

Contemporary Chinese Society Lecture Series featuring Eli Friedman –  
The Urbanization of People: The Politics of Development, Labor  
Markets, and Education in the Chinese City, March 9, 2022

– My name is Ya-Wen Lei. I'm an associate professor in the Department of Sociology at Harvard University. I'm also a faculty member at the Fairbank Center. And today, it's our great honor to have Professor Eli Friedman. And Dr. Friedman is an associate professor and chair of International Comparative Labor at Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations, and he's one of the most prominent scholars who study issues related to labor in China. And his research interest include Chinese studies, development, education, social movement, urbanization, and work and labor. And he is the author of "Insurgency Trap: Labor..." "Insurgency Trap: Labor Politics in Postsocialist China," and which was published by Cornell University Press in 2014. And today, he's going to give a talk based on his forthcoming book, entitle, "The Urbanization of People: "The Politics of Development, "Labor Markets, and Education "in the Chinese City," which will be published by Columbia University Press. I want to say congratulations to Professor Friedman about this exciting book. And just a little housekeeping before we get started. If you have any questions during the presentation, please type them into the question box in your Zoom Control Panel, and we will have time for Professor Friedman to answer the questions at the end. And now, without further ado, I'm going to turn the time over to Professor Friedman. And welcome Professor Friedman.

– Great, thanks so much Ya-Wen, and thanks for the invitation. It's really an honor to be here at the Fairbank Center, and I'm really excited to be able to share this new book that I have. If I were there in person, I would be passing out flyers. I am not, but the book is available for pre-order at Columbia's website. I'm gonna go ahead and share my screen here, if you gimme just one moment. Okay. I hope that looks okay for everyone. If not, please, please do let me know. So I'm going to be talking, as I mentioned, about my book, which is called "The Urbanization of People, "Development, Labor Markets and Schooling "in the Chinese City." I've been working on this project for a decade or so, and I'm very pleased to finally have it out. I was trained as a labor scholar, and so it was a bit of a winding road that led me to writing a book about urbanization, and specifically about schools. But I hope it... I hope it holds together and I'm really interested to get your feedback and questions. So today, what I'm gonna be doing is presenting a distilled version of some of the key arguments and conceptual innovations that appear in the book, and I'm gonna provide some empirical information as well on how the economic geography and state policy within China impact this thing that I'm calling "the urbanization of people." So... Sorry, my window's are a little bit messed up here. If you gimme just a second, I will sort it out. Okay. So today, I will be focusing on the first two chapters of the book, which I've outlined there in red, and I'm gonna have to be... I'm

gonna have to leave out some of the... Some of the empirical stuff that look at the lived experiences of migrant workers, some of the coping mechanisms, as well as forms of resistance, that have developed. And I do wanna note that the story that I'm gonna tell today is going to be very China-focused, kind of nationally bounded, but I want to note that I'm thinking of these processes as part of a broader global dynamic, and I'm happy to get into the way in which the global fits into my analysis in the Q&A, if folks are interested in that. So the story begins in the summer of 2011, when more than two dozen migrant schools, schools for the children of migrant workers, were demolished in Beijing a couple of weeks before the beginning of the school semester, and this resulted in up to 30,000 students being displaced and having no place to go to school. This received a widespread media attention, both within China and internationally, and this was the thing that really alerted me to this issue of migrant schools and the challenges that migrant workers faced. In my earlier research, going back... Going back to the early 2000s, it had focused mostly on labor issues and I had been focused particularly on the workplace and protests, and I had often heard of difficulties that migrant workers faced in getting their children into schools, but this was really dramatic and caught my attention. And so, I went to Beijing that winter, in the winter of 2011/2012, and I began poking around to see what I could find. Before I go any further, I know that most people here will be China specialists and so maybe we understand what we're talking about when I mention the word "migrant worker," but I just wanna be sure. So when I talk about migrant workers, I'm not talking about international migrants, I'm talking about rural-to-urban migrants, people who are PRC citizens, but because of the citizenship regime that exists in China, they face various forms of exclusion. When I talk about "migrant schools," a term that I've already used, I'm referring to the schools that serve the children of these migrant workers who cannot get into public schools in these cities. The migrant schools are largely, or completely, privatized. They serve overwhelmingly, if not exclusively, non-local students. And as you can see from this image that I took in Beijing on the right, they're badly under-resourced because they serve a poor and working class community, and so, therefore, they can't buy very much in terms of... In terms of physical plant. There's all sorts of other problems that exist and we'll get into that in just a little bit. So going back to this story in 2011 and these school demolitions, over the next several years, what I found was that the municipal government in the city of Beijing was using myriad shifts in bureaucratic rules to slowly deprive migrants from access to education. And this is true, both with respect to the formal public and state subsidized education, as well as these informal migrant schools. Interestingly enough, at precisely the same time in 2012/13/14, this the central government begins talking about advancing what they refer to as "the urbanization of people," and so the title of my book comes from this official discourse. For the first time there, the central government is talking about wanting people to move to cities, which is sort of unique in the history of the PRC, but

