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Small horse pulls big cart in the scalar struggles of competing administrations in Anhui Province, China

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Abstract
With its various layers of territorial administration, China provides a picture of the intricacies of scalar practices designed to enhance the competitive position of local governments. In this paper, we examine one arena of scalar competition, a fourth-tier city in Anhui Province that struggles to maintain its authority over its component parts. We focus on contests that play themselves out both vertically and horizontally over prestige projects and territory that can enhance revenue and fill coffers, noting their intensity and complexity. We argue that scalar arrangements in China have at least two distinctive features: they are bound into an all-encompassing system of hierarchical ranks that covers not only territorial administrations but also all party and state institutions and officials; and the competition they engender is first and foremost related to position within this hierarchy. We discuss the scalar struggles of territorial administrations in terms of flux and fixity, the flux induced by intense competition and the hierarchical fixity sought by the central state. We conclude by arguing that these processes diverge from conventional analyses that explain state reterritorialisation as a response to capital flows.

Keywords
Territorial administrations, scalar struggles, competition, flux and fixity, China

Scalar practices, scalar struggles
Scale has become one of the major conceptual playing fields of contemporary geographical writing. Over four decades classical views of geographical scale as fixed and natural have been subjected to sustained attack on the grounds that they fail to take into account the dynamic nature of the political, economic and other forces that deconstruct and reconstruct scale. These Marxist-infused layers of theory building grow out of ideas formulated by Henri Lefebvre, and are then developed in the work of Smith (1984), Swyngedouw (1997), Brenner (1998) and Jessop et al. (2008) among others. Scale, according to these writers, is a framework containing socially constructed and contested landing points – scalar fixes -- created to accelerate the global flows of capital and to aid capital accumulation (Brenner 1999). In China, however, scale has been the subject of a parallel conversation that dovetails only partially with concepts of scale as intrinsically bound up with capital (Cartier, 2018).[1] In party-state-led China questions of scale relate to competition among scalar players in the form primarily of territorial administrations vying for a berth within a fixed territorial hierarchy set by central government. This is an internal struggle for political advantage, albeit one played out in terms of economic gain.

Scale is an outcome of the contentious political practices that MacKinnon has called scalar politics, a concept that we here extend by referring to scalar struggles (MacKinnon, 2011; Moore, 2008). What interests us specifically in this paper is the way in which scalar practices affect the

[1] This sense of a parallel version of events is reinforced by Wu's redrawing of Brenner's periodisation of state spatiality (Wu, 2016; Brenner, 2004).

relations between different layers of territorial administrations that are organised into a strict but never fossilised hierarchy according to hierarchical rank. In China, these scalar practices, intensely political in nature, are driven by competitive contests for revenue and resources. As territorial administrations jockey for advantage, a scalar tension is created between the apparent fixity of the scalar rungs on the hierarchical territorial ladder on the one hand and on the other, the flux that stems from frequent and pluri-directional attempts to reorganise this apparent fixity and find a new scalar fix.[2] This mirrors – but in the political domain -- the interplay of capital flux and institutional fix that David Harvey first theorised (Harvey, 1985; 2001).

The ramifications of scale have been a constant preoccupation in the history of the Chinese state, ever since the start of empire when the several central states (zhongguo) in the plural came to be unified under the Qin emperor into one central state, also zhongguo. However, it is only recently that scale in China and the issues to which it gives rise has become the focus of scholarly attention (Chung and Lam, 2004; Ma, 2005; Cartier, 2005; Shen, 2007; Chien, 2007). This body of research is clearly focussed on scale in terms of China's hierarchy of territorial administration. However, while scale is a concept with layers of meaning in English (Moore, 2008), in Chinese, as Cartier (2011) points out, comparable Chinese terms have slightly different connotations. It is indicative that the commonly used Chinese words such as jibie and cengji have the primary meaning of rank or level. In other words, scale is made manifest in rank, and, as Cartier writes, "the idea of rank [jibie] as a structural condition of state and society runs deep in Chinese history" (2016, p. 530). Scale is translated into a hierarchical ranking order not only for territorial administrations, but also for institutions for which there is no territorial dimension such as universities and banks as well as the salary scales for party officials and all employees of the state to the point where each state institution and official has an equivalent in the party, all of it accompanied by a specialist vocabulary (Cartier, 2015; Cartier, 2016; Chien and Hong, 2018). Thus, for example, universities are given an equivalent ranking in the territorial hierarchy, as are government offices, while the salaries of their employees are precisely dictated by their rank (Wang, 2016; Li, 2015).[3]

The ubiquity of scalar relations in Chinese public life is nowhere more evident than in the country's all-pervasive hierarchical system of administrative divisions (xingzheng quhua xitong) (Cartier, 2015; Chung and Lam, 2004; Liu and Ma, 2016). There are four primary layers of administration under the central state -- province, prefecture, county and township level – as well as a number of sub-levels. But this tells only part of the story. There are equivalent entities at each level, including for example three province-level cities, five autonomous regions and countless urban districts. There are also various 'scalar games' that are played, as we shall see later, including for example counties administered directly by provinces (Lu and Tsai, 2018). Indeed, as both Ma (2005) and Mertha (2005) argue, the vertical structure has gained in prominence at the expense of the horizontal level, all the more so in recent years as under Xi Jinping the centre has re-exerted its authority.

