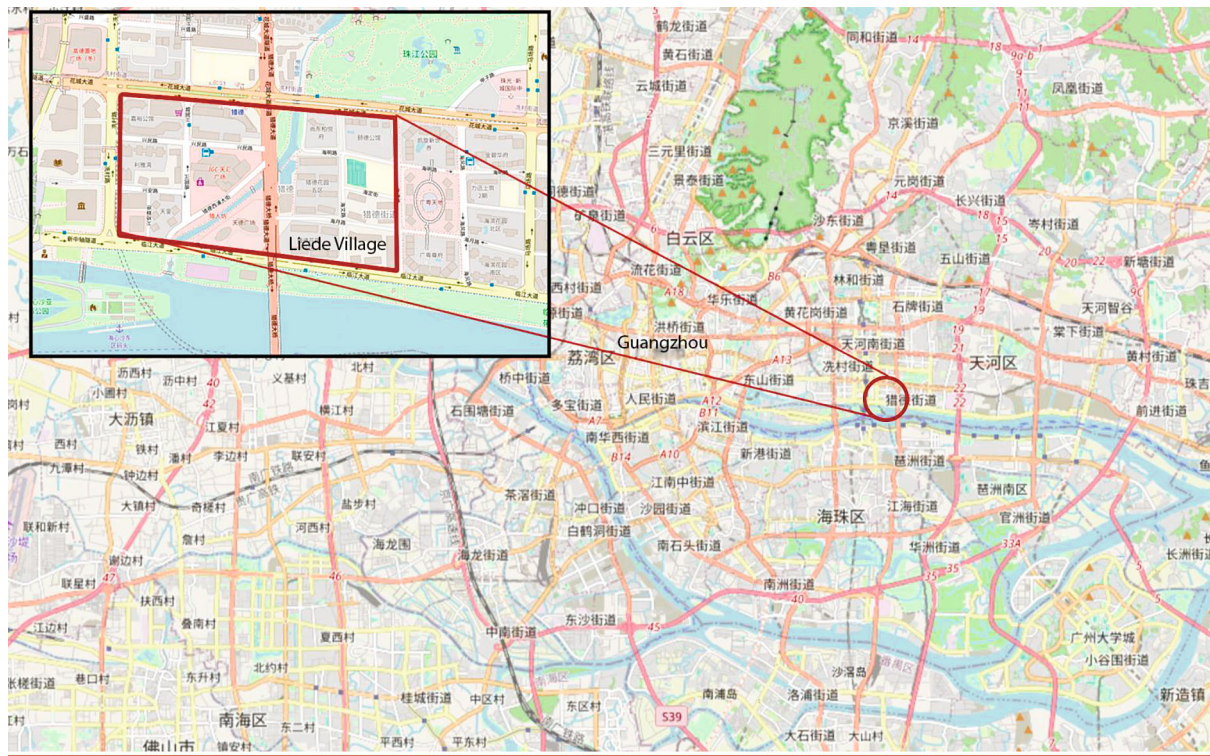
During socialist time, before the neoliberal reforms in Russia agricultural land policy implementation could be split at least into 3 distinct stages:

- nationalization of land and its distribution to individuals (1917–1928);
- collectivization of land and agriculture (1928–1953);
- transition from collective to state-owned agriculture (1954–1989).

Post-socialist period was also marked by three stages:

- privatization and re-collectivization of land and agriculture (1990–1995);
- introduction of the land market (1996–early 2000s);
- rapid redevelopment (early 2000s–present).

Let us follow these stages, outlining major land policy implementation in Russia and their reflection for Ruchyi/Murino villages/town, St. Petersburg (Leningrad).



**Fig. 2.** Location of Liede village in Guangzhou at present.  
Compiled by authors based on <https://www.openstreetmap.org/>.

**First Socialist Time Stage (1917–1928): Nationalization and Distribution to Individuals.** In Russia all forms of private land tenure (first of all by landlords) were abolished, and the land fund was socialized in 1917 according to revolutionary socialist ideals and necessities of the World and Civil wars time (1917–1921). Individual farms, collective farms (cooperatives) and state farms—became basic structures which allowed to use state owned land (Central Executive Committee, 1919<sup>6</sup>; Council of People’s Commissars, 1919<sup>7</sup>; CEC and SNK of the USSR, 1924<sup>8</sup>). The number of individual farmers almost doubled (from 16 to 25M) and land plots fragmented and productivity fell (Agricultural ..., 1932–1935). Few large collective or state farms appeared. After the wartime under the New economic policy (NEP) course (1921–1929) private farms were allowed again. After the failure of the

repressive methods of state food supply management, NEP liberalization enhanced food production but brought in social stratification, and the majority of the population was still starving.