this is not just official jargon. The idea of "the urbanization of people" is also conceptually important for me because what I think it acknowledges, at least implicitly, is that over the reform period in China, there's this... Something of a disjuncture. On the one hand, we have the urbanization of capital and labor, that have moved forward. China has become an overwhelmingly urban economy, they have gone about constructing the institutions for a national labor market so people can move anywhere in the country to sell their labor. But people have not been fully urbanized when we think about people, with respect to all of their social needs, chief amongst which is education. So the major disjuncture, just to rephrase this, is that China has national labor markets, but citizenship, and especially social citizenship, is structured essentially at the level of the city. So why is the central government talking about wanting more urbanization in this period of time? Well, they believe that it will help them rebalance the economy. And this is something that we've heard Wen Jiabao talking about, going back to 2003. More recently, Xi Jinping has continued to talk about rebalancing the economy. The major issue that they have sought to address, really over the last 20 years, is the inadequate level of consumption within China. So you can see here that consumption, as a share of GDP, fell throughout through reform era, And if you look comparatively, trying to compare it to other major economies, consumption is really a very small part of China's overall economy. That makes them overly dependent on investment, as well as exports, as a source of growth. And the government believes, with some justification, that people need to be more urbanized in order to address this, that people who are living in cities in other national settings tend to consume more. In fact, this structural shift to a more urban-centered economy had already been taking place for many years. So a couple of ways of looking at this, you can think of industrialization-led development, right? Which has been very important, going back to the 1980s, but this kind of urbanization-led development has already emerged in the early 21st century, And here you can see that service sector, rather than industry, is contributing more to growth. Here, you can look at some classic urbanization industries, construction, finance, and real estate, and you can see that their contribution to GDP over the course of the early 21st century is increasing pretty dramatically. So this is basically what I'm talking about when I talk about the urbanization of capital, right? China's economy has become much more urban-centered rather than rural or industrial over the last generation. We frequently hear the statistics cited that in 2011, more than half of China's population is living in cities, and that is true but it's also not all that useful for understanding the politics of urbanization, right? So the question of who's getting into which cities and why. Because we also know that there are up to 300 million people in China who are living outside of their place of Hukou registration. All of this is just to say, again, capital is urbanized, labor is urbanized, but people are not urbanized as full social beings, and that their inclusion into urban space is quite segmented. Now, in 2014, the central government announces what's

called the "National New Urbanization Plan" and then a "Residency Reform Plan." So they're, again, encouraging people to move to cities, the media's talking about this new openness to migrants. And interestingly, this did not comport at all with what I was seeing in my field work in the city in Beijing. And in fact, I was seeing all of these pressures to get more people out of the city, and this is true in Beijing and other extra large cities. It was at precisely the same time that the central government also set what they called a red line, a population red line, of 23 million people for Beijing. So the city's population had been growing rapidly and they were now... They were now putting heavy, heavy political pressure on the city to limit population growth moving forward. So this seems like something of a disjuncture, do they want more people in cities or not? The issue is this, and people who are familiar with Chinese cities will not be surprised by this, they want certain kinds of people in certain cities. And in fact, the, the New Urbanization Plan that was announced in 2014 is very explicit about this. They say that cities that have an urban district population of more than five million should strictly control their population growth. And in general, the smaller the city, the fewer the restrictions that they should have on in-migration. So the questions then that structure the rest of my research are the following: How do Chinese megacities manage flows of people? "Megacities," I'm using this a little bit imprecisely, but basically thinking about those extra large cities that have a population more than five million. I'm mostly focusing on Beijing in my research. And then the second question being, "What are the political social... "What are the political and social consequences "of this management strategy?" And just to preview my answers, the answer to this first question is, I'm going to call this strategy that cities are pursuing, "just-in-time urbanization." And if we look at the political and social consequences of this population management regime, I'm going to call that "the inverted welfare state," in short, where public resources are diverted to people who need them least. Okay, a little bit, just very briefly, about my methods. I focused on schools. There's a lot of different places one could study the urbanization of people and how migrants are incorporated into cities outside of the workplace, but I think that schools are a pretty good site for understanding this process because it is a key site of social reproduction. Now, folks may be familiar with this term, but I just wanna clarify what I mean when I'm talking about "social reproduction." There's one sense... It actually has a kind of a double meaning, right? So there's one sense which is derived from Marxist theory, and in this sense, "social reproduction" refers to the regeneration of the workforce, both on a daily and an intergenerational basis. So daily, the worker comes home, they have rest, they have food, they have care, they have a recreation, and the next day, they can return to work. But it also refers to the intergenerational process, right? So this includes things like childcare, access to housing, healthcare, education, etc. And this kind of social reproduction is potentially positive, right? It's about