In this paper we turn the spotlight on a fourth tier city in one of China's less prosperous provinces. Here we find a whirligig of competing local administrations, attached to and detaching themselves from a hierarchical structure of territorial state governments. Our paper highlights some of the features that colour scalar politics in China: the pre-eminence of state actors, whether central

[2] On the possible ambiguities of the concept of a fix as used by Harvey, see Jessop's deconstruction (2006); also He (2017). Here, we use the term 'fixity' to denote a structure that is apparently stable and 'fix' to indicate an attempt to establish a firm hold in this structure.

[3] In expressing the concept of scale, the Chinese use two terms with strong metaphorical resonance. The first is tiao meaning strip and the second, kuai meaning piece or lump, referring respectively to vertical and horizontal relations (Mertha, 2005; Cartier, 2011). This applies to both state and party structures across the institutional landscape. Kuai represents the horizontal relations that exist at each scale between state and party organisations and also all the other state institutions such as state-owned enterprises. Tiao stands for the hierarchy that permeates the party and state and attributes rank both to institutions and their officials.

or local; the structural fixity provided by an all-pervasive hierarchical system of rank; and the flux or fluidity that stems from repeated episodes of scale revision, scale-jumping and the creation of what Ngo et al. (2017) refer to as states of exception. We take up these points in terms of a number of policies and practices with strong scalar consequences (Chien, 2013): the first two were particularly common in the 1990s and early 2000s, the creation of development zones (Ngo et al., 2017) and the construction of new towns; the third has come increasingly to the fore over the last 15 or so years, investment in and revenue from tourist sites; and the fourth stems from the scalar dilemmas posed by the construction of new high speed rail lines and the siting of stations for these lines (Xu, 2017).

Our position aligns itself with that of others who see the role of the state as paramount (Ma, 2005; Chien, 2013; Cartier, 2016; Wu, 2016). At the same time, we borrow the concepts of fixity and motion (here called flux) from Brenner (1998) and adapt them to the Chinese case, extending them in two ways. Brenner builds his argument around "fixity and motion in the circulation of capital" (p. 459), but as this suggests, it is the movement of capital that occupies centre stage in his theorising, leading to a reterritorialization process among cities and states. We argue, however, that the state is the driving force and that a structure of fixity informs and shapes all party and state activities and institutions. At the same time, we highlight the apparent paradox presented by a highly fluid situation on the ground, where a constant jockeying for position in the fixed hierarchy creates a situation of instability which we refer to as flux (Brenner, 2004).

Our contribution is therefore both theoretical and empirical. On a theoretical level, we argue contra Brenner and the Western-centric accounts of others that this is a scalar politics conditioned not by the exigencies of global capital but by the internal hierarchical arrangements imposed by the Chinese party-state. We extend this beyond arguments to be found in the current literature by claiming that in the Chinese context scale is all-encompassing, embracing not only territorial administrations but also every type of entity that has a territorial dimension, including development zones, industrial parks, religious and tourist attractions and transport networks, each of which is subject to the same scalar hierarchy. Moreover, the hierarchical ranking of scale takes in party and government officials and impacts on their prospects of promotion and possibility of demotion. In empirical terms, the focus on Chizhou is not coincidental. Chizhou is a small inland Chinese city; such cities have seldom been the focus of English-language academic research (but see Liu et al., 2012; Kendall, 2015, Theurillat, 2016; and He et al., 2018). More importantly, however, in terms of the specific contribution of this paper, Chizhou is considered to be a weak prefecture-level city (or 'small horse', as the saying has it). As such, it is representative of other small horses located in inland areas, where competition is especially intense precisely because of a fear of falling behind and being leap-frogged by neighbours. Chizhou's story has therefore a much wider resonance within China.

Further, this paper draws attention to the intensity of competition for resources and revenue generated by China's crowded scalar geometry (Chien, 2008; Jiang et al., 2016; Zhang and Wu, 2006). In a system in which evaluation and promotion of officials are still dependent largely on economic growth, the acquisition of sources of revenue is paramount. This leads to intense competition between territorial administrations. This is a struggle between neighbouring administrations in a situation complicated and exacerbated by vertical rivalries that see local administrations linking up with higher level governments in attempts to 'jump scale' (Smith, 1992). In this paper, we draw attention to the intensity and complexity of these competitive practices of scale jumping and scale revision.

Our current paper is the result of a number of field trips to Chizhou undertaken in 2015 and 2017. We interviewed senior officials from each layer of local government. These officials were in charge of development zones, key industrial projects, and transportation infrastructure including the location of high speed railway stations. Among their number were planners from the city planning department in charge of industrial planning and tourism development, the heads of a provincial and

a county development zone, and finally various well-informed local residents including academics and tourist agents. In all, we interviewed 28 people, following up a number of these interviews with telephone calls and email requests for further information and clarification.

The paper continues with a discussion of the many ways in which scale plays itself out in the Chinese context. This is followed by a section that introduces Chizhou as a prefecture-level city, in which our investigations are focused, and the construction of new towns to boost economic strength. The research we conducted and the questions we asked were organized primarily around three issues – scalar competition between development zones, for tourist revenue and over the location of high speed railway lines and their stations. Each of these is introduced in turn, before we conclude with some thoughts on how the Chinese case feeds back into a broader narrative of writing on scale.

