

The Changing Face of the Chengdu Plain Landscape

Hao Zheng

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Declaration

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Hao Zheng

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Abstract

Despite extensive research by geographers, anthropologists, and historians on the Chinese landscape, relatively little is known about the remarkable transformation of the everyday landscape in the inland region of China over the past century and a half. The overall image of the everyday Chinese landscape that emerges from the literature is blurred: pastoral, traditional Chinese style, but also modern and international. This study uses the inland Chengdu Plain as a case to present a realistic and vivid image of the changing everyday landscape through an in-depth archive investigation and semi-structured interviews with eighty ordinary people now living in ten distinct villages. An analysis of the landscape-related archives and interviews shows that the interaction between popular culture, historical contingencies, interventionist policies, and governance strategies has guided the formation and transformation of the everyday landscape of the Chengdu Plain. Further genealogical examination of the daily landscape practices reveals that the governments and various social groups, such as local gangs and guilds, intentionally designed many landscape forms as a spatial regime to raise a particular form of subjectivity and promote a specific mode of daily life among Chengdu people. This study adds nuance to our understanding of the everyday landscape in inland China in a context of dramatic social and political change. It is also part of a growing body of research on the relationship between spaces, places, and governance.

List of Abbreviations

BNSC	Building a New Socialist Countryside
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
NLM	New Life Movement
PLA	People's Liberation Army
URI	Urban-rural Integration

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

From the late nineteenth century to the early twenty-first century, China has undergone many radical transformations in society, culture, and politics. These transformations continuously recast the shapes and appearances of Chinese cities and villages. To date, Chinese scholars in the field of landscape studies have given heed to the historical evolution of the landscape in coastal regions and seemingly focus on those extraordinary landscape changes. By contrast, the study about the inland areas and the ordinary everyday landscape is relatively limited. As an inland region, the Chengdu Plain lies far from the political cores such as Shanghai and Beijing. It is quite typical of Chinese daily life and practices, which makes it become an ideal subject for a study of the evolution of the everyday landscape. Thus, this thesis uses the Chengdu Plain as a case to examine the everyday landscape changes. It attempts to answer some important questions related to the creation and transformation of the everyday landscape. How is the everyday landscape shaped in different historical phases? How does the everyday landscape show different values, various social realities, and changing culture? What role do different groups, such as ordinary people, business operators, and architects, play in the making of the everyday landscape? And how is the everyday landscape created as a regime to govern people?

This thesis begins in the Late Imperial Era, when people's daily life was in a primitive status and the Chengdu Plain was still virgin land for foreign travellers and missionaries, and concludes in the 2010s, when rapid urbanisation brought the urban lifestyle as well as the urban-style landscape to nearly all villages. Specifically, five periods are discussed in this thesis, including the Late Imperial era, the Republic of China period, Early Socialism, the reform age, and the post-reform age. Through the study of the landscape change over more than one hundred years, I try to avoid the possible boundedness of landscape analyses in which the past is simplified as a single romantic scene and to present a more complex, contingent, and dynamic landscape process.

The main argument of this thesis is that the everyday landscape – as a rich exhibit of the characteristics of any society (Meinig 1979b, 2) and a most truthful autobiography of

commoners (Lewis 1979, 12) – represents changing culture, pluralistic value systems, and constant government interventions in daily life. This study points out that although the everyday landscape is the world ordinary people are living in, the state and certain groups always seek to reshape the appearance and form of the everyday landscape to enhance certain value and culture. This study also unveils some governance strategies closely related to the design of the landscape.

There are three important threads weaving detailed landscape analyses together. Firstly, in the Chengdu Plain, the everyday landscape is the arena where different local groups constantly struggle for their interests. The streets in the Late Imperial Era, for example, was appropriated as a symbolic representation of Confucian hierarchy, a worship place, and an extension of the street-side house (see chapter 2). Seeing the everyday landscape as an arena provides an effective means to study the competition and cooperation between different social groups in shaping and interpreting the everyday landscape. In addition, it is also conducive to presenting a more realistic social image created by the everyday landscape practices without possible bias from the author and collected materials.

Secondly, the everyday landscape is a medium through which ordinary people understand a certain political ideology and culture. From the Late Imperial era to the 21st century, Chinese statemen always seek to turn their abstract political ideals into a range of landscape daily practices and physical symbols so that people can readily internalise these ideologies in daily life. For example, the Late Qing Dynasty reformists turned the idea of civilisation into a set of “civilised” practices, including setting up streetlamps to light the streets, building public toilets, and appropriating temples as schools and workhouses. Later, Chinese Nationalists and socialists did similar things one after another, translating their ideologies into various landscape practices.

Thirdly, the everyday landscape is a realm in which certain spatial regimes are established to enforce certain codes of conduct and train certain forms of subjects. In the Chengdu Plain, this spatial regime can be traced to the Late Imperial Era when the spatial configuration of traditional housing compounds allowed the senior members to constantly monitor the junior ones. In the early socialist period, the design of the socialist-style standard residential unit and

the arrangement of communal facilities within residential buildings established a socialist spatial regime to promote collective-oriented practices and foster a collectivised subject among residents. The analyses of underlying spatial regimes reveal the interaction between governance technologies and landscape practices.

1.2 Travelling to the Chengdu Plain

The Chengdu Plain is an alluvial plain located in southwest China. It is one of the main inland agricultural regions in China and is famous for the well-developed Dujiangyan irrigation system (a UNESCO World Heritage site) built in the 3rd century. Geographically, it is situated in the western part of the Sichuan Basin in the upper Yangtze region, centred on Chengdu, the capital city of the Chinese province of Sichuan, and surrounded by high mountains on all sides (see Figure 1.1). The core area of the Chengdu Plain takes a fan shape, accounting for 7,340 km².



Figure 1.1 The location of the Chengdu Plain in China. Source: The author.

Until the beginning of the 20th century, travelling to the Chengdu Plain from the eastern coast was extremely difficult. As a result, it became a relatively independent area in society and culture. The earliest account of the Chengdu Plain by foreign visitors can be traced back to the report of the English traveller Isabella Bird (1831-1904) in 1899. Inspired by the breathtaking views, she wrote that the Chengdu Plain “has a superb climate ... a rich soil, much of which, under careful cultivation, yields three and even four crops annually of most things which can be grown ... forests of grand timber, the area of which has not even been estimated (Bird 1899, 10).” Several years later, when the first British Consul-General Alexander Hosie (1853-1925) arrived in Chengdu, he asserted this area “is the most interesting part of the Empire (Hosie 1897, 1).” In the early 20th century, the Chengdu Plain and its landscape are gradually made known to the outside world via various missionary documents and publications. For example, in the Canadian missionary publication in 1905, a vivid description of the Chengdu Plain can be found.

“Far and wide can be seen dotting the landscape the low grass- or tile-thatched houses of the people, each home surrounded by its mud wall and well-defined by a clump of plume-like bamboos. The colours between are constantly changing. Now white with the rice crop, green with growing grain or vegetables, golden with the wheat harvest, yellow with the native oil plant, or crimson with China’s curse, the opium poppy. (Wallace 1903, 22)”

Compared with the limited accounts in the outside world, the Chengdu Plain has plenty of narratives in Chinese literature. In the Tang Dynasty, Wang Bo (650-676), one of the four literary giants, got intoxicated by the impressive landscape along his way to Chengdu, describing the Chengdu Plain as a “Celestial Treasure House for travel and leisure, and an extraordinary spectacle in the universe.” Likewise, another ancient great poet Du Fu (712-770) also visited the Chengdu Plain and was surprised to discover “an exotic world” that was very different from the Central Plains where he came from. In addition, in the massive official gazetteers from the 3rd century to the 20th century, the Chengdu Plain is also described in detail. For example, in the gazetteer of Huayang (an ancient kingdom founded in the Chengdu Plain), the Chengdu Plain is depicted as a land where flood and drought were adequately controlled, and people never suffered famines.