From 1749 to the revolution of 1917, the neighboring central village of Murino, and the village of Ruchyi, were owned by the landlord’s family and inhabited by its serves: in 1913, there were 103 courtyards, 692 inhabitants (Glezerov, 2013). After the revolution of 1917 former serves were given land plots for individual farming.

**Second Socialist Time Stage (1928–1953): Collectivization.** Total collectivization of agriculture was completed at this stage which included abolition of private property and individual farms. Two sectors of agricultural land were left: in use of state farms and in use of collective farms.<sup>9</sup> NEP had solved some problems in food supply, and private entrepreneurship was then prohibited as counter-socialist phenomenon. Full state control over the system of the bigger agricultural production units was seen as the means to enhance productivity. Residential registration system allowed to control peasants’ mobility. Most efficient big individual farmers (kulaks) were deprived, exiled

<sup>6</sup> Regulations on socialist land management and on measures of transition to socialist agriculture (adopted by the Central Executive Committee on 14.02.1919). SPS Consultant (<http://www.consultant.ru/cons/>).

<sup>7</sup> Decree of the SNK on the organization of Soviet farms by institutions and associations of the industrial proletariat. Electronic library of historical documents. 1919 (<http://docs.historyrus-sia.org/ru/nodes/10280-15-fevralya-dekret-snk-ob-organizatsii-sovetskikh-hozyaystv-uchrezhdeniyami-i-obedineniyami-promyshlennogo-proletariata>).

<sup>8</sup> Resolution of the CEC of the USSR and the SNK of the USSR on agricultural cooperation of 22.08.1924 (<http://docs.historyrus-sia.org/ru/nodes/10280-15-fevralya-dekret-snk-ob-organizatsii-sovetskikh-hozyaystv-uchrezhdeniyami-i-obedineniyami-promyshlennogo-proletariata>).

<sup>9</sup> General principles of land use and land management (approved by the resolution of the CEC of the USSR of 15.12.1928). SPS Consultant (<http://www.consultant.ru/cons/cgi/online.cgi?req=doc&base=ESU&n=3130#Wj11GT0PV9fucaE>).

or killed as “counter-revolutionary elements”, poor peasants with their plots, as well as former kulaks’ plots were united into collective and state farms (Humphrey, 2002). By 1934 already 75% farmland was collectivized (Central Committee of the CPSU, 1930<sup>10</sup>). Mass famine and death took place in late 1920–early 1930s. Mass protests were suppressed. Later productivity of basic food production grew.

In 1931, a collective farm was created under the name Lenin’s Fortress in Ruchyi village, dispossession of *kulaks* and Stalinist repressions took place here. In the 1930s, the name Ruchyi stretched well beyond the village geographical boundaries: this became the name for the new state farm which merged with the Lenin’s Fortress. It appeared due to the state campaign for the organization of large state farms with a vegetable and pig-breeding specialization around Leningrad. Ten large agricultural cooperative farms located around the city before launch of this campaign in 1930, as well as about fifty smaller cooperatives and small subsidiary farms of city enterprises, could hardly cope with the food supply of Leningrad (Municipal Council, 2017). One of such new state farms was Ruchyi. The center of the state farm estate was identified near the railway station, where the construction of productive and housing facilities was launched. In 1931, the state farm Ruchyi expanded once again due to the joining of the branch of another state farm, and after a while the lands of the villages of Ruchyi and Grazhdanka entered the state farm. The area of the state farm has reached almost 1 thousand ha. After the WWII, the Ruchyi state farm again began to grow actively, several larger state farms and one collective farm were added to it. Thus, if before collectivization the center of this territory was the village of Murino, then after it the center moved to the main estate of the Ruchyi state farm near the railway station.

**Third Socialist Time Stage (1954–1989): From Collective to State-Owned.** Many collective farms in the USSR were consolidated and transformed into state farms based on state ownership and the use of the labor of hired workers during this period. After Stalin’s death in 1953, the “elimination of differences between town and country” policy was proclaimed. Thus, largest industrialized state suppliers of meat, eggs, milk, and vegetables surrounded largest cities. Urban industrial enterprises, their workers and townsmen upon their request were now allowed to use the plots of land for growing self-supplies (Shlykova, 2008). The remaining collective farms were granted more rights for self-management.

During the consolidation, the state farm Ruchyi turned into a powerful association, which in the mid-1970s merged with three other large state farms. As for

the village of Ruchyi, which gave the name to the state farm in the 1930s, rural life in it continued until the mid-1960s, when this territory administratively became part of the city of Leningrad: the demolition of old wooden buildings and construction of multi-storied urban ones began according to microdistrict principle here (Aksenov et al., 2020). The former residents of Ruchyi received city apartments nearby for free. During the mass housing construction of the 1960s, the village of Ruchyi was completely absorbed by the city. Since all land was owned by the state, no expropriation but just redistribution was required. The state farm kept operating on the rest of its land (Glezerov, 2013).