Fixity and flux: practicing scale in China

Instability is inherent in scalar politics. Scale is constantly contested as territorial administrations compete for resources and revenue, but also for investment and higher rank in a form of competitive urbanism (Swyngedouw, 1997; Wu and Zhang, 2007; Jiang et al., 2016). Brenner (1998) among others sees this as part of the neoliberal scenery of state spatiality in which governments preen themselves to attract inward investment. These tendencies are visible in the policies of the Japanese government to boost the status of Tokyo as a 'global city', as they are in South Korea, where national government has introduced liberalising policies in Seoul to boost the metropolitan area's global competitiveness (Tsukamoto, 2013; Park, 2008). This overwhelming sense of competition and fear of frailty in the face of rivals is dictated by the demands of a globalised economy (González, 2006). The size of the Chinese economy, however, is such that much of the competitive pressure is exerted internally and has only second-hand connections to global capital (Ma, 2005). While it is certainly true that the first Special Economic Zones, created in 1980 by central government were designed to attract foreign investment and drive economic growth, the avalanche of similar 'states of exception' that ensued followed a logic linked primarily to internal Chinese factors (Cartier, 2001). Thus, for the main part, the drivers of competitive attempts by territorial administrations to jump scale are internal.

In this section we set out our understanding of how flux and fixity operate in relation to China's system of territorial administration. The flux is everywhere, induced by competitive forces. The fixity is 'aspirational', in the sense that it denotes a longstanding ideal of Chinese empire and relates to the more recent attempts by the Chinese party-state to create a fixed, sedentary population. The party-state's strongly rooted desire for fixity has, however, been undermined by its own changes of tack in its quest for an improved and more efficient hierarchical structure (Chien, 2013; see also Xu, 2017; He, 2017; Ngo et al., 2017). In the pre-reform era, for example, prefectures were known as special districts (zhuanqu), but, unlike the prefecture-level cities of today, they were little more than offices of provincial government, and indeed are still not defined in the constitution. During those decades, as indeed for much of Chinese history, counties carried more political clout than they do today (Chung and Lam, 2004).

The details of China's established but shifting territorial hierarchical structure has been explained at length elsewhere (Ma, 2005; Shen, 2005; Shen, 2007). Scalar politics are by definition multi-layered, characterised by local governments seeking a scalar fix, that is to say, a more advantageous position within a supposedly fixed territorial hierarchy. In China, however, the centre ultimately calls the shots notwithstanding the space for manoeuvre given to local governments to experiment and the frequent attempts by local governments to jump scale. The quest for fixity is underpinned by the state's capacity to rewrite rules and change the hierarchy of the ranking system (Cartier 2016, 539); while provincial and prefecture-level cities can propose adjustments to

territorial administrations, the Ministry of Civil Affairs has final decision-making power on all changes (Ministry of Civil Affairs, 1985; Cartier, 2015, p. 296).

The scalar practices of local Chinese governments appear to contradict this apparent picture of stability and central control. Shifts in the balance of power among territorial administrations have been many and profound, both horizontal and vertical, but central government has generally held the reins. A number of changes in particular are noteworthy in the light of the scalar practices in the south of Anhui Province that we discuss below: the creation of prefecture and county level cities, the conversion of counties into city districts and the creation of development zones and other types of 'states of exception' that are the result of scalar practices such as scale jumping. The interplay between economic prosperity and administrative ranking is examined by Liu and Ma (2016) and Cartier (2016), who finds that the mismatches that occur can be compensated for through numerous ad hoc adjustments.

The principal feature of territorial rescaling over the last four decades, almost since the start of the reform period, has been the use of processes of conversion, absorption and upgrading to create prefecture-level and county-level cities through processes of conversion, absorption and upgrading (Chien, 2013). Ma (2005) sees this as a shift from a dual urban/rural system, with cities sitting alongside rural counties or prefectures, to a hierarchical unitary system. It is the result, Chien argues, of a reappraisal of the role of cities, which were once, during the early Communist decades, viewed with suspicion but in the reform era have come to be seen as engines of growth and as locations of modernity (Chien, 2010; Cartier, 2015). It is not a coincidence therefore that so many prefectures were turned into prefecture-level cities in the 1980s at the start of the reform period. These new cities were given a whole layer of bureaucracy, control and tax-raising powers (Chung and Lam, 2004; Cartier, 2011). Contradictions, however, have resulted from this process; prefectural-level cities, for example, have limited control over a range of developments initiated by lower level administrations. As a result, many lack the economic clout to lead their prefecture, resulting in the situation, alluded to in our title, of 'a small horse pulling a big cart' (xiao ma la da che) (Chung and Lam, 2004; Ma, 2005). Anhui Province is generally considered to have too many small horses.

Similarly, many counties have been converted into county-level cities. However, reflecting the complex nature of scalar practices in China, some county-level cities have either come directly under the aegis of provinces, bypassing the level of prefectures, or have merged with other county-level cities to form prefecture-level cities. Still others have been converted into urban districts, a move that has become increasingly marked in and around leading cities such as Guangzhou, Hangzhou and Ningbo (Cartier, 2011). As Lu and Tsai (2018) have noted, this highly dynamic situation leads to competitive pressures on counties from both provincial and prefectural governments, pulling in separate directions, and results therefore in duplication in reporting duties for county governments. Counties, for their part, can upset the administrative apple cart by initiating development projects, as we shall see in the case we examine here.