Notwithstanding the lavish praise for the landscape, the identifying factors of the Chengdu Plain in both early 20th-century outside reports and classical Chinese literature are traditional society and spectacular natural scenery. This reflects that the lifestyle and societal structure in the Chengdu Plain were seldom influenced by the outside world until the late Qing era. In fact, local rural gentry and prestigious elders as the representative rulers of the empire still played an important role in organising daily life and vigorously resisted the new political regime when the empire was overturned by revolutionaries. Notably, compared with the upper classes, ordinary people's daily life undergoes slower changes. Traditional farming, drinking tea in a teahouse, and playing mah-jong were their daily activities throughout the 20th century. Local people appear to be fairly conservative and unlike their coastal counterparts, maintain a much more traditional culture in the radical social transformations. In summary, a traditional lifestyle has been a distinction of the Chengdu Plain. It makes the Chengdu Plain particularly significant and interesting to understand how the traditional cultures interact with the new ones in landscape making.

Certainly, like other inland agricultural regions, the early 20th-century Chengdu Plain also possesses some shared characteristics. Firstly, it has a dense population and fertile land. In 1910, the residents in the core city Chengdu had reached 335,000. Due to the fertile land and the sophisticated irrigation system, its rice production is the largest in the upper Yangtze region. Secondly, there are well established market towns distributed over this area. Periodical markets are held frequently in these towns so that farmers could sell their crops, buy necessities, practise certain rituals, and enjoy some performances. The daily life of common people is heavily dependent on these towns in many aspects. Thirdly, lineage groups and religious groups play important roles in organising daily production and rural governance. Various shrines and temples were the most widespread public buildings in the Chengdu Plain in the early 20th century while the lineage and provincial halls were often built as the centres of the traditional communities in townships. These shared characteristics enable the Chengdu Plain to witness some representative social-cultural transformations taking place in a wider context.

1.3 Theorising everyday landscapes

1.3.1 Terminology

Everyday Landscape. Everyday landscape is one of the fundamental concepts underpinning this study. However, its definition is not easy to clarify because of its close association with the complex and ambiguous term landscape. Thus, it is worthwhile tracing its evolution from the original concept of landscape, thereby better understanding the various dimensions of everyday landscape.

The contemporary concept of landscape is originally developed from the early 19th-century German human geography tradition of Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) that highlighted the inter-connectedness between life forms and environment (Taylor and Lennon 2012, 25). Then, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the work of Otto Schlüter (1872-1959), Carl Sauer (1889-1975), Franz Boas (1858-1942), and Halford Mackinder (1861-1947) drove the move of landscape study from the scientifically deterministic view to the inquiry of the culture in shaping landscape patterns (Taylor and Lennon 2012, 25-26). These pioneers of landscape study conceptualise landscape as a cultural product rather than an artistic and historical genre. This shows the earliest intellectual reflection upon the everyday landscape - the material representation of culture. In the 1950s, English historian W. G. Hoskins (1955) developed the concept of landscape from geography to the domain of history and explored the complex relationship between landscape, locality, rurality, modernity, and nostalgia in his salient book *The Making of the English Landscape*. Hoskins's historical accounts of the English landscape largely derive from his observation of the ordinary evidence visible in fields and hedges, lanes and streets, buildings and clusters of buildings, and the careful thinking of the temporality embedded in this evidence. Hoskins's work suggests that a new dimension of everyday landscape – a local form of history - has been acquired.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the prominent landscape scholar J. B. Jackson further explored the concept of everyday landscape, or in his words, vernacular landscape, through his blending of strongly voiced opinions of cultural and historical awareness in landscape study. Jackson pays significant attention to an ordinary insider's or inhabitant's understanding of the material world he is living in and the symbolic meanings which arise from social life in particular

geographical settings (D.E. Cosgrove 1998, 34). Throughout Jackson's academic career, vernacular landscape was the constant and dominant theme of his writing, which makes his work a seminal contribution to the concept of everyday landscape. As Tim Cresswell (2003, 274) summarises, "Jackson's (everyday) landscapes are ones that people inhabit and work in and they are landscapes that people produce through routine practice in an everyday sense". Evidently, ordinary people's "sweat, hardship, and earnest thought" (Jackson 1997b, 343) have become an important dimension of everyday landscape.

Due to the contribution of Jackson, in the 1990s, everyday landscape or similar terms, such as vernacular landscape, ordinary landscape, and generic landscape, had been widely discussed in the broader context of evolving intellectual currents across the arts and humanities. Kenneth Olwig (2002, 2013) reclaims the landscape concept from its association with art and aesthetics in the European context and stresses that the ideas of customary law and political symbolism are foundational to landscape. His work reveals the considerable power of custom and state in making an everyday landscape. Cosgrove (1998) develops the definition of landscape from things that are "seen" to "ways of seeing", which produces a methodological correlate in everyday landscape, in that multiple interpretations rather than detailed descriptions have become the concern of landscape scholars.

Marxism, through its various transformations and manifestations, has also substantially influenced the understanding of everyday landscape. The key figure Don Mitchell (1994, 1996, 2003) as well as other radical North American geographers such as Zukin (1991) see everyday landscape as "a contentious, compromised product of society, shaped by power, coercion and collective resistance (Zukin 1991, 16)". They highlight the existing social, economic and political hierarchies and a form of social regulation in everyday landscape, and reinscribe everyday landscape as the secret standard-bearers of ideological values. In addition, in the UK, the conception of discourse, power, and subjectivity developed from the legacy of Michel Foucault¹ reinvigorate the analyses of landscape history and landscape practices (e. g. Gregory 1994; Clayton 2000). David Matless (1998), for example, seeks to explain the landscape

¹ Foucault's work explores the convoluted relationship between power, discourse, and subjectivity through his genealogical analyses. His salient achievement is to prove those most take-for-granted concepts – such as sane/mad (Foucault 2001), health/ill (Foucault 1989), discipline/punishment (Foucault 2012) – are not objectively defined but historically and discursively constituted.

transformation by detailed discursive interpretation of particular figures, episodes, and movements in UK history and claims that everyday landscape can be defined as a changeable matter of elaborated cultural conventions and ramifying codes of conduct. Echoing Matless's argument, more recently, Tim Oakes (2019) also uses Foucault's concept of governmentality, or "the conduct of conduct", to point out that everyday landscape can be understood in relation to particular techniques and technologies of training self-managed citizens.

Lastly, international heritage studies on cultural landscape offer a broad conceptual framework in which various values and meanings of everyday landscape can be situated, and layers of changes and landscape continuity can be simultaneously considered. Rössler (2006, 334) articulates that the fundamental principle underpinning the World Heritage cultural landscape is "a closely woven net of relationships, the essence of culture and people's identity ... a symbol of the growing recognition of the fundamental links between local communities and their heritage, humankind and its natural environment". Rössler's summary suggests that the concept of cultural landscape offers a holistic framework for considering different values and meanings. Supported by this holistic framework, in the later 20th and early 21st centuries, the extensive international discussion of *modus operandi* and the rise of the popular heritage boom extended the concept of cultural landscape to cover the everyday landscape in vernacular places (Harrison 2013, 68-94). Meanwhile, the critical examination of the heritage discourse (e.g. Smith 2006) and the rethinking of the discipline of conservation (e.g. Lennon and Taylor 2012; Taylor 2013; Poullos 2014, 2015) drive a continuing paradigm shift of reading landscape from the monument-centric approach to the dynamic-value-based one. Consequently, in addition to the focus on the continuity of material fabrics and outstanding values, layers of changes over time and community (as well as regional and individual) values have become essential facets of cultural landscape. This ongoing evolution of cultural landscape in heritage studies, particularly the development of the dynamic-value-based paradigm and the recognition of the fact of change, has revealed and provided solid theoretical support for comprehending and investigating two key concerns lying at the core of everyday landscape - the co-existence of continuity and changes, and the interpretation of pluralistic, even conflicting values.