the production and the maintenance of life, endowing people with certain kinds of capacities. But there's another meaning of social reproduction that's less positive, and this is associated with Pierre Bourdieu, and this is basically the idea of reproduction of forms of class domination across time, right? The stabilization of unequal forms of class. And for Bourdieu, in his work, particularly with Passeron, they identify the school as being a key site where this form of social reproduction is carried out. And so, schools capture both of these dynamics. Both the positive productive, but also the potential for reproducing and rigidifying forms of class hierarchy. I conducted more than 250 interviews. I did, as well, many months of ethnographic observation that was based in schools. I'm not gonna be able to get into most of this data today, I'll mostly be focusing on state policy. The book focuses largely on Beijing, but I did also do research in Guangzhou, in Chengdu, and as well as in Guizhou. The book, again, is focused mostly on Beijing, but we do have important comparisons that I make to these other cities, that I will touch on right at the end of the talk. So let's now return to the original question that I posed, which is "how are megacities managing flows of people?" or "which people are being urbanized and how?" My answer to this question is this thing that I'm calling "just-in-time urbanization." And this is a bit abstract, and it's drawing heavily from labor studies. Again, I've been trained as a labor sociologist. I'm gonna skip a lot of the details, but I do want to give, at least, a brief outline of what I'm doing with this concept. I draw an extended analogy between China's urbanization process and just-in-time production, as it emerged in the Toyota production system in the postwar era in Japan. And the basic argument is that China's megacities are attempting to treat labor the way that just-in-time production treats auto parts, and are attempting to manage the movement of labor according to just-in-time principles, even if they can't actually accomplish it. And it's really important, they cannot actually accomplish it. But there's an attempt to do so. The basic idea with just-in-time is to... With just-in-time production, as it first emerged for Toyota, is to deliver auto parts to the right place, at the right time, in the right quantity. And I just wanna show a quote here from Taiichi Ohno, he's the guy who is most closely associated with the development of just-in-time for Toyota. So he says, ""Just-in-time" means that "in a flow process, "the right parts needed in assembly reach "the line at the time that they're needed, "and only in the amount needed." The whole idea here is to be able to reduce warehousing and all of the costs associated with that, right? So things kind of move through smoothly. There's a lot of other things that go along with just-in-time, but this is really the essential... Really, the essential point. So with respect to just-in-time urbanization, the things that... What the state is doing is trying to develop a kind of a fine tuned and dynamic regulation of human movement into and out of the city. You can think of it as an attempt to align the developmental needs of the city with the rhythms of the labor market, to treat labor as if it's any other factor of production, and, critically, to avoid paying for the cost of

maintenance of the labor when that labor is not needed. And you can think of that as social reproduction, right? And access to social services within cities, including, critically, education is a key mechanism that cities have for regulating the flow of people, okay? So that's all a little bit abstract. What does this look like empirically? We know, at the most general level, that the central government wants more people to move to cities from 2014 on, and they're doing this because they see urbanization, urbanizing people, as necessary to catalyzing the next phase of development. But to get why the central government is saying this at precisely the same time that people are being pushed out of the city of Beijing, we need to understand this peculiar city, Beijing, and it is peculiar in all sorts of ways, within a larger constellation of cities and regions. Now, as I've mentioned, that National Urbanization Plan delineates different functions for different kinds of cities. And I've... I spent a lot of time looking at this plan and trying to figure out what the core political logic of it was. And I'm... it's a little bit abstract, but I want to.. I just wanna put this up on a slide. I think that the essential thing that this plan is trying to do is to affect a correspondence between individual endowments of human capital and that person's location within the urban hierarchy. Now, that's a little bit abstract. A simpler way to understand this is that the plan wants elite people to go to elite cities and they want the so-called "low end population" to go to low end places, right? We have these megacities, places like Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen etc, and they need to "optimize their population," that's the language that they use in the plan. They need to optimize their population to enhance their capacity for economic upgrading and for competition in the global market. And I should say that, included in this... Included in this optimization of the population structure is to respond to the rapidly aging population that they're facing in these cities, and, of course, the birth rate has been extremely low in these large cities, far below the level of replacement. It's also important to note here that this urbanization strategy is not just about exclusion. They still need these workers, and this is a little bit different from how people sometimes talk about Chinese cities as being spaces of exclusion for migrants. Really, what it's about is being able to bring some people in and expelling others in a dynamic manner, and in a way that accounts not just for the quantities, but also the qualities of those workers. Now, I use schooling as a lens on this broader process of urbanization. And so, the key empirical question for me is, "How do migrants, "or the children of migrant workers, "in these cities get access to education "in the cities where the parents are working?" And again, education is critical for understanding these intergenerational processes. And the answer is that in Beijing, it's quite hard, particularly now. And what I wanna do now is describe the architecture of what I'm referring to as "the inverted welfare state." As people may be familiar with, the Chinese state has more tools at their disposal to control internal movement than just about any other country. And the most important administrative tool that they have is