Running alongside these scalar practices, we find a parallel arena of politics consisting of multifarious and pluri-directional examples of scale jumping, involving the creation of states of exception as a result of assertions of central authority and of local government power. The earliest, seminal move was the creation by central government of four Special Economic Zones in 1980, with a fifth added shortly after, in an attempt to bypass the local state and create vectors of economic growth (Cartier, 2001). However, in the years that followed, not only did central government continue its policy of creating special zones under its jurisdiction, but local governments followed suit to the point where even the middle-ranking Anhui Province, in which Chizhou is located, had 333 such zones by 2003 (Ngo et al., 2017). Ngo et al. refer to this 'zone fever' as a bottom-up scale jumping tactic.

Central government, sensing that it was losing control of economic development, has attempted to reassert its authority in various ways. It has, for example, created a number of "new

areas" around the country, including Pudong in Shanghai, to propagate its vision of economic development, wresting these districts away from the territorial administration in which they were located (Cartier, 2015; Li et al., 2014; Li, 2015). Over the last decade or so, it has also attempted, unsuccessfully, to corral local governments together into city-regions in order to douse competition and hook up to global capital (Zhang and Wu, 2007; Wu, 2016; Li and Wu, 2017). However, to characterise scalar politics in China as a story of de-centralisation followed by re-centralisation would be an over-simplification (Cartier, 2011).[4] Too many things are happening simultaneously for this to be convincing.

The case – or rather series of cases – that we examine in this paper do not, except perhaps peripherally, involve central government. The scale jumping and competitive contestation in the south of Anhui Province all occurs at the local level, with some involvement from the provincial government. Scalar tensions between a frustrated lower level government and its immediate superior in the hierarchy, lead to attempts to jump scale on the one hand and to reinforce the scalar hierarchy on the other. In no way, however, is this an isolated occurrence. The outstanding examples here are those of Suzhou and Kunshan in Jiangsu Province. Kunshan is a county-level city within the prefecture-level city of Suzhou, itself the richest and most powerful prefecture-level city in the country. Kunshan is located in the west of Suzhou's territory, on its border with Shanghai. Despite being only a county-level city, through its aggressive developmental approach and particularly strong connections with Taiwanese businesses, it has grown an economy the size of some poorer provinces (Chien, 2007; 2013). In recognition of its prosperity, Kunshan jumped scale and came to be directly administered by the provincial government. In recompense for this 'loss', Suzhou was granted not the higher rank it sought for the city but a new urban district in the form of another prosperous county-level city, Wujiang, and higher ranking for its officials (Cartier, 2016).

There is in other words a constant search for a more rewarding scalar fix, the rewards coming in the form of faster development and economic growth. This is partly driven by the system of evaluation of officials, which still largely measures performance in terms of ability to meet economic growth targets (Chien, 2013; Jiang et al., 2016). This creates a climate of continuous striving and jostling for position which takes place at an institutional level and is translated into fierce competition for resources and revenues between territorial administrations. Indeed, as we shall see in the following sections looking at Chizhou and its subordinate county Qingyang, local governments compete for economic and political advantage even when they are not of the same rank.

Chizhou, Qingyang and frenzied construction

Here we provide an introduction to the Chizhou case. We start by placing the prefecture-level city in its provincial context. We then describe and demarcate Chizhou, providing background information on Chizhou itself as well as its principal constituent parts, Guizhi District, Jiuhuashan Special Scenic District and Qingyang County. Finally, we present some of the main instruments being deployed by Qingyang officials to push their county's case for promotion.

Anhui's location is of special significance. Although it borders two of China's wealthiest provinces, it is officially classified as part of the Central China economic region. Suggesting a greater distance from the east coast, its GDP puts it in a relatively lowly 12th position among China's provinces. This geographical proximity set against its relative economic backwardness, has prompted political leaders in the province to promote a range of competitive industrial urbanisation strategies even as a number of cities reinforce links with nearby Nanjing. The extent of competition-

[4] Li et al. (2014) use the terms downscaling and upscaling to represent decentralisation and (re)centralisation and also see these processes as sometimes occurring concurrently. Shin et al. (2015, p. 1633) depict a somewhat similar pattern of "downward rescaling" followed by "upward rescaling" in the development of Songdo New City in South Korea.

induced flux that exists in Anhui Province can be gauged by two acts of administrative fiat. The first was the renaming of Huizhou in the south of the province in 1987. Despite the considerable historical associations of the name Huizhou, it was changed to Huangshan, the name of the celebrated mountain cluster that falls within its boundary, becoming at the same time a prefecture-level city. The intent behind the name change was to increase the appeal to tourists. Even more dramatic is the case of Chaohu, bordering the provincial capital of Hefei. This prefecture-level city was dismantled in 2011. Its former subsidiary components were hived off to surrounding cities, while its urban core was downgraded to county-level city under the direct control of the province but actually managed by Hefei. This drastic move was designed primarily to strengthen the competitive position of Hefei, the provincial capital.