In summary, the evolution of everyday landscape has shown the process in which different meanings are infused into its original intellectual reflection - the material representation of culture. Now everyday landscape can be defined as both the palpable material world of everyday life, a sort of cultural landscape, and the abstract “constructed” and circulating system of cultural meaning, codes of conduct, discourses, and ideological values. In addition, everyday landscape has an intense relationship with temporality. It shows an ordinary people’s history of cultural use, changing values and customs, daily resistance, and state governance.

Ordinary people and popular culture. The central focus of this thesis is ordinary people. I attempt to show how the local ordinary people understand and make the everyday landscape they live in and what role they play when outside power seeks to change the landscape. During the writing process, sometimes I also use the terms “commoners”, and “lower classes”. Both terms, nevertheless with slightly different literal meanings, can be equated with ordinary people.

Specifically, the term “ordinary people” refers to persons of lower social status, who could be subsistence farmers, small shopkeepers, salaried workers, itinerant peddlers, and so on. In daily life, these people could be “residents of a street sitting out in their doorways, chatting together while enjoying the cool evening breeze (Rowe 1989, 79)”, or “citizens who secure no fame and who have no place in the headlines (Langhamer 2018, 176)”, or dwellers who “squeezed into the teahouses, as the day’s news was put aside in favour of scheduled storytelling (D. Wang 2018a, 3)”. They are also what might be described by Spivak (1993) as, in the colonial and postcolonial context, people who find themselves in the situation of subalterns and are speechless in the face of the overpowering system of rule, or remain unheard and misunderstood. Jackson (1997a, 149) uses the term as “vernacular” people who spend much of the day outdoors and use public spaces “not only for sociability and relaxation but also for work, the exchange of goods and services and information, and even violent and competitive sports and games”. Although the names of ordinary people might not be

mentioned in the accounts of the landscape², they are very important creators of the landscape.

Popular culture is another major focus of this thesis. Studying the everyday landscape inevitably entails the identification of popular culture and elite (or high) culture. Nevertheless, the distinction between the two is blurred and subject to the context. For example, many religious festivals and their related public rituals were popular in traditional society and practised by ordinary people. However, these festivals and rituals have become high cultures due to the disappearance of these festivals in modern society. John Storey (2018, 5-13) has sketched out the main definitions and categories of popular culture proposed by various cultural theorists. Firstly, it is simply culture widely favoured by many people (Williams 1983); secondly, it is left over after we have decided what is high culture (Bourdieu 2010); thirdly, it is mass culture related to mass consumption (Fiske 1989); fourthly, it is the culture directly created by or originated from the people, like folk culture or working-class culture (Bennett 1980); fifthly, it is a site of struggle between the “resistance” of subordinate groups and the forces of “incorporation” operating in the interests of dominant groups (Marxists, such as Gramsci 1971; and poststructuralists, such as Foucault 1980); sixthly, it is a sort of convergence where a significant difference between popular culture and high culture can no longer be recognised (postmodernists, such as Jenkins 2006). All these definitions reveal the complex connotation of popular culture and its dynamic relationship with elite culture. In this thesis, I do not focus on a certain category of popular culture but comprehensively consider all of them according to different contexts.

Thus, the definition of popular culture in this study is relatively broad: it is the culture favoured by ordinary people, influenced by mass consumption, and marked by resistance and incorporation. According to this definition, the distinction between popular culture and elite culture can be better understood as the dynamic negotiation and exchange between the two. Different from the postmodernist theories which emphasise the market force in driving the exchange, the cultural amalgamation in the Chinese context has a long history and more

² Cosgrove and Daniels (1988) have suggested that landscapes have often acted as a “veil” to cover the internal contestations and conflicts, which means that ordinary people have potentially been overlooked in the interpretations of the landscape.

complicated cause. William Dolby (1976) finds this phenomenon in the premodern Chinese drama performances and states “the drama of the rich and the drama of the poor have not been very rigidly divided and have been the more easily able to replenish and renew each other”. Based on Dolby’s study, Barbara E. Ward (1985, 171-172) explains this as the lack of scripts in the conventional Chinese drama resulting in the process of homogenisation. Likewise, historian Di Wang (2003) discovers that in the early 20th century, teahouses in Chengdu as the representative of the popular culture had been favoured by the elite classes due to the severe shortage of leisure amenities and attractions. My viewpoint is that whether popular culture and elite culture are amalgamated or separated is malleable and conditional upon specific social, economic, and political factors. In addition, the exchange process between popular culture and elite culture reveals the changing social context.

Power and Spatial Regime. In this thesis, power is the key framework for exploring and explaining the complex relationship between different social groups, the continued conflict between the local and the state, and the effective implementation of government technologies in everyday landscape making. However, the meanings of power are varied and have long been the subject of scholarly debate. In the 17th century, Thomas Hobbes (first publish in 1651, and republish in 1998) defined power as “man’s present means to any future apparent good”, which stresses the individuals who carry and constitute power. Two centuries later, Nietzsche (first publish in 1910, republish in 1968) and Max Weber (first publish in 1921, republish in 2019) extended Hobbes’s idea of power to a broader dimension. The former links power with the conditions of legitimacy, seeing power as a capacity to define reality (Nietzsche 1968) and the latter adds social relationships and resistance into the concept of power, thereby understanding it as “every chance, within a social relationship, of enforcing one’s own will even against resistance (Weber 2019, 134)”. After the Second World War, following Hobbes’s lead, more thinkers, such as Hannah Arendt (1970) and Barry Barnes (1988), suggest that “power constitutes the opposite of coercion and violence, and is thus a prerequisite for agency (Clegg and Haugaard 2009, 2)”. Today, this account of power as domination, which is linked to the capacity for violent agency, has become the most popular perception of power in popular culture and everyday speech.

In addition to the Hobbesian view of power, Marxists developed another understanding of power. They insisted on studying power in the operations of the specific modes of production/social formation and emphasised the importance of the economy and production relations in the domain of power. As a result, they explain power through two interchangeable layers: economic power, and political power (Nigam 1996). In the works of Marx, economic power is synonymous with capital and political power usually refers to state power (Nigam 1996). Marxists also introduced the concept of class into analyses of power and argued that power represented the oppression of one class by another and a sort of privilege.

Finally, power was reformulated in the influential work of Michel Foucault. Different from the Hobbesian and Marxist views, in *Discipline and Punish* Foucault (2012, 26-27) claims that power is

“conceived not as a property, but as a strategy, that its effects of domination are attributed not to ‘appropriation’, but to dispositions, manoeuvres, tactics, techniques, functionings; that one should decipher in it a network of relations, constantly in tension, in activity, rather than a privilege that one might possess; that one should take as its model a perpetual battle rather than a contract regulating a transaction or the conquest of a territory. In short this power is exercised rather than possessed; it is not the ‘privilege’, acquired or preserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic positions – an effect that is manifested and sometimes extended by the position of those who are dominated ... We should admit rather that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful).”

In other places, Foucault (1980, 119, 154) further explains power as a productive network that runs through the whole social body and informs that power is exercised by the virtue of things being known and people being seen.

Foucault’s notion of power is relatively complicated. Firstly, he underlines that power is both positive and productive. In his opinion, it is possible to argue that power can produce discourse, norms, knowledge, pleasure, and even “things”, and thus can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework. Secondly, notwithstanding linking

power to action, he challenges the idea that power is wielded by people or groups but treats power as “a set of actions upon other actions (Foucault 1982, 789)”, or in short, a mechanism of action. Thirdly, he points out that power as a strategy maintains a relationship between the sayable (statements) and the visible (appearances) (Kendall and Wickham 1998, 49), which offers a distinct methodology for studying different forms of visibility and their interplay with different discourses.