Hukou. Again, you guys are... This is a China Studies audience, so I will assume that most people have heard of this term. If not, Hukou is the household registration. It is a system that ties the provision of social services to a particular locality. If you leave that place of Hukou registration, you're no longer guaranteed access to social services. So the first question that a migrant who arrives in Beijing will want to know... If they want to get their child into school, the first question will be, "Can I get Hukou in this city or not?" So how do you go about getting Beijing Hukou? If you want to be a full citizen and have guaranteed access to education, this is how you have to go about it. And in many cities, Beijing included, they've now developed, what are called, "point-based Hukou acquisition plans." These plans are relatively new but I think it's actually just a systematization of a pretty deeply ingrained political logic. So if you wanna apply for Hukou and your employer cannot provide it, one way that you can get it is if you work, particularly for a state-owned firm, that your employer might be able to arrange it. If not, you have to go about accumulating points. So how do you go about accumulating points? The first and most important metric in Beijing, and other cities, is your value in the labor market, and the particular way that this is operationalized changes from year to year, but the basic labor market orientation of these plans is reflected in a 2014 opinion that came from the state council, and it said that cities should, "Emphasize resolving Hukou for people "who have been in the city for a long time, "have strong employability, "and can adapt to urban industrial transformation "and upgrading, "and the competitive urban environment." If we look specifically at Beijing's point-based Hukou plan, one of the four primary considerations is, "Ensuring the human resources to improve "the central functions of the capital city." So in all cities, if you're applying for Hukou, there's an absolute requirement for a labor contract. Education levels are critical, so the more education you have, the more points that you accumulate. Again, there's variation from city to city, at least as of 2017. Shanghai would give more points for a PhD, say, than was the case in Guangzhou, but the general tendency is more education, more points. Some cities will list specific skills that they need, and those can change year-to-year in response to perceived developmental needs. And generally they do not accept people over the age of 45 under the assumption that they don't have that many more good years in the workforce. The second most important metric is owning property and, specifically, real estate. So in most places, owning a house within the locality that you're applying for Hukou, you will accumulate more points. You'll get fewer points for renting. I believe in Beijing, you get half as many points for renting as you do for owning a house, and you don't get any points if you live in informal housing or employer-provided dormitories. The third most important metric is contributing to the local tax base. So in Beijing, in order to get this point-based Hukou, you have to... You have to have paid into local social insurance for seven years just in order to be considered. Other cities have different ways of putting this into practice. Sometimes they look

at contributions to social insurance, sometimes they'll look at other kinds of tax payments that you've made within the locality, and the more that you've paid into the local tax system, the more points that you can accumulate. There's a final category that I've kind of invented, it's a little bit of a catchall, but I'm calling it "political correctness." So you can get point deductions if you've had any run-ins with the law, if you've had children in violation of the birth control policy. That, obviously, is less of an issue now with the so-called "three child policy," but all of these things can cause you to lose points. Now, if we go through each of these bullet points, I think it's pretty clear how it excludes working class people. Hundreds of millions of people in China don't even have a labor contract. And in fact, the number of migrant workers that have a labor contract has declined over the last several years. And so, if you don't have a labor contract, you're immediately excluded from applying. Obviously, the more education you have, the more points you accumulate. This is going to favor people who are already relatively well off. Owning property is pretty straightforward. If you're rich and you can afford an apartment in Beijing, you accumulate points. If you live in informal housing, you get no points. In fact, you will be excluded from this altogether. So again, just to reemphasize a point that I made a moment ago, if we look at this Hukou acquisition in the largest cities, we see that it's not just about exclusion. They want to bring people in, but they want to be able to bring in certain kinds of people. And we saw, actually, I think it was in 2017, that the megacities, including Beijing and Shanghai, started giving out what they called "green cards" to global talent. And this was happening at precisely the same time that in Beijing, they were razing all of these informal houses for migrants. So they're kicking the so-called "low end population" out, at the same time that they're creating new channels to bring even foreigners in to the labor market. Obviously, COVID has really changed this dynamic and it's much more difficult for foreigners to get in. Okay, so the first question is, "do you get Hukou or not?" But the second step, in focusing more specifically on schools, is to ask how people who do not have Hukou, which is going to be the overwhelming majority of migrant workers and, essentially, all working class migrants, how can they get at... How can they get their children into public schools if they're living in a city where they do not have Hukou? And in fact, there's a very similar set of requirements that favor relatively well off people. Some cities, this is not true in Beijing, but some cities have point-based school admissions plans. These were really innovated in the Pearl River Delta area. So places like Guangzhou, Dongguan, Foshan, as well as Shenzhen, I believe. Yeah, Shenzhen has these point-based school enrollment plans. And they favor... They're less tilted towards labor market value or the education of parents, and focus more on length of residence and payments into local social insurance. Beijing has, until recently, had something called "the five permits" that is required just to be able to apply to get into public school for non-locals. You have to provide a labor contract, proof of social insurance, a rent, a