The neoliberal reforms of late 1980s–early 1990s gave start to three new stages.

**First Post-Socialist Stage (1990–1995): Privatization and Re-Collectivization.** Under “neoliberal” Land reform plan designed for 1991–1995, private ownership was re-introduced in Russia: both in economy and land property rights. After the dissolution of the USSR, the new Russian Constitution in 1993 declared the right to private ownership of land. The shift from gradual to forced land privatization took place. Collective and state farms lands were privatized or re-collectivized in the form of production cooperatives, partnerships or peasant farms, although real land market for agricultural lands was not shaped yet. Since technically the allocation, surveying and registration of such a huge number of plots were unrealizable in a short time, it was decided to introduce the institute of land shares: a special certificate was issued to the former state farms’ workers—a documented right to receive in future a certain area of land as part of privatization.

In 1991, re-collectivization took place and the state farm was reorganized into the Ruchyi Association of Peasants’ Farms. In 1993, when privatization became possible, it was transformed into a closed agricultural joint stock company (CAJSC) Ruchyi. This organizational and legal form was chosen as the most appropriate in the transitional period of development, now CJSC Breeding plant Ruchyi. As a result, in addition to the CJSC Breeding plant Ruchyi,<sup>11</sup> in 1994 more than a thousand shareholders appeared from among the former workers of the state farm, who obtained rights to land.

**Second Post-Socialist Stage (1996–Early 2000s): Introduction of the Land Market.** The 1996 presidential decree allowed to lease land. It gave a start to agricultural land market by giving not only the right but the real possibility to lease a land share, a virtual land plot that had only the size (ha) indicated in the certificate distributed during the previous stage. Since the shared lands were not allocated, this decree gave the

<sup>10</sup>Resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU (b) of January 5, 1930 “On the pace of collectivization and measures of state assistance to collective farm construction” (<http://istmat.info/node/30797>).

<sup>11</sup>Official website of CJSC Breeding plant Ruchyi (<http://www.xn--hlapjqz.com>).

green light to self-seizing of lands. Land management system was privatized, which above all resulted in fragmentation and sometimes loss of land rights archives, which added ground for speculation and illegal operations with agricultural land.

During this period, Breeding plant Ruchyi CJSC continued production activities on its lands, and its owner made a political career, becoming deputy of the Legislative Assembly of Leningrad oblast, on whose territory the CJSC lands were administratively located.

**Third Post-Socialist Stage (Early 2000s–Present): Rapid Redevelopment.** This stage started with the large-scale changes in the federal and regional legislation in 2001–2005: adoption of Land (2001), the Urban Planning (2004) and the Housing (The Constitution ..., 2005) Codes, along with amendments in the Civil Code (2001) and numerous related laws and regulations. Rapid redevelopment of agricultural lands in the cities began. The intention was not to allow land market to fall into shadow and to facilitate redevelopment of agricultural land. Due to adoption and entering into force of the new legislation after 2005 business has entered the stage of “land fever”, rapid redevelopment of agricultural lands into urban ones and extensive construction on them began (Visser et al., 2012).

After the change in legislation, attempts to consolidate in one hand all the privatized lands of the former state farm began. Since 2004 and over the next several years, the owner of Breeding plant Ruchyi tried to justify the illegality of the transfer in 1994 of the land plots previously owned by the state farm Ruchyi to the court. That time he lost the courts. However, in 2010 the court transferred the land plots of more than 1000 shareholders to the ownership of the agricultural complex, thereby increasing the area of its ownership by 2500 ha. After the decision of the court, protest actions of shareholders, who claimed that the signatures of more than 1000 landowners had been forged during privatization back in 1993, began in the media and on the streets. But after a few months, the selected land was alienated in favor of some private company, divided into smaller plots, transferred to a different category of land and sold (Petrov, 2014).<sup>12</sup> Numerous legal proceedings over the land in Murino, accompanied by scandals in the media, continued with Breeding plant Ruchyi and with firms that tried to buy land from it, and with the city, which was building a ring road around St. Petersburg on part of the land. Later, public activism was registered on the issues of social infrastructure development (Nezhinskaya et al., 2020). As a result, the owner of CJSC Breeding plant Ruchyi managed to consolidate about 5 thousand ha