In this thesis, the definition of power is relatively loose because I argue that all accounts of power, from Hobbes to Foucault coexist when we study the everyday landscape. My overall definition of power is a dialectic of centralisation and equalisation, domination and resistance, repression and freedom, sayable statements and visible appearances. In addition, in the specific context, different notions of power have been applied to study different aspects of the landscape. In the examination of large-scale landscape making related to state politics, the Marxist understanding of power which stresses class oppression is adopted. In the discussion of ordinary people’s daily landscape practices, the “common sense” view of power, as domination, is drawn on. In the analysis of the spatial regimes embedded in the landscape, Foucault’s framework of power which regards it as strategies, mechanisms, and regimes bearing a particular relationship between knowledge (discourse) and a form of visibility is employed.

Besides power, the spatial regime is another important focus of this study. I try to reveal how the everyday landscape is intervened by artful design and professional spatial planning to augment state power and produce certain subjects. However, the study of the spatial regime in the discipline of landscape is relatively uncommon, and much of the credit for the surge in interest in space and regime can be attributed to the development of the interdisciplinary research between geography and philosophy. In the 1960s, Marxist geographers commenced linking the questions of space to their critique of capitalism. Doreen Massey (1995), for example, suggests that the specialisation of work within particular places shows the general territorial relations between capital and labour. Likewise, David Harvey (1999) seeks to analyse capitalist development and its crisis through the lens of spaces. These Marxist explorations point out the underlying relationship between space and capitalist economy cycles. But they tend to subordinate the question of space to the general social discussion

such as class inequality and uneven development. Consequently, the reconfiguration of the space is merely considered a physical manifestation of those fundamental socioeconomic changes.

Compared with the conventional Marxist geographers, Henri Lefebvre (1991) rejects what has hitherto been acknowledged as the orthodox Marxist position on space: namely, that space mirrors class inequality and embodies underlying economic relations, but offers a multilayered spatial analysis. Firstly, he asserts that space has been sophisticatedly created to drive production, reproduction, and constant transformation of capitalism and thus illustrates a history of social production. Secondly, he argues that space has become an important ruling instrument of the state because it is the carrier of the dominant social orders and institutions. As he states, each new form of state, “each new form of political power, introduces its own particular way of partitioning space, its own particular administrative classification of discourses about space and about things and people in space (Lefebvre 2003, 281)”. Thirdly, he extends the political concept of space from the macro geographical areas to the micro places in everyday life, such as the home, school, and street, and points out that the spatial practices on the micro level show the integration of capitalism and daily life. The work of Lefebvre links space, daily life, social institutions, and governance system, significantly influencing Foucault and other scholars to further explore the complex amalgamation of space and the ruling regimes. And it also provides an original framework of the spatial regime: The spatial regime is the ways of creating space in order to strengthen particular social institutions.

After Lefebvre, the concept of the spatial regime has been constantly developed in a broader context. Michel Foucault (2012), as the most important contributor, historically examines Bentham’s meticulously conceived design for a prison and finds that the Panopticon has become an archetype of the modern disciplinary spatial regime in which people’s behaviours are monitored, controlled, and governed. Through his genealogical analysis, he also points out that this disciplinary spatial regime has existed in other modern institutions like the school, the factory, and the asylum, and has fostered self-reflexive and self-governing subjects. Foucault’s analyses can be seen as a revolutionary innovation in the thinking of the spatial regime since he not only first introduces genealogy as a methodology into the spatial regime

study but also creatively associates certain spatial regimes with the training of certain subjects.

Following Foucault's lead, in the field of landscape, David Matless (1998) excavates what he terms a "planner-preservationist" vision of a modern English landscape and demonstrates at length that landscape has been a sort of spatial regime to cultivate the sense of English citizenship. More recently, in sociology, David Bray (2005) systematically delves into the socialist social organisation through the lens of space and proposes that *danwei*³ as a unique spatial and social system established a regime in socialist China to promote the production of good socialists. Both Matless's and Bray's writing can be read as fruitful attempts to apply the idea of the spatial regime to the study of certain sets of moral and aesthetic values in different social and historical contexts. Their work shows that the concept of the spatial regime is saturated with meanings reflecting local cultural practices, historical contingencies, and other unintended consequences.

In summary, the spatial regime has built a new dimension onto the study of human society and landscape formations. It can be defined as the ways of creating space in order to strengthen certain social institutions, promote certain moral and aesthetic values, and foster certain subjects. In addition, the work of Foucault, Matless, and Bray has offered many illuminating insights about the practices and possibilities of the spatial regime in everyday life, which proves that the specific forms of the spatial regime are largely subject to the different sociocultural contexts and historical contingencies.

1.3.2 Past scholarship on the Chengdu Plain landscape

China's vast geography and rich history have contributed to its distinct culture and rich landscape mosaic. However, until now, most landscape studies conducted in China either concern those extraordinary and unique landscapes or focus on large-scale landscape

³ In Bray's work, *danwei* has two layers of meaning and cannot be adequately represented by an English approximation. In geography, it refers to the spatial units of state-sector workplace in socialist China. In sociology, it is a system of employment and material support for the majority of urban residents.

transformations. The investigation and examination of the everyday landscape through the lens of the everyday people is very limited.

In terms of the Chengdu Plain, the existing landscape studies can be roughly divided into three categories. The first is quantitative analysis based on the view of landscape as physical geography. Scholars (e. g. Hong Li, Deng, and Wu 2005; Y.-h. Wang, Zhao, and Ren 2007) generally draw on GIS to explain landscape change and propose practical suggestions for sustainable land use. The second category entails cultural and archaeological examinations of distinct landscape symbols and forms. The local planner Bo Shu (2012), for example, deeply probed into the major transformations of the agricultural landscape from ancient times to the 20th century through a Marxist perspective and claims that changing relations of production have constantly driven the development of the landscape. Likewise, Zhi-long Fang (2012), explored cultural and social values embedded in the local traditional settlements and sketches out some general principles and strategies for the local landscape planning in his PhD thesis.

The third category explores frameworks for conserving the quickly disappearing local landscape. Due to unprecedented urbanisation in the Chengdu Plain after 2000, landscape conservation has become a big subject of scholarly debate. Scholars (e. g. X.-y. Cai 2009; Fang and Li 2011) in the field of urban planning and architecture have proposed that the small-scale rural residential pattern (in Chinese, *Linpan*) which has existed in the Chengdu Plain for hundreds of years ought to be seen as the core characteristic of the local vernacular landscape and be protected. Min Zhang, Feng Han, and Dawei Xu (2016) take the local UNESCO world heritage site Dujiangyan irrigation system as a case to discuss the sustainable protection and management of the landscape under the framework of cultural landscape. Yanshuo Zhang (2018) explores the contested interpretations of authenticity in the development of the local historic district and suggests that a community-focused approach should be applied to future conservation and development.

Summarily, what scholars seek to explore in the context of the Chengdu Plain represents a double reading of the local landscape. On the one hand, landscape has been something “too much about the already accomplished” (Cresswell 2003, 269), “too quaint” (Cresswell 2003, 269), and in cultural consonance with notions of prettified heritage and melancholy nostalgia

for a mythical rural past (Wylie 2007, 117). On the other hand, landscape has been an expected outcome of social production, tourism, climate change, and government policies. The problem with this double reading of landscape is that it always lies in the tendency to value the extraordinary, the large-scale, and the ancient, and largely neglects the ordinary. By contrast, my landscape study of the Chengdu Plain focuses on the everyday landscape and ordinary people's daily landscape practices under different regimes. Thus, although these landscape studies are insightful in many aspects, their outcomes and approaches are far different to my everyday landscape study.