Like Chaohu, Chizhou has had a chequered history, having been dissolved and re-formed twice, most recently in 1988. It has a population of 1.64 million, covers 8272 square kilometres and contains three counties, Qingyang, Dongzhi and Shitai, one central district, Guichi, and one Special Scenic District, Jiuhuashan (Figure 1). Borders, however, have shifted. Qingyang and Chizhou had each been under neighbouring administrations during the 1980s. Qingyang County would now like, according to its officials, to become part of Tongling City or be led directly by Anhui Province (interview with county officials, 10 September 2015 and 22 August 2016). Its central town is Rongcheng.

Chizhou, like other prefecture-level cities, signifies not a city but a territory that includes various urban settlements as well as wide expanses of rural land and mountains. The central urban settlement is Guichi, now formally just an urban district within the prefecture-level 'city'.[5] With a population of at least 650,000, Guichi is too small to figure in any tiered table of Chinese cities. For a visitor from Europe, however, it appears substantial. The principal economic indicators show Chizhou to be the weakest of Anhui Province's 16 prefecture-level cities. Its GDP was the lowest in terms of GDP, and less than 10% of Hefei's GDP (interview with city official, 21 June 2017). The Chizhou government is therefore highly reliant on revenue from entrance tickets bought by visitors to its prime tourist site, the Buddhist sacred mountain of Jiuhuashan; in 2016 alone, this amounted to about 100 million yuan (interviews with county official, 28 August 2015 and 21 June 2017). In addition to this, the city government receives a substantial slice from the tax revenues paid by Qingyang County (Li and Yang, 2015). This is a clear source of resentment in Qingyang. As one official put it to us: "It is a shame that a poor city [Chizhou] relies on the pull of a rich county [Qingyang]" (interview with county official, 10 September 2015 and by telephone 28 September 2016). For country officials, the prefecture-level city government is a small horse pulling a big cart.

Chizhou City Government is using the income from Jiuhuashan both to bolster its position within Anhui Province but also in more concrete terms to 'add centrality' to Guichi District by building a 30 square kilometre new city centre immediately to the east of the existing centre on converted agricultural land (interview with city official, 22 June 2017). One of the features of this new city centre is that it is built within a development zone, Guichi High Tech Industrial Park, discussed below. Much of it has already been completed, including the government offices of Guichi District, up-market hotels and shopping malls. It contains a significant component of residential land with housing and other facilities for its current 30,000 residents, including accommodation for the substantial number of residents displaced by the urbanisation process. In order to increase the pull of this new town, two top district schools have been relocated there. What is more, Chizhou City Government has developed another, even larger new town near the railway station. It has, however, been criticized for stretching the city's infrastructural framework well beyond the area which it can fill (interview with city official, 8 November 2017).

[5] Cartier (2016, p. 539) explains the relationship between prefecture-level city and central settlement thus: "Prefectural cities are really two cities: the larger administrative city, which includes county-level cities, and the economic city of the urban core".

Chizhou City Government has burdened itself with three additional projects that have become a drain on its resources. One of these is dealt with below: Jiangnan Industrial Concentration District (Jiangnan Chanye Jizhong Qu). The second is a 'white-elephant' Buddhist centre located on the road to Jiuhuashan. The third is a lakeside park which cost 3 billion yuan to build and landscape, whose cost has yet to be recouped through the entrance fee. It seems that the competition for revenue from tourism and urban and industrial development have led Chizhou City Government to invest without sufficient consideration. In the words of a Chizhou official, those who have invested most have lost most (interview with city official, 22 June 2017).

Qingyang County, the other principal focus of this study, lies directly east of Guichi District. Officials of Chizhou City Government will tell you off the record that they would like to see Qingyang County converted into a city district in order to strengthen the city government's control in terms of finance, tax and budget. Qingyang County officials, on the other hand, would like to see Jiuhuashan scenic district 'returned' to its control to form a county-led city under the direct authority of the provincial government, which would enhance its administrative and financial autonomy (Lu and Tsai, 2018). As things stand, however, Qingyang County (population 270,000) cannot become a county-led city because the population of its central settlement, Rongcheng, is too small.

In an attempt to gain population and thereby press its case for promotion to county-level city against the prefecture-level government, Qingyang County Government started construction of its own new town in 2011. Because Rongcheng, the old centre of Qingyang County, was built without strict planning, it was reckoned that it would cost more to transform the old town than build a new suburb given the costs of demolition and compensation for local residents (interviews with local officials, 28 August 2015, 4 September 2016 (telephone) and 21 June 2017). Within its ten square kilometres the Southern New Town contains a man-made lake, a so-called ecological garden, a walking pavement and various transport facilities. Up-market apartment blocks and a four-star and five-star hotel are located around the lake. Alongside these amenities are a senior middle school and a middle school, a commercial plaza, banks, and a government service centre. The schools are seen as Qingyang's trump card, and according to officials, they have already attracted some 5,000 residents to Rongcheng, many of them to the new town. It should be stressed that a new town of this degree of ambition is quite rare in a settlement of Rongcheng's very modest size (by Chinese standards). In order to construct this new town, Qingyang officials managed to cajole local banks into providing funding support for state-owned and private property development companies.