of land directly adjacent to the city and sell it to large developers.<sup>13</sup> Since 2007, a new city has been built in Murino on the lands of the former state farm Ruchyi. As of August 1, 2021, the population of Murino was more than 154000, while the 2010 census gave a figure of 7900. A total of 205 apartment buildings in Murino host about 87.000 apartments. There are 28 kindergartens and four large schools in the city (Nezhinskaya et al., 2020). The new city has a number of problems associated with both the speed and the features of the territory redevelopment described above, and with the legal status: its territory does not belong administratively to St. Petersburg, but to neighboring Leningrad oblast. Part of the territory of the former state farm remained within the boundaries of St. Petersburg, on the inner side of the ring road.<sup>14</sup> In 2008, the first modern developers came to this very territory. Here, by order of Okhtinsky Bereg LLC,<sup>15</sup> the owner of most of the territories of the former Ruchyi state farm, a Master Plan<sup>16</sup> for urban planning transformation and development of the former Ruchyi state farm land within the administrative boundaries of St. Petersburg outside of Murino town was developed. The concept for the development of the territory, acquired by the developer in 2007, assumed the development of inexpensive apartment buildings up to 20 floors high, public and business complexes, social facilities and parking lots, which would lead to the creation of a completely new microdistrict of the city. More than 100 thousand people will live here. At the same time, the concept for the development of the city metro provided for the construction of the Ruchyi metro station by 2020, which was not implemented. The entire complex was commissioned by the spring of 2020.<sup>17</sup> Other residential complexes: Tsvetnoy Gorod<sup>18</sup> and Ruchyi<sup>19</sup> are planned for commissioning in 2023 and 2022, respectively. Totally, after 2008 due to the redevelopment of the former state farm Ruchyi land both within St. Petersburg and Leningrad oblast (Murino town) boundaries urban population increased here by not less than 250 thousand.

<sup>13</sup>Ruchyi were denied access to the Ring Road. News portal Dp.ru. 2007 ([https://www.dp.ru/a/2007/10/16/Ruchjam\\_otkazali\\_v\\_dostu](https://www.dp.ru/a/2007/10/16/Ruchjam_otkazali_v_dostu)).

<sup>14</sup>Resolution of the Government of St. Petersburg No. 117 of 6.02.2006. Electronic fund of legal and regulatory and technical documents (<http://www.consultant.ru/cons/cgi/online.cgi?req=doc&base=SPB&n=61148#Mkrq1GTM8mdZs6X>).

<sup>15</sup>Residential Complex Novaya Okhta. LSR (<https://www.lsr.ru/spb/zhilye-kompleksy/novaya-okhta/hodstroitelstva>).

<sup>16</sup>Urbis Master Plan. LLC “URBIS-SPB”. 2008 ([http://www.urbis.spb.ru/proekti/i\\_master-plan-ruchi](http://www.urbis.spb.ru/proekti/i_master-plan-ruchi)).

<sup>17</sup>Residential Complex Ruchyi. LSR (<https://www.lsr.ru/spb/zhilye-kompleksy/ruchi>).

<sup>18</sup>Residential Complex Tsvetnoy Gorod. LSR (<https://www.lsr.ru/spb/zhilye-kompleksy/tsvetnoy-gorod>).

<sup>19</sup>Residential Complex Ruchyi. LSR (<https://www.lsr.ru/spb/zhilye-kompleksy/ruchi>).

<sup>12</sup>Petrov A. Among the deceived shareholders of Ruchyi are former employees and commercial companies. News portal Neva.today. 2014 (<https://neva.today/news/v-chisle-obmanutyh-payshhikov-pz-ruchi-byvshie-rabotniki-i-kommercheskie-kompanii-80662>).

*Agricultural Land Policy Implementation in China and Liede Village (Guangzhou)*

Like in the Russian case, agricultural land policy implementation in socialist China could be split into several historical stages: 2 before and 2 after the start of neoliberal reforms. After the socialist revolution of 1949 and prior to the reforms these were:

- nationalization of land and its distribution to individual households (1949–1956);
- collectivization of land and agriculture (1956–1978).

After the start of the neoliberal reforms there were:

- de-collectivization and re-collectivization of land and agriculture (1978–1994);
- expropriation and redevelopment (1994–present).

Let us follow the same logic and describe these stages both at national level and for the case of Liede village (Guangzhou).

**First Socialist Time Stage (1949–1956): Nationalization and Distribution to Individual Households.** After the socialist revolution of 1949 the state nationalized and distributed rural land from landlords to individual farm households (People’s Republic of China, 1950). The 1954 Constitution legally protected farmers’ land ownership. The Chinese Communist Party’s ideology claimed to combat and eventually eliminate private ownership of properties; however, to win the support from peasants, the state gave up to insists in public property, land has been distributed to individual households in accordance with the promise which was the core mechanism to mobilize mass in the civil war before 1949. Up to 240 mln acres of rural land were redistributed to approximately 75 mln peasant households (Ho, 2005). Land reform greatly increased the enthusiasm of farmers who got access to land for production and contributed to a substantial increase in China’s grain output. Private ownership could not match the need for massive industrialization though and led to inequality between households, which mismatched socialist ideology.

Liede village has claimed to have more than 900 years history in Guangzou (1080 AD) (Wang et al., 2011). Before WWII, Liede possessed around 200-ha agricultural land on the both sides of the Pearl River Delta. Agriculture specialized on fruits and vegetables. In 1949 Liede had 1786 population and obtained around 200 ha of agricultural land.<sup>20</sup> Under 1952 land reform, approximately 66 ha of land in Liede have been redistributed to other villages (Wang et al., 2011).