lease, or a house deed, Hukou, as well as this document where you basically have... You have to prove that nobody in your home village can look after the child. So as with the Hukou application, this excludes the lower tiers of the labor market. All kinds of informal workers that do not have labor contracts. This would be true for gig workers, for security guards, for people selling vegetables on the street, or what have you. And the reality is, as I was doing my field work from 2014 on, the government in Beijing started arbitrarily adding on all kinds of other requirements in order to get children into public schools, which had the function of excluding just about everybody. It became extremely difficult. So just to recap these two steps. If you wanna get someone into... If you wanna get your children into school, there are two layers of what I conceptualize as a "negative means test." And they're a negative means test in the sense that they're testing for a preponderance rather than a deficit of means. First question is, "Will you get a Hukou or not?" And if not, which will be the... Will be the case for most people, then the question is, "can you get provisional access to public schools?" And so what we see is that this nominally public resource of education goes to people who need it the least. Everyone who's excluded from that is then left to this free market, and those are the migrant schools, right? Which are barely regulated in Beijing, receive basically no subsidies from the government. It's different in different cities. Shanghai, they get somewhat more subsidies from the government. But the result of this is that we have these privatized migrant schools, which are spaces of concentrated deprivation, right? Everybody who can get into the public system will do so, and all of the poorest, least well-resourced people are kind of concentrated in these spaces. Okay, now I've been talking about this whole process in a, basically, aspatial manner, but we really need to understand something about China's economic geography to understand the full implications of what I'm calling "the inverted welfare state." So you'll recall that the urbanization plan envisions this correspondence between individuals' levels of human capital and their position within the socio-spatial hierarchy. That's a real problem because it is likely to compound education... Educational inequality and probably class inequality as well. And that's because the largest cities are also the wealthiest. Now, this is not unique to China, but as you can see in this scatter plot here, the bigger the city, the higher the GDP per capita. It's also an issue because the largest cities have the best social services. So here you can see, on the Y-axis, we have annual spending per capita on education, and the larger the city, the more they're spending per capita on education. You can see that Beijing and Shanghai sit well above the line. Shenzhen is way above the line basically because a much larger share of their population are migrants, are non-locals. Chongqing, for people who are familiar with Chongqing's geography, you'll understand why it's over there. It's a little bit complicated, but... And this is particularly the case with respect to higher education. Of course, people know that the best universities are in places like Beijing and Shanghai, and those are

the places that are also the most difficult to get into. So given that.... And this is, I should also say, is true for other kinds of social services, hospitals and whatnot; the bigger the city, the better the services, right? So it's not surprising, given this kind of backdrop, that migrants are interested in going to the largest cities. And so, here, we can see migrants as a share of the local population, and then the population of those cities along the X-axis. And so, what you can see is that the bigger the city, the higher the percentage of the non-local population. So this is something that people are familiar with trying to know. We have a lot of migrant workers and they tend to be in the largest cities. One way to counter this tendency for people to want to go to the largest cities would be fiscal redistribution, right? A centralization of finances, and then redistribution out to smaller places. And if there's... The schools are just as good in some county town out in the provinces, then people will be less likely to want to go to the largest cities. Unfortunately, things have been moving in just the opposite direction, right? And so, here, we can see expenditures on education and you can see this massive gap emerging between central and local expenditures. So what this means is that a locality's levels of economic development and their own fiscal capacity is going to have an increasingly big impact on their ability to provide decent education, right? The central government is doing very little of redistribution. It's ticked up just a little bit under Xi Jinping, but obviously the gap remains pretty massive. So the inverted welfare state refers to the system that allows these regional economic inequalities to reinforce fiscal inequalities. And both within as well as across cities, the best public resources are reserved for those who are most likely to succeed in the market. And so, this is an inversion of the idea of the welfare state, at least as conceived in 20th century capitalist countries. Now, if we come back to those demolitions, those school demolitions that I mentioned at the outset, what we see is an urban government that's trying to prevent population growth despite strong, ongoing motivations for people to come into those cities, right? And so, countering this pressure required, in Beijing, high levels of coercion, targeting not only the workplaces of labor intensive industries, but also targeting the schools of migrant children... Or schools for migrant children, as well as informal housing. And people might know, I already mentioned, in 2017, there was this mass demolition of neighborhoods where migrant workers tended to live. And both housing and schools are, of course, primary sites of social reproduction, so that's really applying a lot of pressure to these families. Inevitably, when I talk about the school demolitions, people wanna know why they're happening and it's very complicated. The question is like, "Is it economic that they just wanna take the land "that's under the schools?" Or "Is it political, that they just want "to get the low end population out?" And while the specifics of any given case certainly vary, my argument is that both the economic and the political factors are pushing in the same direction, basically, from the mid 2010s on. That the desire for land, to use it as real

estate, for real estate development, becomes more important and there's less available land in cities like Beijing. They also wanna optimize the population for this economic upgrading. And there are these strong political demands from the central government to limit population growth. So they wanna meet that, and then there's also this kind of idea that having too many people in the cities could lead to social instability. So all of these things are pushing in the same direction. But that's actually not the end of the story, right? Because you can't just get rid of working class people. If you get rid of too many people, this would drive up labor costs. It would take away all of the workers that are necessary for the city to function, right? So if you think about the nannies, and the janitors, and the drivers, and all of these things that the elite industries need in order to function, you can't dispense with them altogether. The city needs them. So I really do see an ongoing tension between the city's desire to expel and to admit working class people. And it's precisely because of this tension that the plan of precisely urbanizing people according to their levels of human capital is a utopia. It cannot be realized. And so, we will continue to have in China, tens, or hundreds, of millions of people who will be living in places where they do not have the rights to education or to other social services. And this is... Looking at this population of people and how they respond to this situation is really the empirical meat of the book. And I can't really... I don't have time to get into it now, but I do just wanna touch on a few issues that the book deals with in a lot more detail before wrapping up. So the first point is, I call it, "parents navigate population control "via education," which is the way that these restrictions on accessing public education, as well as school demolitions, were talked about. And so here, I'm looking at parents dealing with this constantly shifting bureaucratic landscape and how they're responding to these kinds of pressures that are pushing them out of the city. It involves both workarounds within the city, as well as like a kind of social triage; figuring out which family members can exist in which places to ensure survival. I also look at the impact of school demolitions, of which there have been hundreds in Beijing alone over the last decade. Not surprisingly, school demolitions create all kinds of displacement. We have ch... We have children and families that are uprooted, their education is disrupted, and they're oftentimes forced to leave the city. Sometimes, this can lead to the production of the so-called "left behind children." Children living in a place without one or either of their parents. And so, these demolitions are quite kind of spectacular, they caught media attention, but it's important to note how they work in tandem with these quieter forms of bureaucratic exclusion that I've just described. I also talk about teachers as reproductive shock absorbers. And so, this is me as a labor scholar, this is actually how I got into this project, was looking at teacher's work. And the answer... The basic point here is that all of this kind of chaos and displacement that migrant children are experiencing is directly reflected in the work of the teachers. So we have parents who are