In fact, the studies strongly related to this thesis are mainly academic works in a broader field. Historian Di Wang has published many in-depth sociocultural studies pertinent to Chengdu's urban history. Different from conventional historians, he gives heed to urban commoners and their public life in the small-scale neighbourhood space. In his book *Street Culture in Chengdu*, the full range of cultural artifacts and activities appearing on the street from 1870 to 1930 are carefully analysed through the lens of popular culture (D. Wang 2003). Likewise, in a historical study about the teahouse, he properly explores people's everyday life and the interaction between local people and the state through the change of the teahouse over the course of the 20th century (D. Wang 2008, 2018a). Although like Di Wang, I examine everyday life and ordinary people, my interest is the interaction between people and landscape rather than cultural artefacts and activities per se. In addition, Wang's historical work does not deal with spatial issues like the spatial regime. By contrast, I use the framework of the spatial regime to explore the underlying relationship between moral values, social institutions, and subjectivities.

Apart from Di Wang, Kristin Stapleton's (2000) book *Civilizing Chengdu* discusses the original idea of urban planning and administration in the central urban area of the Chengdu Plain. Through the comprehensive investigation of the late-Qing New Policy Movement and the city administration movement, she reveals how the concept of civilisation moved from "ideology" to "practice" through local reformists' efforts during this period (K. Stapleton 2000). Stapleton has analysed at length the two great waves of change in urban space and local life, and her study emphasises the distinguished contributions of those prominent figures like police reformer Zhou Shanpei and warlord Yang Sen, whereas in my thesis the focus is on ordinary

people and how these top-down reforms were challenged by the lower classes in their daily landscape practices. Furthermore, I examine other far-reaching reforms and campaigns related to the reshaping of the everyday landscape in the socialist period.

Finally, Ole Bruun's anthropological study of a contemporary Chengdu community gives hitherto the most comprehensive account of local people's daily life, their private business, and their relationship with lower-level bureaucracy during the reform age (the 1980s and 1990s). In his book *Business and Bureaucracy in a Chinese City*, he describes the actual situations of local people under the sway of a monolithic state based on his direct contact with the people. He suggests that many old-fashioned socioeconomic forms of organisation have spontaneously re-emerged in the local community after the retreat of the state in daily life (Bruun 1993). Bruun draws attention to the rising private sector in the post-socialist context and seeks to figure out the complex relationship between small business operators and local officials responsible for controlling the private sector. By contrast, my study, although also involving small business operators, sees them as a group among the lower-class people. I argue that the major measures of social reform have permeated all groups of people and influenced their culture and landscape practices.

1.3.3 A multilayered theoretical framework

The definitions of the key concepts and terms and the review of the past scholarship on the Chengdu Plain landscape are important references for theorising the Chengdu Plain landscape. Utilising the approach of cultural landscape, I conceptualise the social nature of the everyday landscape, including the dynamic sociocultural values and changeable meanings embedded in landscapes, the complex interaction between physical landscapes and people's practices and vernacular knowledge, and a series of tensions between landscape as commonplace and as scenic space and an ideological vehicle. The theory of the spatial regime sheds light on the application of abstract power strategies and interventionist logic in the making of the everyday landscape. Considering the coexistence of multiple social values and power strategies within the everyday landscape, I synthesise the cultural landscape and spatial regime approaches, and put forward a multilayered theoretical framework for guiding this study.

There are four main layers within this framework. Among them, the first and second layers - continuity and change - are closely interrelated and construct the sociocultural genealogy of the everyday landscape. Through the lens of continuity, I examine how certain cultures and values transcend the simple historical divide between the “traditional” and “modern” Chengdu Plain and the geographical binary divide between villages and cities (or towns), finally becoming landscape formation embodying the deep truth about the nature of Chengdu people’s local identities. Changes over time illustrate the process in which dominant ideologies and newly emerging social structures reshape or reinterpret the landscape to achieve specific social and political ends. In addition, the interplay between continuity and change reveals how government-led landscape practices meet with considerable resistance from below and how ideology-oriented built environments are reappropriated, redeployed, and reinterpreted by people in the local context.

The third and fourth layers - spatiality and subjectivity - are also interlocked. They elaborate on the “power” genealogy of the everyday landscape, or in other words, the process in which the everyday landscape is designed as a spatial regime to enforce specific codes of conduct and foster certain forms of subjectivity. I insist upon the necessity of incorporating the problem of the everyday landscape into a broad discussion about power strategies and their influences on the production of various subjectivities. In my view, the everyday landscape not only represents a sociocultural domain but also opens up a power realm in which the spatiality of the landscape emerges and becomes connected with the broad strategies of knowledge, governance, and subject formation within traditional, socialist, and post-socialist China. The spatiality of the landscape also implies the underlying presumption that the everyday landscape is a productive medium bound up with ideological work. Subjectivity is both the origin and the outcome of the particular landscape spatiality. It supports another underlying presumption of this study - with the transformation of the landscape, humans within are also constantly reshaped.

These four layers constitute the theoretical framework for my Chengdu Plain landscape study. Although they are generally divided into two separate groups that focus on two specific dimensions of the landscape, these two groups are not entirely insulated. For example, the continuity of certain landscape formations is sometimes seen as a sort of spatial strategy to

establish a spatial regime rapidly. Likewise, when a particular form of subjectivity emerges, the value system underpinning the daily landscape practices is largely rebuilt, ultimately leading to a fundamental landscape reconstruction. These interrelated aspects of the two groups allow me to further reach a full understanding of the degree of complexity in everyday landscape making.

1.4 Methodology

This study can be regarded as a contribution to the historical geography of the local landscape. Since it is an interdisciplinary work to some extent, the methods applied in this study derive from several different disciplines. Firstly, I draw on Foucault's genealogy to guide my collection of sources and analyses of the relationship between landscape, discourses, and spatial regime. In Foucault's view, genealogy involves a dual aesthetic and ethical strategy (Matless 1998, 21). On the one hand, it "is gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary (Foucault 2000, 369)", operating "on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times (Foucault 2000, 369)". According to this, in my study, I have gathered not only conventional sources but also those folk, unconventional, and unofficial ones, such as local folklore and rumours. On the other hand, genealogy "seeks to re-establish the various systems of subjection: not the anticipatory power of meaning, but the hazardous play of dominations (Foucault 2000, 376)". In line with this, I have examined the competing interpretations of the everyday landscape through the framework of power strategy to uncover the underlying power relations and the operational principles, or rationalities, of government. After the 1970s, genealogy as a methodology developed from Foucault's work has profoundly influenced the critical examination of landscape. As Wylie (2007, 6) suggests, the task of the critical cultural geographer has been to interrogate the regimes of power embedded in landscape.

Secondly, I examine the human perception of the everyday landscape by positioning the landscape practices within notions of embodiment, inhabitation, and dwelling. This approach comes mostly from interpretative archaeology, architectural phenomenology, and cultural anthropology. This approach "draws attention to the corporeality of our bodies, notions of affect and context, and an acknowledgement of the multi-sensuous landscapes in which we

find ourselves (Waterton 2013, 66-67)". In this study, when I analyse the empirical and archival data, I seek to engage my personal experiences with the landscape practices.

Finally, I also use first-hand observation and face-to-face interviews to study the contemporary landscape. In this thesis, the sixth chapter about the recent campaign "Building a New Socialist Countryside" and its considerable influence on the everyday landscape relies on observations and interviews during my fieldwork. I have observed all the main types of villages in the Chengdu Plain and collected a lot of information from direct interviews with farmers, officials, and planners. Further, I have had casual conversations with passers-by, tourists, and outside visitors. In my analysis, I attempt to make my empirical observations relatively neutral instead of skewing toward certain values. I also take a detached view of the interviews. I chose interviewees randomly and all responses along with interviewees' original emotions were recorded and presented in my fieldnote.

In the following sections, I thoroughly discuss the way by which I evaluate and use various sources and how I design my fieldwork.