**Second Socialist Time Stage (1956–1978): Collectivization.** The 1956 regulations deprived peasants of

their private land ownership and left land in the hands of the state or a collective (Ho, 2005). In 1958, the system of People’s Communes (PCs) and their hierarchical structures was introduced. All means of production: land, cattle and tools became collectively owned. The rural land system based on collective use of state-owned land was eventually legitimized in 1962 (CCCP, 1962). Rural land could be used collectively by the peasants, but was not allowed for lease or sale. Such a policy was enforced by Mao’s strong intention to push the transition to PCs and fully collective ownership. Mobility restrictions and social control were strengthened by a registered permanent residency system (Hukou). Experiments with collective property rights led to the low enthusiasm of farmers in production due to “eating from the same pot”—getting an equal share regardless of the work invested. The Great Leap Forward policy (1958–1962) decentralized land ownership from the commune to the production team and led to national famine, which can be interpreted as the result of extremely collective ownership and governance fallacies.

In March 1958, Liede was incorporated into Shahe Town of Guangzhou. Under collectivization in August 1958 Liede became a production brigade under Shahe People’s Commune (Li, 2005). During this stage land and other means of production become collectively owned, villagers were divided among three categories of labor, i.e., crop farming, livestock rearing and fishing (Kan, 2016). During this period, Liede continued to lose its land. In 1964, 6 ha were expropriated by Seedling Field of Guangzhou. In 1966, 0.46 ha was given to the army. In 1976, Guangzhou Port Authority expropriated 8 ha of land in Haixinsha, an island in Pearl River (Wang et al., 2011).

**First Reform Stage (1978–1994): De-Collectivization and Re-Collectivization.** Economic de-collectivization occurred when in 1978 the family management system was introduced, and after 1981 spread all over the country. Agricultural land was contracted by PCs to individual households to operate with obtaining profits. In 1982, all urban land became exclusively state owned and run. The People’s Commune was substituted by town government in 1983. But rural, mainly agricultural, land remained under collective use, only some smaller state enterprises have been privatized. 1988 modification of constitution allowed leasing of rural and state-owned urban land. In some provinces, village community cooperative economic association became a legitimate body to own and run rural collective properties, such as land. Re-collectivization took place in several regions. To avoid famine and increase agricultural output, bottom-up initiatives to redistribute rural land for family use rose in rural China. To deal with shortage in consumptive products, rural areas have been encouraged to develop industries to mobilize a broad range of skills, labor, and capital in production. The family agricultural management system greatly increased the enthusiasm

<sup>20</sup>Guangzhou Liede, the Dragon Boat Festival amidst the sound of dragon firecrackers. 2018 ([https://m.thepaper.cn/kuaiobao\\_detail.jsp?contid=2189802&from=kuaiobao](https://m.thepaper.cn/kuaiobao_detail.jsp?contid=2189802&from=kuaiobao)).



of farmers; a substantial increase in China's grain output happened; the increase in labor productivity freed up some of the workers who migrated to megacities.

Due to economic de-collectivization and family management introduction, from 1980 to 1985, agricultural output in Liede have increased by 10 times. Capital from Hong Kong and Taiwan was invested in production of shoes, paper and soft drinks under joint ventures' operation. From 1980 to 1990, industrial output reached CNY 4 mln (Kan, 2016). In 1987, Liede was formally transformed from a socialist brigade to an administrative village under the jurisdiction of Shahe Town, Tianhe District, and Guangzhou Municipality. Under re-collectivization process, in May 1990, Guangdong Provincial Government announced regulation on village community cooperative economic association, which became legitimate body to own and run rural collective properties including land. In Liede, the Village Shareholding Cooperative Economic Association (VSCEA) was established in 1992. The committee of VSCEA had the power to operate collective land and other properties (Kan, 2016). Li Fangrong, the deputy party secretary of Liede Brigade, has become the chairman of Liede Village Committee in 1987. In 1989, the same person became the party secretary of the village and acted as the top leader of Liede until 2013 when he resigned and migrated to Canada (Li, 2005; Wang, 2016). In 1987, 6 ha of land were expropriated by the city of Guangzhou to build sewage disposal facilities. In 1991, another 0.8 hectare has lost to Shahe Town Government for the expanding project on agricultural technologies. Thus, by 1994, Liede village obtained 193 ha of territory for agricultural and housing use.