The scale and ambition of the new town project is unusual for a county town like Qingyang. With its landscape of lake and leisure facilities, it is more akin to what one would expect to find in a much larger city and has been, according to local officials, the crucial project that has narrowed the gap between Guichi District and Qingyang County in terms of urban construction (interview, 28 August 2015). The Qingyang County party secretary, who was the main protagonist and promoter of the new town, was promoted to the post of deputy party leader of Chizhou City in 2015. Meanwhile, the city mayor and party secretary was transferred to a lesser post in Anhui Province due to what was seen as modest economic and political achievements in her five years as mayor and two years as party secretary of Chizhou City. However, based on our observations and discussions with local officials and residents, there is now an over-supply of property in Qingyang County, exacerbated by a net outflow of population. This contradicts the official line but is far from unusual for smaller cities in China.

Development zones fixed into hierarchies

Development zones, including industrial parks, provide a window into the complex world of spatial politics in China. Along with new cities, university towns and the like, they reveal some of the overarching ambition inherent in China's industrial urbanisation. They speak to agendas of urban

expansion through the provision of high-revenue-yielding industrial land, and often involve the expropriation by the state of vast additional swathes of land to create land banks for future urbanisation (Huang and Chan, 2018; Qiu and Wei, 2017; Wu and Waley, 2018). They also reflect the complexities of administrative stratifications, showing, as we shall see in this section, how the system of territorial administrations projects itself outwards and wraps these development zones into its embrace. Equally, however, they reveal how local officials have their employment prospects stitched into the scalar politics of the development zones. Not only are their futures bound up in the institutional system for promotion based on economic performance, but, as we indicate below, their rank of employment depends on the ranking given to their administrative unit.

Anhui Province has been prey to the zone fever that spread across China since the 1980s. The establishment of development zones in the southern part of the province was especially promoted after a visit in 2012 from the former president Hu Yaobang, who himself hails from Anhui. In order to dampen this development zone fever, in 2015 the State Council issued a decree banning local governments from offering preferential policies to attract investment. But over the following two years it had to row back on this policy in the face of opposition from local governments and the slowdown in growth of the national economy. The consequence appears to be a return to fierce competition at the local level.

Chizhou has 13 development zones, which are called variously development zones, industrial parks, industry bases and industrial concentration zones. In the paragraphs that follow we introduce four of Chizhou's largest. In doing so, we highlight the complexities of their place in the territorial hierarchy, the competitive tactics they use and the mix of functions that characterise these zones.

All four of the development zones are run by management committees, but this is where the administrative arrangements start to get complicated. A number of features stand out from the details of the four zones provided in Table 1. In first place is the scale shifting that occurs and the impact this has on officials. Thus, the Anhui development zone, established in 1992 by the government of Chizhou prefecture-level city, was then approved by Anhui Provincial Government as a provincial level park and later, in 2011, promoted in rank by the State Council in Beijing to state-level park. This was an unusual move for an undistinguished provincial industrial park but one which meant that its officials were promoted and gained more powers for the park in terms of land planning, tax and fiscal policy. The city government, however, does not benefit because officials are seconded from the provincial government; in their own words and off the record, Chizhou officials say that all they do is the dirty work. As is clear from this comment, there is a certain level of tension between city and provincial officials. The Qingyang development zone also underwent a process of upgrading to provincial level. Due to its strong economic performance, it has become an independent economic and fiscal entity with some fiscal and taxation decision-making powers, making it equivalent in some respects to a territorial administration. Its political level is sub-county level, higher than township and half a level lower than county government. The Guichi industrial park, established by Guichi District Government, also had its rank promoted to provincial level.

Secondly, all four of these development zones should be seen as a means of driving economic growth through the means of industrial urbanisation. Their expanse is such that local administrations can bank sizeable swathes of land for future urbanisation programmes. Because much of the land is destined for industrial use, local governments anticipate higher revenues through taxes on investing companies. They are also to some extent multi-functional, meaning that some land can be used for prestige new town projects. We have already noted, for example, that the Guichi industrial park includes substantial amounts of housing, schools and government and party offices. This can be seen as a city-building project equivalent to that undertaken by Qingyang County. It has, however, met with less success, failing to lease out significant amounts of space and leaving those long stretches of unfilled land and unused factory buildings referred to above.

Thirdly, the complex scalar politics of Chizhou's development zones is compounded by the ferocity of the competition that exists among these zones -- Qingyang County officials even claim that the Anhui development zone has taken away from them some large projects using policy and administrative advantages (interviews with officials from the Development and Reform Commission of Qingyang County Government, 29 August 2015 and 21 June 2017). Equally, competition is severe between them and similar establishments in nearby parts of the country, especially in Jiangxi Province, which like Anhui is close to the east coast but has significantly lower

Table 1. Key information on a selection of development zones in Chizhou.