1.4.1 Evaluation and use of Sources

In the field of landscape study, Peirce Lewis (1979, 19) reminds us that "sometimes the commonest things are the hardest to study." In analysing the everyday landscape, one of the major challenges is the difficulty of collecting and interpreting data. In the Chinese context, the official accounts and literature are mainly written by the elite classes who are relatively well-off and receive a good education. As sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (2010) suggests, these elite classes have developed their own tastes in culture and aesthetic criteria due to their unique places in society. Therefore, the everyday landscape might be largely overlooked or distorted in these widely used materials. Meanwhile, hegemonic discourse and ideology also have adverse implications for understanding the everyday landscape. The ruling class and the state always seek to link the everyday landscape to the symbols of their dominant values and governing ideas, which leads to constantly reinterpreting the landscape with changing authorised discourses. D. W. Meinig (1979a, 42) offers a quintessential example of this phenomenon in the American context: "Where those who see landscape as problem see disorder, clutter, incongruity, congestion, pollution, sprawl, and dereliction amid the glitter,

those who see it as ideology may see distinct manifestations of American interpretations of freedom, individualism, competition, utility, power, modernity, expansion, progress.” Meinig’s example also applies to the Chinese context. The everyday landscape of the Chengdu Plain is interpreted by contesting discourses closely related to the tension between different groups as well as nationwide social transformations after the Late Imperial Era.

The challenge in collecting and interpreting data leads to an important question: “Can the everyday landscape explicitly reflect ordinary people’s identities, values, and cultures?” I believe it can, although the answer is largely dependent on what sources are collected and how they are used. Every kind of source presents its distinct advantages and potential disadvantages in the study of the everyday landscape.

In this thesis, there are four traditional sources of data. They are official documents, mass media, investigations, and personal records. Official documents mainly include the various local gazetteers, yearbooks of Chengdu, and public historical and design archives. The *Chronicles of Huayang* compiled in the 3rd century is the earliest official document used in this thesis. Some accounts of the ancient landscape can be found in it. By contrast, the *Gazetteers of Chengdu, Pi County*, and *Wenjiang County* compiled in the 1990s provide recent information about the landscape. In addition, some gazetteers of certain villages such as the gazetteers of Zhanqi village and Xianfeng village are valuable records of the everyday landscape focusing on a small scale. In recent years, the Sichuan Archives opened up vast local archives to the public, which also benefits the study of the government-led landscape management and land policies. The mass media that I used are popular local and national newspapers as well as journals widely circulating in different periods such as the *Xingxing News*, the *People’s Daily*, the *Chengdu Daily* and the *West China Missionary News*. Among these newspapers, the *Xingxing News* and the *West China Missionary News* were established at the beginning of the 20th century and ended before 1949. They reported local news, novel social phenomena, native customs, and landscape changes from the late Imperial Era to the Republic of China through the lens of local Chinese intellectuals and foreign missionaries. By contrast, the *People’s Daily* and the *Chengdu Daily* published during the socialist period recorded how many of the government-led social transformations took place and constantly

remade the everyday landscape making under the control of the socialist state at the national and the city levels.

The early investigation of the Chengdu Plain can be traced to *Chengdu Tonglan* (Investigation of Chengdu) written by the local reformist Chongju Fu (1875-1917) in the early 20th century. Influenced by Western ideology, Fu carefully observed and pointedly remarked upon ordinary people's daily life and their living and working environment during the late Imperial Era. In addition to Fu, the first British Consul-General in Sichuan Alexander Hosie in Sichuan also deeply probed into the products, industries and natural resources of the Chengdu Plain during the same period and disclosed primary information about this land in his book *Three Years in Western China: A Narrative of Three Journeys in Ssu-ch'uan, Kuei-chow, and Yun-nan*. Hosie's narratives reflect a foreigner's point of view. In the 1940s, university students who retreated to Chengdu from Nanjing due to the invasion of Japan carried out an ethnological and sociological investigation of Chung Ho Ch'ang, a common town in the Chengdu Plain. In their report *The Men and Women of Chung Ho Ch'ang*, the scene of an ordinary town clearly unfolds before readers' eyes. During the socialist period, the investigations of the Chengdu Plain were mainly conducted by local governments or government-appointed scholars. For example, the government-sponsored *Architectural Journal* published many investigations and analyses about the architectural and landscape design in the Chengdu Plain.

Personal records consist mainly of diaries, travel notes, and memoirs. For example, Xian-de Zhang's memoir *Chengdu: Jin wushi nian de siren jiyi* (Chengdu: The Private Reminiscences of the Past Fifty Years) takes readers to revisit the disappeared everyday landscapes and to witness the making of the new landscape when many aggressive campaigns frequently influenced local daily life under the socialist state. The recently published fieldnotes of anthropologist G. William Skinner (*Rural China on the Eve of Revolution: Sichuan Fieldnotes, 1949-1950*) are also used in this thesis since they reveal how the Communist revolution changed people's daily life and reshaped the traditional landscape overnight. In addition, the renowned autobiography of Jung Chang *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* offers some valuable personal accounts of the everyday landscape from the 1950s to 1970s, showing how the most radical socialist ideology under Mao's regime was visualised in the landscape.

Although traditional sources provide massive useful information to study the everyday landscape, they simultaneously entail some significant disadvantages. Firstly, all these sources were not created by common people, which results in some “blind spots” in describing and explaining the everyday landscape. For instance, the official gazetteers always focus on the overall land use and policies but seldom touch on the cultural practices of making streetscapes and creating private spaces. Secondly, due to the difference in social status and class, the accounts of the everyday landscape in these sources often have a potential bias towards lower-class people and the everyday landscapes they live in. In the investigation conducted by the late Imperial reformist Chongju Fu (546-548), temples and the traditional religious rituals held in them were rendered as the roots of social backwardness and the representation of ordinary people’s ignorance, which clearly shows Western-influenced reformists’ prejudice against ordinary people’s cultures, customs, and beliefs. Thirdly, underlying ideological differences lead to different and even conflicting accounts of the same landscape. This phenomenon is particularly common in the documents, reports, and comments related to the landscape transformation in post-socialist China. For example, when the reform advocates praised the rise of small commercial strips as promising signs of the growth of the private sector, people who still embraced socialism interpreted this commodified streetscape as a “dangerous” capitalist symbol.

Most of the disadvantages can be dealt with by making a critical distinction between the realistic landscape created by the popular classes and the accounts of the landscape contextualised within the political milieu and power geometries of society. This framework can help us not only critically use the traditional sources but also explore the hidden meaning and social contexts attached to them. Again, using the rise of small commercial strips as an example, when it was widely reported in the local and national newspapers, two different layers of meaning could be discerned (for details, see chapter 5). The positive reviews described these newly emerged strips as relatively benign forms of built environments created by the reform policies. They underscored the underlying social and symbolic value of the commodified streetscape in the reform context, such as promoting consumer culture, projecting an image of capitalist abundance, and providing legitimacy to private business operators. By contrast, some negative reports criticised the strips as “dangerous” capitalist symbols that caused severe damage to the socialist ideology and social fabric. These reports

expressed the social reality that some groups still stuck to rigid socialist principles and disfavoured the market-based landscape practices. The value of the traditional sources is largely dependent on the approach adopted in interpretation. Critical analysis as an approach of enquiry therefore enables us to take into account the landscape through the complex relationships between different groups and between state politics and popular culture.

In addition to the traditional sources, other materials related to the everyday landscape are also drawn on in this study. For example, bamboo-branch poetry (a kind of folk poem) which comprises many accounts of everyday landscape practices such as walking, sightseeing, farming, celebrating, and worshipping, is a valuable non-traditional material for investigating the landscape. Different from conventional lyric poems, bamboo-branch poetry is not meant to express aesthetic appeal, special affection, and personal philosophies, but is intended to objectively depict social actions, production, and practices.

Local folklore is another kind of non-traditional material. I have examined the folk stories and grassroots literature published in the local literary journal *Longmengzhen* (Folk Tales) and *Sichaun Wenxue* (Sichuan Literature). Regarded as a sort of oral history of the landscape, these stories and literature not only describe vernacular people's palpable transformation of the landscape, but also reveal the association of landscape with locality, community, and customary law through daily experience. Surprisingly, in the current Chinese landscape study, only a few scholars have systematically examined popular folklore.