informal workers, they're struggling for survival, they have long hours, and the state is not ameliorating the inequalities produced by the market, but is in fact enhancing them, right? So what happens is you have a disproportionate share of the reproductive labor that, in other contexts, would be borne by the family or by public institutions, that are pushed onto these teachers in these informal schools. This includes also emotional labor, extra tutoring for the children, medical care, lending them money. And so, I call them "reproductive shock absorbers" because they have to absorb all of the social shocks that children are experiencing. At the very end of the book, I also provide a multi-scalar analysis. So first, I compare Beijing to Guangzhou and Guiyang, and look at the different systems of education that they have in those cities for migrant children. It's not just a comparative view, but also relational, and it really allows me to specify the unique character of Beijing's population management regime, and how it derives from its position atop this urban hierarchy, and that is really clarified when you look at cities that are a little bit below that. At the very end, I shift to this global level, and I show how China's particular insertion into global capitalism creates different pressures and constraints on each city's population management strategies. I also compare China's efforts to realize these particular distributions of people and workers. I make a comparison with earlier emergent empires, and this is a big topic which I'm happy to answer questions on. But one big difference is that in the 21st century, China cannot... Like the American or British empires, it cannot source slave labor. And it also can't export its surplus populations in the way that settler colonialism did for Euro-American empires, as well as the Japanese empire, right? So they're a little bit more constrained by the borders of the nation-state. Okay, just to wrap up, I've argued that the urbanization here... That the urbanization of people is this official recognition that capital and labor are urbanized and people are not, that people should be more urbanized, which is to say they should be able to access social reproduction in the places where they work. But people are supposed to be urbanized in specific places. "Just-in-time urbanization" is an effort to realize a particular distribution, but it's a utopian strategy that cannot be realized for reasons that I've just explained. The consequences of this, we have this negative means test within these highly uneven patterns of development, and this is what I refer to as "the inverted welfare state." The basic point here being that nominally public resources are funneled to those who need it least, whereas working class migrants are left to precarious social reproduction. So this is all a little bit gloomy and I wanna leave us on something of a positive note. There's growing recognition of this problem and mobilization among both teachers and parents. I don't wanna be... I don't wanna give you too optimistic a perspective on this, these are still sort of limited. I have a photo here that's from Shenzhen, it's actually not from Beijing, but it's a little bit more photogenic because you have these parents saying, "We want equal education." And so, it will take a major political realignment, I

think, to fundamentally address these problems. There'll be fierce resistance, both from urban residents who, themselves, face immense economic pressures, as well as urban governments who don't wanna share their resources. But I think these kind of incipient movements at least suggest a recognition of the problem, which is an optimistic first step. So thanks very much for your attention, I'll leave it at that, and looking forward to your questions.

- Thank you so much, Eli for the great talk. And now, we will go ahead and take some time for question. So, and just a reminder, please be sure to type your question into the q... Into the question box in your control panel. And now, we have two questions about point-based citizenship. Yeah, and... So Eli, I'll just read a question, okay? And you can decide whether you want to answer. So the first question is, "With regards to point-based citizenship, "does this matter how many properties you own?" And the second one is, "how does the point-based citizenship system "in China compare to the credit scoring system "in the US?"

- Interesting. As far as I know, you can only accumulate points for your first property, right? So owning multiple properties does not give you more points. And my guess, given what's happening with the central government's general macroeconomic direction, now that they're trying to discourage more housing speculation, so that's probably even less likely moving forward. With "how does it relate to "the credit system in the United States?" You know, I mean... So the major way that educational inequality in the United States, and many other countries, frankly, is... Or a key factor, I should say, in educational inequality is it's mediated by the real estate market, right? So if you live in a wealthy suburb outside of... Outside of Boston, outside of any big city in the United States, wealthy people send their kids to public schools, and the way that it's kind of constrained is by your ability to buy a house within that district and to be able to pay property taxes on that. So to a certain extent, yeah, your credit score is relevant there because if you want be able to buy a house, you want it to be able to get a mortgage on a house that costs a million dollars, two million dollars, whatever, and then you can send your children to public school, right? It's not exactly how it works in China, although I should say that China is moving more in that direction. So they've, a number of years ago, required cities to use, what's called, "proximity based enrollments." in Chinese, right? So they have catchment areas and if you're within the catchment area, and you have local Hukou, critically, you can send your kid to that public school. And so, one of the things that we saw in Beijing is that the catchment areas around the elite public schools, the real estate suddenly shot through the roof, and you had people who were buying a closet, that wasn't really a house, for \$300,000 so that they could send their child to a public school, even if they weren't living there. So I think China's kind of moving a little bit more in this real estate-mediated form of educational inequality but the Hukou