name	establishment and rank	current management	principal features and expanse
Anhui Chizhou High Tech Industrial Development Zone **(Anhui Chizhou Gaoxin Jishu Chanye Kaifaqu)**	Chizhou prefecture government in 1992. Approved by Anhui provincial government as provincial level park. Approved by the State Council, 2011, as state level park.	Management committee directly led by provincial government with involvement from city government.	Took away some large projects from Qingyang Industrial Zone using policy and administrative advantages (interview with Qingyang officials). Factories include Changli Forging and Fulaiyin auto parts, both of which moved from Zhejiang Province. State-owned concrete maker located in the park is up for sale reflecting slowdown. 27 square kilometres.
Qingyang County Economic Development Zone **(Qingyang Xian Jingji Kaifaqu)**	Established in current form in 2003 in Rongcheng Town. Approved by Anhui Provincial Government, August 2006. Upgraded to provincial level in 2105.	Management committee	Has concentration of companies in new materials, non-ferrous metals, and automobile parts. Have leased land to private Shanghai company to help fight fierce competition. 16 square kilometres.
Guichi High Tech Industrial Park **(Guichi Gaoxin Jishu Chanye Yuanqu)**	Established by Guichi District Government in 2006. Approved by provincial government in 2010. Name changed and level up-graded to provincial level.	Management committee. Central section approved by State Council and subsequently managed by City Government.	Leading industries include electronics and new materials. District party and govt bodies moved their offices in along with top two district schools. Includes housing and other facilities for 30,000 residents. 27 square kilometres.
Jiangnan Industrial Concentration District **(Jiangnan Chanye Jizhong Qu)**	Established by provincial government in 2010. City government has leading role. Approved by State	Management committee directly led by provincial government with significant involvement from city government. Management	Income from industrial park last year (2016) totalled 390 m yuan. Large scale of land with industrial property but few companies and factories. 216 square kilometres.

	Council.	committee operates at sub-provincial level.	

Source: Interviews with local officials, 2015 and 2017.

costs and provides free land and subsidies. Despite the intensity of this competition, there is not a lot of difference in the type of company that these industrial parks host nor in the policies with which they attempt to entice new investors. Both city and county governments, regardless of potential duplication of effort, have therefore established investment attraction teams in Shanghai, Ningbo, Hangzhou, Nanjing and even Beijing.

To summarise, each zone is fixed into a hierarchical administrative structure in ways that speak to the complexities of China's territorial scalar politics (Cartier, 2018). At the top, the State Council attempts to control the creation of development zones through a policy of ratification. Below that, within the province the game of scalar politics involves the search for provincial approval, but the interplay between province, prefecture-level city, and urban district or county is especially complex and fluid and does not lend itself to easy generalisation. At the same time, in terms of horizontal relations, the zones are involved in fierce competition for investment from the same sort of companies. In a highly fluid situation, they seek a scalar fix.

Mountain temples and train stations as arenas for scalar competition

In the last section, the focus was on a multitude of spaces, multiple acts of scale jumping on the part of different institutional players. Here we consider one space, Jiuhua Mountain, over which two territorial administrations have fought. Jiuhuashan is actually a temple-adorned series of mountain peaks and is one of China's four holy Buddhist mountains and thus an important place of pilgrimage. It is one of two pre-eminent tourist sites in the south of Anhui province, the other being the granite peaks of Huangshan, which lie only about one hundred kilometres south-east of Jiuhuashan but beyond the borders of Chizhou.[6] That sites of pilgrimage and tourism should have become so strongly contested speaks to the significance of the rewards to local government in terms of the revenue that they bring in. In the paragraphs that follow, we examine first the administrative intricacies that have seen the mountain temples come under the administration of 'small horse' Chizhou and secondly some of the implications for Chizhou's coffers. We then report on the 'hotel war' between Chizhou and Qingyang as both prefecture-level city and county compete for revenue from tourism. Finally, we turn to the key issue of access to show how these two administrations have been competing over the location of a station on a planned new high-speed rail link.

Jiuhuashan had been administered by Qingyang County, but, despite being surrounded by county territory, was transformed into a management district and later a Special Scenic District under a management committee (fenjingqu guanli weiyuanhui). As a result, although surrounded by Qingyang County, the Jiuhuashan temples come directly under the authority of Chizhou City Government. The loss of the mountain and the revenue it brought still rankles with Qingyang officials, who argue that the separation of mountain and county has led to competition for visitors and duplication of infrastructure, rendering comprehensive development impossible (interview with county officials, 3 September 2015).

Jiuhuashan attracts very large numbers of visitors from China and beyond -- 9.71 million in 2015 (interview with Jiuhua Management Committee official, 21 June 2017). The revenue from the

[6] Huangshan, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is a collection of pine-clad mountains that rise to well over one thousand metres, and it has long been regarded as one of the foremost sites of natural beauty in all of China. It is also, as mentioned above, the name of the prefecture-level city immediately to the south of Chizhou.

entrance fee charged to tourists at Jiuhuashan has become one of the key driving forces for the local economy, along with other tourism-related tax revenues. In 2016, tourism brought in about 54.53 billion yuan for the whole city, including expenditure on accommodation, transport, restaurants and entrance tickets. From this, the city government directly netted about 2.6 billion in revenue, with around a quarter of this sum coming from visitors to Jiuhuashan (interview with city official, 20 June 2017). This explains the eagerness of Chizhou City Government to have it under its wings so that it receives all the revenue directly without the county-level government taking a cut. As Li and Yang (2015) have clearly shown, county-level cities find that part of their tax payments to central government are hived off by their immediate superior level territorial administration. On numerous occasions, county officials complained to us of the various means by which their revenue is diminished as a result of manoeuvres undertaken by the city government, the first and foremost of which was the takeover of Jiuhuashan. Attempts to knock heads together have so far been largely ineffective.[7]

Qingyang County Government officials still rue the day when they 'lost' the mountain to the prefecture-level city government. They continue, however, to make investments in order to capture some of the financial rewards that emanate from the mountain's importance. Thus the county government has built two five-star hotels, three four-star hotels and many small hotels in the vicinity of Jiuhuashan. Such is the sense of rivalry between the county and city governments that the county government built one of the five-star hotels as a reaction to the 'capture' by the city government of an older four-star hotel. The new five-star hotel sits in Qingyang County on the only main road leading to Jiuhuashan. It is very unusual for the government of a small county to build so many prestigious hotels. Qingyang's government indeed has gone so far as to plan and build a subsidiary Buddhist centre including a series of temples in order to compete with Jiuhuashan district and Chizhou city. The intention is that pilgrims and tourists base themselves in Qingyang when visiting the mountain and not in Chizhou's central urban district.