**Second Reform Stage (1994–Present): Expropriation and Redevelopment.** Tax-Sharing Reform of China in 1994 has created a centralized fiscal system and a decentralized administrative system. Such a dual system encouraged municipal governments to transfer rural agricultural land to urban land. The new versions of the Land Management Law of 2004 and 2019, as well as the Property Law of 2007 facilitated this process. Besides this, Property Law of 2007 for the first time protected the interests of private investors to the same extent as that of national interests. Under China's Constitution, the state had the right to expropriate collectively owned land if this was in the public interest, and state expropriation was the only way to transfer land from the rural collective sector to the urban state sector (People's Republic of China, 1954). Because the relationship between the state and the rural collectives was a hierarchical one, rural collectives had little bargaining power when negotiating land expropriation. This transformation can produce huge amount of local revenues. A large number of rural collectively owned agricultural land has been expropriated and transferred to urban state-owned land with poor compensations. As the result of expropriation, peasants in former villages were deprived of their land

rights. Such an expropriation is estimated around CNY 785.8 bln in 2002 in total.<sup>21</sup> Expropriation enabled city governments to produce at low cost extensive "development zones" on the former rural collective lands at the edge of the cities. By 2008, 28000 km<sup>2</sup> of "development zones" have been created in Chinese cities (Ji and Song, 2017).

In 1993, to stimulate urban growth, an ambitious mega project, the Pearl River New Town as the new CBD for Guangzhou has been approved and planned by Thomas Planning Service Inc, USA. Liede was included in such a project in its southern part, which required to contribute its land to build the new CBD. Since 1994, Liede has continually lost more than 150 ha of its land by expropriation. As returns, Liede could obtain 8% of expropriated land as reserved construction land for economic development: this very land could be developed for an urban function in the CBD, while the rest of Liede's rural collective land could not. Compensations up to CNY 0.45 bln for this expropriated land was paid to Liede VSCEA who operated it and not distributed among individual households. As a result, VSCEA found business partners for 19 parcels on its reserved construction land where residential and commercial real estate was built. Liede VSCEA as well has built a multifunctional building by itself. Through these projects, income of Liede VSCEA increased from CNY 4.1 mln in 1994 to CNY 33.6 mln in 2004; however, profits of VSCEA declined from 1.5 to 1.2 mln in the same period (Wang et al., 2011), which could be explained by the increased VSCEA spending on welfare and social services for villagers (Kan, 2016). In 2002, all of Liede was converted into the urban community according to municipal government policy. Rural villagers became urban residents; villagers' committee became residents' committee with less autonomy from the upper-level government; all collectively owned land should have been converted into state owned land; Liede VSCEA was converted into a joint-stock company named Liede Economic Development Company Limited (LEDCL). Every individual householder became shareholder of LEDCL, voter for electing its committee, and could share its profits. The congress of representatives of shareholders is the highest body to make decisions for LEDCL. This new company is legally a private company, which is a market entity regulated by China's laws for companies (Kan, 2016). Conflicts among villages, commune leaders and the city took place several times which included public protests and lawsuits on the issues of commercial decision-making and social infrastructure management (Jia Ming, 2020; Kan, 2016; Wang et al., 2011; Wang, 2016).

Comparison of the two cases listed above shows that both countries chronologically went through

<sup>21</sup>Urbis Master Plan. LLC "URBIS-SPB." 2008 ([http://www.urbis.spb.ru/proekti/i\\_master-plan-ruchi](http://www.urbis.spb.ru/proekti/i_master-plan-ruchi)).

common stages on their socialist “path” in agricultural land policy implementation:

— Early socialist nationalization of land (Russia (R): 1917, China (C): 1949);

— Peasants’ mobilization during socialist revolution, Civil and other wars using the slogan “Land to Peasants” and distribution of land to peasants (R: 1917–1921, C: 1946–1949);

— Initial intention to prohibit private land ownership (implemented more in R: 1917, less in C: 1950);

— Roll back to some measure of private ownership, due to that loss of productivity and growth of social inequality (R: 1921–1929, C: 1954–1956);

— Collectivization of agriculture in order to raise productivity, get rid of private property on land and social inequality. Registration system allowed to control peasants’ mobility (R: 1928–1953, C: 1956–1978);

— Low production efficiency and mass famine (R: late 1920–early 1930s, C: 1959–1961);

— De-collectivization (R: 1954–1989, C: 1978–1994);

— Re-collectivization (R: 1990–1995, C in some provinces: 1988–present);

— Rapid urban redevelopment of former collective farmlands around big cities (R: 2005–present, C: 2004–present).

Some stages through which these countries went prior to the market reforms differed, though. Thus, Russia has experienced a certain step back from collectivization in the 1950s, when state farms replaced many (but not all) former collective ones. At the same period, urban households and industrial enterprises were allowed to apply for land plots in the countryside in order to grow there some crops for their own consumption only (we conventionally call it “de-collectivization”). To some extent, this stage could be compared to de-collectivization stage of the late 1970–1980s in China, when market reforms already started and where the newly appeared few state farms and numerous household-managed farms were allowed the market operations with their crops.