still does matter, even if it's less than used to be the case.

- Yeah. And we have a question about the relationship between central government and also the local government. So Ding Fei's question is, "Could you share more about the central/local gap "in educational expenditure, "especially if and how "the central expenditure are distributed "among provinces? "And also, in addition to economic motivation, "does the needs for greater social stability "and control play any role "to push for just-in-time urbanization?" So I just wanna relay this question to economist, Scott Rozelle's finding in "Invisible China." So he famously argued that China has the lowest level... China's labor force has the lowest level of education, and this is very bad for the long term economic development. So if every province, every city, is so selfish and the central government doesn't do anything, then the result could be terrible for everyone. So how do you see the possibility that the central government would do something, especially in line with President Xi Jinping's "common prosperity" project? Is there anything new there?

- Yeah. Huge questions. So let me first deal with this question about the central/local relationship. Anyone who's studied Chinese politics, this is something that we all deal with in one form or another. So the first thing to say is that central government policy on educational inequality is good, right? As with many of these policies, you look at what Beijing is saying and it's, in my view, commendable, right? So they've had this expression about educational... What's it called? Educational equalization, right? Where they're trying to deal with these regional imbalances, as well as the imbalances for migrants. With specific respect to the children of migrants, people who are living outside of their place of Hukou registration, the official policy, the Ministry of Education approved it in 2003, has been called the "two primaries." And what the two primaries means is that the children of non-locals should be primarily placed in public schools, and that the financing for that should be primarily borne by the receiving area, right? Not the place where they have their Hukou registration. So the central government recognizes this as a problem, they recognize it as a problem that can generate inequality as well as dissatisfaction and, potentially, social instability, and it's something that they want to do. As with many things, there's this... It's an unfunded mandate, to use an American term, right? So they tell the local governments, "You should be paying for the children of these migrants "and you should figure out how to pay for it," and they're not obligated to pay for it. They are obligated to provide compulsory education, which is grades one through nine for their own population, so it's like a thing that they can do. But if you look at the list of priorities, it has just never risen to the top. And doing sort of big splashy investments, building a new airport, a new bridge, some big real estate project, these are the kinds of investments that central government... Or sorry, that local governments have really pursued, in part because they have these GDP quotas that they have to meet. So

that leads them to a situation where it just never becomes the top priority. So how would you deal with it? Well, you can deal with it with this kind of fiscal rebalancing. I think it would have to entail a pretty significant re-centralization. And we see similar dynamics, I think, with both education and pensions, which have been... In the reform era, they moved from the work unit level up to the level of the city, but China never developed a national... A robust level anyway, national pension system or healthcare system or anything. So there's, I think, strong resonances across these areas of social welfare. And it's ba... I mean, it's a political problem, right? So Xi Jinping is the most powerful leader in many years, but for him to force that means that he's taking resources away from all these places. So is he gonna go to Beijing and say, "I'm gonna give your children "fewer educational opportunities, "I'm gonna make it harder for them "to get into Bei Dan and Tsinghua"? All of the people who are making the rules are going to resist that very intensely. And then, he has to do the same thing in Shanghai, and he has to do the same thing in Guangzhou, and all these places. So it's ultimately a political problem. I do think that the... To come back to the next point about "common prosperity," about all of the problems that Scott Rozelle has identified in his work over many years, but also in the most recent book. Will "common prosperity" be the push for them to really take this issue seriously? I mean, the decentralization of education is a real problem, and it's even becoming a real problem if Rozelle's work is to be believed, which I think it should be. It's even a problem from the perspective of economic development, right? If you don't have an adequately skilled workforce to lead to the next stage of growth that will allow China to become a high income country, that is a thing that... Even the cynical government officials presumably care about. But, again, addressing it is really not simple. You have this very fractured and decentralized system, and you have to take things away from powerful people in order to make it more equal.

- Yeah. Thank you so much, Eli. And we have a questions from... So let's take a question about mobilization because resistance. So we have a question from Yue Zhang, and she said, or he said, "Thank you for the fascinating talk. "Can you talk a bit more about the resistance "of social mobilization "of rural migrants in China? "In addition to the lack of equal education rights, "many of migrants live in urban villages "and have been evicted "when the local governments implement "urban renewal to demolish the villages. "Are there any resistance against urban renewal "and displacement among the rural migrants?"