Except for written sources, graphics, including photographs and drawings, as the most faithful representation of the everyday landscape, are used in this thesis to support descriptions of landscape and people's practices in landscape from written sources. Since the late Imperial Era, foreign travellers and missionaries commenced capturing the everyday scenes of the Chengdu Plain through photographs. Famous sinologist Joseph Needham (1900-1995), for example, entered the Chengdu Plain in the early 20th century and took many valuable photographs of streetscapes, markets, and houses. During the Second Sino-Japanese War, the Japanese published some photographs of local life, culture, customs, and farming in their investigation reports about West China and the Sichuan province. In the early socialist period, due to the rigorous control of publications, photographs about daily life and the everyday

landscape were relatively few. After stepping into the reform period, capturing landscape and local lifestyle had gradually become the everyday practices of millions of amateur photographers, thus providing considerable resources for uncovering contemporary landscape transformation. Drawings, like photographs, also vividly record the landscape and people's daily activities. In this study, I do not use Chinese traditional landscape paintings which are very abstract and highlight emotional resonances, but examine those simple sketches emerging in the local newspapers and modern design blueprints published in professional journals since they are more objective and accurate in illustrating the everyday landscape.

1.4.2 The design of my fieldwork

Like those pioneers in the field of everyday landscape studies such as J. B. Jackson and D. W. Meinig, I have performed my own fieldwork in the Chengdu Plain and have used my direct observations, face-to-face interviews, and first-hand empirical experience to analyse the landscape. I have investigated ten villages of different characteristics, from the fairly prosperous model village in official reports to relatively ordinary ones, and have witnessed the dramatic changes in the everyday landscape, daily life, and social customs in the past several years. Specifically, the ten villages I visited are Xianfeng, Nongke, Anlong, Zhanqi, Mazu (neighbourhood community), Qitian, Hongxiong, Jinlong, Qinggangshu, and Yufu, respectively.

I chose these villages based on three principles. Firstly, the selected villages should be situated in separate geographical areas so that I can map some shared characteristics of the whole Chengdu Plain rural landscape. Some of these selected villages, such as Qinggangshu, Anlong, and Nongke, are relatively close to the urban area. Others are on the periphery of the Chengdu Plain. Secondly, the selected villages should vary in the sociocultural context and economic condition so that I can observe the complex interactions between daily life and rural settings. Table 1.1 lists the key characteristics of each village. Lastly, the selected villages ought to represent different stages of BNSC so that I can note the process in which a top-down, abstract political policy gradually transforms into concrete spatial and environmental practices. Among these villages, Zhanqi village, as a model village in BNSC, had successfully accomplished the

main construction goals set by BNSC. By contrast, others, although having started their rural (re)construction, only partially reached the standards of BNSC. Yufu village even remained at the initial stage of BNSC without any large-scale (re)construction.

Table 1.1 The characteristics of the villages

Name of the village	Sociocultural and economic characteristics
Xianfeng	In this village, there are many agricultural tools and places relating to socialist collective farming during the Maoist period. The government has restored the socialist-style public buildings and built an open-air farmer memory museum according to the Maoist collective-oriented spatial layout.
Nongke	At the end of the 1980s, it built the first rural guesthouse for urbanites in China. Then many farmers started to devote themselves to the rising rural tourist industry in the 1990s and 2000s.
Anlong	It is famous for local bonsais in history. Many planners and architects see the newly built settlement within Anlong village as an exemplary design for safeguarding local residential mode and vernacular landscape.
Zhanqi	It is an experimental village for many key policies of BNSC. Both the governments and residents consider Zhanqi village a very successful BNSC case in economic, political, and social aspects. In 2018, present Xi Jinping visited Zhanqi village. Later, it became the model of “the new countryside” widely reported in local and national newspapers and media. Today, the spatial planning and governance mode of Zhanqi village has been widely applied to guide the rural (re)construction in other villages in the Chengdu Plain.
Mazu (neighbourhood community)	Because of the clean and clear creek running through the village, the scenery here is picturesque. Because of this lovely landscape, nearby people have spontaneously built many rest sites and tiny tea houses along the river.

Qitian	Located in the natural conservation area, the village's development has been largely influenced by the conservation guidelines. In addition, some local farmers here still follow traditional farming practices, such as the practice of winter water storage.
Hongxiong	Some artists and musicians have been deeply involved in the rural (re)construction under BNSC. Consequently, the village has been rebuilt as a music theme park attracting college students and urban youth.
Jinlong	Because many peasant poets were born here, the government has built a folk poem theme park in its rice paddies to sustain the cultural tradition of composing folk poems and attract urban tourists.
Qinggangshu	Because of its geographical proximity to the urban area and excellent ecological resources, the whole village has been transformed into an eco-tourism park featuring wetlands, recreational farming, and sightseeing tours.
Yufu	Some important historical relics were found here. Thus, its economic development must give way to historical conservation. Residents still live a traditional lifestyle. The infrastructure is in poor condition. The government and residents are seeking to catch the opportunity within BNSC to improve residential environments and living quality significantly.

Notably, my empirical observation of these ten villages identifies a standardised spatial/environmental layout adopted by the village governments in formulating the new village planning and (re)arranging village spaces under BNSC. In 2019, nearly all villages I visited had been divided into three or four functional zone, including the new residential zone, the public service zone, the rural tourism zone, and the possible agricultural zone. The residential zone was the place where new well-planned residential settlements were built. The public service zone referred to the rural civic centre where daily rural administration support and public services were provided. The rural tourism zone referred to the newly built

rural theme park or the open-air museum. The agricultural zone was the open fields where farmers plant crops. Interestingly, notwithstanding arable fields are generally seen as the representative image of vernacular life, they had virtually disappeared in certain villages like Zhanqi and Qinggangshu. The reason is that BNSC encouraged the village government to transform arable fields into large-scale themed parks and commercial strips for the increasing number of urban tourists. Even in the villages still at the initial stage of BNSC, I noted the decrease in arable fields and the space intentionally left by the rural planners for developing future rural tourist projects.

In addition to direct observation, I conducted interviews to inquire about people's experiences and feelings about the landscape changes and the implications of these changes for their daily lives. The total number of interviewees involved in this study is one hundred. Among these interviews, there are eighty ordinary residents. I seek to reflect detached opinions among residents rather than privileging a particular group's voice. Thus, When I chose my potential interviewees in the ten selected villages, I referred to the latest rural demographic features and used them to guide my recruitment. Table 1.2 indicates the age and gender distribution and occupation information of these eighty interviewed residents. The statistics show that most interviewees fall into the group of middle-aged and elderly residents. The reason for this uneven age distribution is that urbanisation during the past decade drove the young generation to leave their villages to seek employment in large cities. The large number of retirees involving in my interviews also aligns with the aging-related demographic change in the local rural communities. In addition, the relatively high percentage of residents engaging in private businesses reflects the implications of BNSC for villagers' careers. Since BNSC encouraged the village government to develop the tourist industry, many villagers had become private business operators to provide tourist services.

Table 1.2 The information about the ordinary residents interviewed

Age distribution						
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	>65
Interviewees	3	7	14	12	18	26

Gender distribution						
	Male			Female		
Interviewees	38			42		
Occupation						
	Workers in the factory within their village	Workers in the factory outside their village	Private business operators within their village	Private business operators outside their village	Retirees	Undisclosed
Interviewees	4	12	13	3	33	15

Apart from the residents, I have interviewed eight village leaders (village-level Party secretaries in the Chinese context) and five village-level officials. In the process of landscape making, all these leaders and officials had played important roles in negotiating upper political agendas with local needs and people's wishes. According to the requirements of some village leaders and considering the potential political sensitivities, I do not disclose detailed information about these leaders and officials here⁴. I also have interviewed three professional planners who have participated in the latest spatial and environmental planning of the Chengdu Plain. However, the planners were reluctant to offer their ideas of planning to me, a non-planner. Finally, I have talked with one migrant worker and three tourists to observe their response to the landscape changes.