Despite the millions of visitors each year to Jiuhuashan, transport connections are considered to be poor. The potential to attract many more visitors from the east-coast conurbations make the location of the lines and the siting of stations of utmost importance to the local governments involved. Anhui Provincial Government has been attempting to link Hangzhou and other rich eastern cities to Jiuhuashan and Huangshan by having a new high speed line pass directly through these sites. The line will eventually link Hangzhou with Wuhan in central China. Completion of the track, however, has consistently been delayed by disagreements over the siting of stations. Huge amounts of competitive pride not to mention substantial sums in income are attached to the decision over where to locate a station that would make Jiuhuashan directly accessible to high-speed rail travellers. The city government has been pressing for it to be located within the borders of the special scenic district in order to consolidate and reinforce the city's leading role. Qingyang County has been holding out for it to be constructed at a site within the county but only a short distance from Jiuhuashan. As of the time of this writing (autumn 2018), no agreement had been reached.

This bitter scalar struggle over one of China's principal sites of pilgrimage speaks to the deep-seated problems that stem from the clumsy hierarchy of territorial administrations. It highlights the continued difficulties and anomalies faced at the prefectural scale, over which historically there has been so little consistency of definition (Chung and Xu, 2016). In this specific case, it demonstrates the lengths to which the prefecture-level city government will go to gain additional revenue despite the ostensibly stronger claims of a subordinate rival.

[7] This reflects similar difficulties experienced at the larger scale of the Yangtze and Pearl river deltas, where, as we have already observed, central government has been unsuccessfully promoting the creation of regional formations in order to dampen competition (Li et al., 2014; Li and Wu, 2017).

Concluding thoughts: scaling up from Chizhou

In this paper, we have discussed some of the ways in which scale colours the political process and its economic consequences in the south of Anhui Province. What is happening there occurs, mutatis mutandae, in other parts of Anhui, as we saw in the case of Chaohu, but also elsewhere in China. The scalar struggles in Chizhou have involved complex and multi-layered exercises in competitive manoeuvring in order to construct new towns and development zones, take over territory and pocket tourist revenue and fix the location of high speed rail stations in advantageous positions. The tactics used have included scale jumping, the creation of states of exception and intervention by higher level authorities.

We have highlighted two aspects of these scalar struggles. Firstly, we have shown how they extend far beyond territorial administrations and impact on many aspects of institutional and official life, including control over development zones and even Buddhist temples. As a consequence, in both China's parallel party and state structures, hierarchies of rank are reflected in a scalar layering that is complex and comprehensive. Secondly, we have linked scalar struggles to the party-state hierarchy of ranks for officials, for whom evaluation and promotion depends on meeting economic targets. We have seen this, for example, in the way that the deployment of officials intersects with the ranking of development zones. We have emphasised throughout the all-encompassing nature of scalar struggles in China's polity, as party and government officials fight each other tooth and nail to secure more revenue and resources for their own bailiwick.

These struggles, however, do not entail the "capital-centred jumping of scale" that Smith once referred to (1996, p. 72). They belong first and foremost to the inward-looking world of China's party-state politics, within which officials are under pressure to bring economic growth to their territory. While in inland China they seek to do this by encouraging investment from east-coast provinces, competition for footloose global capital is not a central preoccupation as it is for local and regional governments in many other parts of the world. Nor do we see here the same discursive context of global competitiveness that features in so many of the pitches issuing from local governments in Europe and Japan (González, 2006; Tsukamoto, 2012).

Nevertheless, the case of Chizhou and by extension the many similar scalar struggles at the local level in China support Swyngedouw's argument (1997) concerning the constantly contested nature of scale. We have in this paper borrowed MacKinnon's term scalar politics but have also adapted it and referred to 'scalar struggles' to reflect the intensity of the competitive politics undertaken by local officials. This is, as elsewhere, competition for resources, investment and the revenue that comes with it, but in China it is competition for higher political rank too.

Returning to our overarching framework of fixity and flux, we have argued that scalar politics in China are a multi-directional game played by different party-state organs, often at a very local level. The fixity is supplied by the strictly ranked hierarchy of territorial administrations and other institutional arrangements controlled by the central party-state. But this fixed hierarchy is prey to the flux that occurs when competitive forces push and pull these institutions and their officials into attempts at scale revision, scale-jumping and creation of states of exception through a move up the hierarchy. There are some similarities here to the reconfigurations of state space undertaken in Europe to create the right institutional structures to attract public resources and inward investment. Yet this is far from being the "dynamic, transformative process [italics in the original]" (2004, p. 450) which Brenner sees as inherent to the state's spatiality. This is a rigid hierarchical centrally imposed structure within which local administrations struggle for revenue and resources.

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