- So... I wrote my first book about migrant worker resistance, labor resistance, so it's something that I've thought a lot about. With respect to the evictions, I mean, what I found in my research is that migrants in these... The villages in the city is where they're typically living, in informal housing or tenuously legal housing, because those are the only places where they can typically afford

cities of Beijing... And other cities like it are extremely expensive, as everyone knows, they... The migrant workers that I interviewed couldn't imagine a city where constant relocation and demolition didn't exist. That was kind of accepted as a fact. So the main thing that people found, and the thing that they would get them kind of upset and ready to fight back, is really the terms of those relocation. So okay, "you want to build some new high rises "where there used to just be "these "Ping Fang", "these one story derelict houses, "okay, we can accept that. "But where are our children going to be relocated? "Are they going to be relocated "to another school or not? "Or are you just gonna like send us on our way?" So there isn't that sense of belonging, right? People understand that they're kind of like guests in the city. And so, the more robust and, I think, successful forms of resistance to housing evictions has come from urban residents themselves who negotiate over the price that they're gonna get from developers. So I haven't seen... I think that that kind of hegemonic view, that cities are just going to be constantly redeveloped, is pretty firmly implanted. There have been... When it comes to schools, there have been... There have been some interesting events. Sometimes, they're just reactive. So the bulldozer shows up to demolish the school and parents will lie down in front of it or will protest at the Department of Education. There's also been things where the Department of Education, I've definitely... I've seen this very clearly in Beijing in a number of cases, where they raised the bar, right? So if in 2013, you could get your child into a public school, and then they begin to add new requirements on. And there have been some cases where parents, sometimes in concert with local NGOs, will go and they'll protest at the local education bureau, and some of those protests have been successful. I mean, but they continue to be pretty reactive and they're not scaling up to deal with the issue at the structural level.

- Thank you so much. And so, there is a question from Sarah Zhang, and she said that, "I'm Sarah Zhang "from UC Santa Cruz. "I was wondering if you could speak more "about historical continuity "versus reform era transformation, "and the draconian enforcement of Hukou takes "its roots from the socialist era. "And at the same time, "you have mentioned the close connection "between just-in-time production "and Hukou connection, "a new liberal capitalist invention. "Which do you think amount to greater influence "in this present day condition: "history or reform era transformation?"

- Ooh.

- [Ya-Wen] Big question.

- Yeah, so I am a... I always see continuity between the so-called socialist era and the reform, or the neoliberal, era. I'm like... I just always we see continuity. There are some differences, right? But so, if we look at the... When Hukou was implemented in 1958, the

intention was very clear. It was to pin peasants in place so that they would continue to produce, so that surplus could be extracted from the rural areas and invested in urban areas in big push industrialization. And it immediately, thereafter, led to the catastrophe of the Great Leap Forward, when millions of people, almost exclusively in rural areas, died of starvation. So the basic logic that flows from the state socialist period up 'till the contemporary period is that the peasantry is... They are in service of national development, that they are the relatively disposable population that can be exploited. The difference though, aside from the fact that it used to be state-owned property and now we have private enterprise and what have you, the difference is that the peasantry doesn't live in the countryside anymore, the peasantry's in the cities now. The peasantry is the urban proletariat, and so... But I think that that fundamental issue has not changed, that we've designated a social group that can be treated in this relatively disposable way, either as labor, or if we want them off the land or whatever. If you're a migrant worker in the city of Beijing and they want to take you off the land to build apartments, as I was just saying, you have no legal recourse. You don't have a right to be on that land. And so, I think that there's... I do think that there's a lot of continuity there. There's a lot of... There's obviously a lot of differences. When you're working for Foxconn or something, it's different than working on a rural commune in the 1960s. But I do see strong forms of continuity.

- Yeah. So basically, the idea is also... So the government kind of include... Everyone has to serve the... Serve the interest for national development, and the national development is defined by the party-state. And then if you are assigned a bad category, that it's very difficult to change your value. And now, people's value depends on their value as a factor for production. That's--

- Exactly, exactly. And Hukou is becoming less determinative of your life, of chances. I do think that inequality... There's this debate in the 90s about, "Is the source of inequality in China more driven by political status versus the market?" I do think it's moving more in

- [Ya-Wen] : Market

- [Eli] : the direction of the market, but I view this, to use an American term, in an intersectional way. These things interact with each other in really important ways, and the legacy of state socialist forms of inequality is very much with us and is being transferred into market-based forms of inequality. If it limits your human capital accumulation and your subsequent success in the labor market, even if Hukou disappears tomorrow, well, you're in a position where you're not gonna be very competitive in the labor market, and so that's going to generate market-based forms of inequality.

- Yeah, thank you so much, Eli. We still have a lot of question, but we run out of time so that shows how great your talk is. And so... And I just want to make announcement. So next... Our next lecture will be on March 22nd. Professor Bin Xu from Emory University will talk about his new book, entitled "Chairman Mao's Children." I think that book is also a great book. And I want to say thank you to Professor Friedman again, and thank you everyone for your great question, and for attending the series, and we really appreciate your support, and we hope to see you next time. And thank you, Eli.

- Thanks everybody.

- [Ya-Wen] Thank you.

- Take care.

- Thank you.