Anyway, having introduced some uniform market economy principles (C: since 1978, R: since 1989), neoliberal reforms were carried out under different governance principles in the two countries. In China, implementation of “market socialism” model gave rise to private entrepreneurship, inclusion into global market but limited the introduction of private property and political liberalization. State retained control over majority of real estate and land property rights, leaving certain space for cooperative property on land (Zhou et.al, 2019). In Russia neoliberal reforms brought full measure of the free market relations, privatization of land and real estate, international openness and political liberalization at the break of post-socialist trans-

formation in late 1980–early 1990s (Axenov et al., 2006).

We shall trace effects of these policy solutions on our main subject—urban redevelopment of collective farmlands in Chinese and Russian cities—using the examples of the two cases outlined above: Liede village in Guangzhou and Ruchyi/Murino town in St. Petersburg.<sup>22</sup>

## DISCUSSION

Comparison of agricultural land policy implementation in Russia (Ruchyi/Murino town, St. Petersburg) and China (Liede village, Guangzhou) reveal certain important similarities and differences in both cases’ development. We shall try to select those which could be attributed to the effects of socialist “path” as well as to the neoliberal reformation effects.

### *Similarities*

Due to the general common features of governance under socialism, in both cities on the lands under consideration, in comparison with other lands of these cities, there was developed a different system of ownership and/or rights on land, type of land use, control/regulation modes listed above. Thanks to these features, in particular, a system of large socialist collective or state agricultural enterprises had developed around cities, disposing of large compactly located plots of land. Two major outcomes we tend to attribute to these specificities. First, real estate-led redevelopment, which started after the reforms in both cases, dealt with these large land plots which were controlled/owned by the successors of the former socialist management and were of special interest to developers due to size, location of the plots and possibly to certain benefits out of their non-market managers’ “good will.” Second, since socialist principles declared protection of the rights of laborers, this enabled the latter to claim certain share out of market real estate operations from “their” enterprises—both in case of their former cooperative or state farm status. These outcomes, being facilitated by the rapidly changing regulation, could not help but caused social tensions which involved protests and lawsuits in the court in both cases. Since the two outcomes described above seem to be general for such transitions in both countries, we assume that the rule would be: the more involved were the former socialist farmworkers in the governance of this transition from the very beginning, the less dis-

<sup>22</sup>Due to several administrative reforms, the lands of the former state farm Ruchyi was divided between two subjects of Russian Federation: St. Petersburg and surrounding Leningrad oblast. The former village of Murino received the status of a town of Leningrad oblast, while becoming, in fact, a new urban quarter of St. Petersburg. The rest of the lands of the former state farm Ruchyi remained administratively a part of St. Petersburg, and developed separately and under different regional regulation.

ruptive due to social and legal tensions the process of redevelopment went.

Market (neoliberal) reforms began in both cities in the late 1970–1980s (with a time lag of about 10 years). At the beginning of the reforms, a system of collective rights to dispose/own land in market conditions developed on the lands of such farms as being dependent of the management of enterprises. While de-collectivization took different forms during different periods in the two countries (R: 1954–1989, C: after 1981), re-collectivization in both cases after 1990 became the part of neoliberal transformation and served as a tool to convert a former socialist farm into a private company and expose its land stock to market development.

For this and not only reason, in both cases, at the end of the 1990s–2010s, rapid mass urban multi-storied construction took place on these lands, which was less regulated than the rest of the development in the city. The resulting high-rise dense morphology of this type of urban sprawl we also tend to attribute to the effects of the common socialist “path”, which had practiced the “mobilization” economy downplaying the importance of personal comfort issues. One of the common for both countries results of such policy was housing shortage in the cities, which used to become a real barrier issue during the periods of rapid urban growth. So, the fast construction of the cheap mass high-rise housing turned to be the most efficient market solution.

In residential development, which prevailed in both cases, common features were observed: high population density (a bit lower in “urban village” phase in Liede, then one of the highest—in both cities); predominance of housing of minimum square footage (in Liede—especially during the “urban village” phase, in Ruchyi/Murino—during the whole redevelopment); in many respects in this regard—the emergence of the cheapest offer at the housing market here (in Liede—during the “urban village” phase). Based on the latter, a cluster of “first” housing in the city was formed here: either for newcomers, or for local youth separating from their families, or for young families. Therefore, the population in both cases is much younger and more small-family than in the rest of the city; there is an increased share of “investment housing”—purchased/built for lease and resale. In both cases, the lack of social and household infrastructure, etc., was an important problem: roads, driveways, especially the number and quality of entrances/exits to and from the city, as well as educational institutions, healthcare, fire protection, etc. caused public tensions (Jia Ming, 2020; Kan, 2016; Nezhinskaya et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2011; Wang, 2016).

### *Differences*

Land policy implementation in Russia and China during neoliberal reform periods have passed through several stages, and urban redevelopment of the former collective farms’ land resulted in distinct morphological phases, closely related to these stages. In Guangzhou Liede village case 2 major morphological phases of urban redevelopment took place after the start of neoliberal reforms, as opposed to single one—in St. Petersburg Ruchyi/Murino town case. One may even say that Liede has passed two major redevelopments, which completely replaced the previous built structures, while Ruchyi/Murino—only the one.

Urban redevelopment in Liede first went through the phase of “urban village”—a very specific Chinese form of socialist collective farm land transformation, which could be interpreted as an extremely “path dependent” response to unifying impacts of neoliberal trends introduction to the socialist system of governance. In addition to the above-mentioned features, it resulted in the greatest measure of local autonomy in decision-making and social regulation, dense low-quality chaotic construction and exclusion from the open market urban development (Lin and Meulder, 2011; Tian, 2008). The second phase there was marked by 1994 and 2002 city regulations, which legally removed the “path dependent” barriers for the unified neoliberal redevelopment. Since that time, the respected territories became exposed to the open market and general city regulation and high-rise construction according to international urban standards.

In Ruchyi/Murino, St. Petersburg, only one morphological phase of redevelopment has happened due to governance specificities. More rapid introduction of comprehensive free market reforms was combined with total and abrupt refusal of all socialist principles, which allowed to avoid such transitional phases like Chinese “urban village.” All this enabled privatization of land to happen in the 1990s, and after the adoption of appropriate regulation general standard high-rise urban construction to take place. But in accordance with the above-mentioned discussion on the different pace of different structural transformations (Sýkora and Bouzarovski 2012), this single phase in St. Petersburg Ruchyi/Murino case combined traces of both phases in Guangzhou Liede case as described above.

The specific “urban village” phase, which did not happen in Russia, is quite logical to attribute to the effects of Chinese governance specificities on the generally common socialist “path”: different attitudes and regulations were applied to collective rights on land use in the two countries. Due to this Guangzhou case is still collective after redevelopment, the degree of local “autonomy” of governing choice was and still is high here, community remains more dependent on the communal management and carries out a more closed-door redevelopment for individual villagers. In St. Petersburg re-collectivization was used only for the

needs of rapid privatization, since that time the role of communal management in redevelopment was gradually replaced by the market mechanisms, and the role of a developer became the central one since late 2000s. The role of the former laborers of the socialist farm diminished to the role of the other individual market players. On the other hand, more comprehensive liberalization here gave rise to more public participation of different social actors.

As we have shown, “path dependency” impacts made the urban redevelopment process of the former socialist farmland quite different from that of the rest of both respected cities. Governing and pace of different structural transformations differed in the two countries substantially. Our results demonstrate that in the St. Petersburg farmland redevelopment case, globalizing neoliberal impacts overruled specific “path-dependency” ones in political, legal, economic urban institutions, and both impacts were and still are equally important for the transformation of urban social practices and structures. In Liede village, Guangzhou, case “path dependency” specificity turned much more pronounced in political and social practices and structures, while neoliberal and “path-dependency” impacts were probably of equal importance for legal and economic structural transformations. So, these differences could be described by different transition models in these two countries, namely, a radical model in Russia and a gradual one in China. Due to the radical change, socialist path dependency has been more rapidly broken in Russia. Privatization, the core principle in neoliberalism, played the key role in such a radical transition. Therefore, global neoliberal effects have eclipsed the influence of path-dependency in Russia’s case. In contrast, Chinese gradual model still cannot avoid relying on its socialist past. Until today, this country calls its economic system a socialist market economy. At the same time, the neoliberal principles have been applied to improve economic efficiency. As a result, Liede village as a Chinese case has displayed equal importance between neoliberal and “path-dependency”, which are both crucial for understanding political-economic system in China. In Chinese case, the city and local authorities played a major role with initiating spatial planning and regulating development on the former agricultural fields. While the case of Murino is notable for the lack of governance at regional/city level. In the Murino case, re-collectivization served for faster privatization and it ultimately led to the splitting of land rights and further concentration in the hands of a few that ensured rapid development. While, in the Liede case, the collective rights were preserved and this is the key difference between the Chinese case and the Russian case. In spite of all this, the unifying “neoliberal” modernization trends have led to almost the identical urban morphological structures at the end, which could be seen as internationally common ones.

So, we can state that while neoliberal modernization effects during urban redevelopment of former socialist farmland brought the internationally common urban built environment both in Chinese and Russian metropolises, path-dependent governance models introduced substantially different business, social and administrative structures. While Russian radical transition model made business the main driver of such redevelopment, diminishing the role of local self-governance and enhancing the role of public activism, under Chinese gradual transition model local administrative and social self-organization played the key role controlling and even overruling interests of business actors.

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#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors of this work declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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