I mainly held semi- and unstructured interviews. For residents, I asked them eleven open-ended questions centred on their daily experiences of the everyday landscape (see Appendix I):

- Personally, what is your impression of the rural landscape?

⁴ Some interviewees have authorised me to use their family name and gender in this study.

- In your experience, what are the main changes in the local landscape and residential environments?
- How do you involve in landscape practices?
- How do you see BNSC and its implications for rural built environments?
- Do you participate in landscape planning and management? If yes, by what approach?
- Do you think the landscape (re)construction under BNSC affects your lives? If yes, to what extent and how?
- What value do local landscapes and built environments offer you, in the past and present?
- Do you agree that landscape is a kind of heritage?
- How does the rising rural tourism reshape the local landscape?
- What is the ideal rural landscape and residential environment in your mind?
- Do you have some anecdotes or interesting experiences about the local landscape?

I also asked some additional questions relating to the issues raised by the interviewees.

For government officials and experts, I asked them thirteen open-ended questions focusing on the changing value and meaning of the everyday landscape (see Appendix II):

- Personally, what is your impression of the rural landscape?
- In your opinion, what values and meanings are embedded in the rural landscape?
- How are the rural landscapes changed over time?
- Based on your experience, what are the main characteristics of the rural landscape?
- How do the BNSC policies change the traditional landscape and residential environments?
- What role do residents, communities, outside investors, tourists, and governments play in the landscape (re)construction and management?
- Do you agree that landscape is a kind of heritage?

- How do you understand the concept of cultural landscape?
- What is the influence of BNSC on current landscape design and rural spatial arrangement?
- What is the interaction between the rural built environments and rural governance in the post-socialist context?
- How do you see the rising rural tourist industry and its implications for built environments?
- What is the ideal landscape formation in your mind?
- Do you have some anecdotes or interesting experiences about landscape design and management?

I also asked them about some unprepared topics following the momentary flow of conversation.

For interviewees who preferred a casual chat to a relatively formal semi-structured interview, I had an unstructured and informal discussion with them. I attempted to collect interviewees' observations closely related to my theme landscape and the random, piecemeal information interviewees spontaneously conveyed. Although sometimes I conducted these unstructured interviews like an anthropology student, I treated what I obtained from a landscape point of view: that is, seeking to answer "the question of how landscape works as a vehicle of social and self identity, as a site for the claiming of a cultural authority, as a generator of profit, as a space for different kinds of living (Matless 1998, 12)".

To a large extent, the interviews assist me in choosing my case study for chapter 6. When I put the questions on the landscape experience to the villagers, most of them, either deliberately or unconsciously, named Zhanqi village and advised me to visit there. More surprisingly, twenty-eight residents residing in different villages told me that they had visited Zhanqi village and saw it as the best village in landscape construction and rural development throughout the Chengdu Plain. Some other villagers I interviewed also had heard of Zhanqi village from local media and daily chats. This group made interesting comments on Zhanqi village. In their view, present Xi Jinping publicly endorsed the landscape (re)construction of Zhanqi village after his visit in 2018. Thus, according to the popular socialist standardised

construction strategy, other villages in the Chengdu Plain should learn and copy the Zhanqi mode. The feedback from my interviews has become the critical reason for choosing Zhanqi village as my case in this study. Furthermore, different from villagers, some officials and experts I interviewed highly praised Anlong village for its localised settlement layout and vernacular built environments. In their eyes, the great credit of Zhanqi village should be attributed to active political propaganda rather than its excellent design and planning. By contrast, the well-planned Anlong village, particularly its small-scale, group-style, and ecological settlements, indicated the future direction of rural landscape and residential environment design. In order to make my study more comprehensive, I also include the newly built Anlong settlements in chapter 6 as a case.

Finally, all interviews were conducted in either Mandarin or the Sichuan dialect and then translated by myself into English. A university ethics approval had been obtained before the face-to-face interviews. The Ethics Protocol Number of this study is 2018/728.

1.5 The organisation of the dissertation

This thesis has seven chapters, and chapters 2 through 6 are organised chronologically. This organisation is largely in line with the major transition of state politics in China from the Late Imperial Era to the 21st century. Chapter 2 mainly explores the everyday landscape at the end of the 19th century and under the governance of the feudal regime. Here, I focus on how the everyday landscape was intentionally made to represent the traditional Confucian social and moral structure. This chapter argues that during the Late Imperial Era, although ordinary people enjoyed considerable autonomy in making the landscape, their house compounds had established certain spatial regimes to weave individual lives into a typically Chinese social pattern based on Confucianism and fostered people who respected seniors.

Chapter 3 examines the changes in the everyday landscape when social reformists, local guilds/gangs, and the Chinese Nationalists controlled the Chengdu Plain one after another during the first half of the 20th century. I trace the emergence of a civil lifestyle in the Chengdu Plain when Westernised reformists created a modern-style streetscape and appropriated traditional temples as modern public spaces. I also describe how the landscape practices of local gangs and guilds conferred upon ordinary people a collective identity during the warlord

period. The Chinese Nationalists' landscape strategies focusing on mass mobilisation are also examined. The key point of this chapter is that the political turmoil had, to a certain degree, broken the linkage between the Confucian value system and the everyday landscape and led to large-scale reconstruction and broad reinterpretations of the landscape.

In the fourth chapter, I look at the roles the Soviet socialist spatial/environmental practices played in rebuilding the everyday landscape of the Chengdu Plain during the early socialist period (1949-1976). I show the way through which socialist architects translated abstract socialist ideologies into physical residential and production environments. I also analyse some popular design strategies, such as standardisation and the socialist axuality, to illustrate the interaction between the environment and socialist values. The major argument in this chapter is that the socialist-style landscape, as the combination of socialist symbolism and the spatial regime of collectivisation, significantly promoted a collective lifestyle among ordinary people.

Chapter 5 reveals how the social process of de-collectivisation gradually refashioned the everyday landscape in the reform age (1977-2000). I examine a variety of local landscape practices related to house remodelling, private consumption, and family farming and argue that individualism which had disappeared in the early socialist period had gradually revived during this freest time for ideologies under the socialist regime. Moreover, this chapter draws attention to new spatial regimes established in the everyday landscape. I point out that enclosed residential estates and modern factories were built as "machines" to train self-managed subjects in the post-socialist context.

Chapter 6 discusses the latest national campaign "Building a New Socialist Countryside" and its complex implications for the rural landscape. Slightly different from the rest of the thesis, this chapter focuses on a model village for landscape management and rural redevelopment, Zhanqi village. The analysis of the everyday landscape in this chapter is primarily based on my fieldwork rather than archival data. The main argument of this chapter is that "Building a New Socialist Countryside" as a strategy for rural urbanisation has extended the state-sponsored urban planning regime to rural jurisdictions and shaped an urban-style landscape in villages. It also reveals that the well-designed landscape has copied urban spatial regimes in the rural context: through building small apartments, park-like greenery, urban-style civic centres, and

transforming private farms, the new countryside has become a machine to produce self-managed, law-abiding, communally minded citizens.

The final chapter weaves all the chapters into a broader view that values the transformation of the everyday landscape, spatial regimes, and subjectivities in this inland Chinese Plain. It summarises the complex relationship between different social groups in the making of the everyday landscape and explores the historical continuity/change of the everyday landscape.

Chapter 2 The Chengdu Plain in the Late Imperial Era

The late 19th century Chengdu Plain was a traditional agricultural area like the majority of Chinese inland plains before the modern era. Due to the well-designed Dujiangyan irrigation system and the fairly mild weather all year around, in the Late Qing Dynasty (about the 1890s), its farmland had been the most productive in the upper Yangtze region. Local farmers had grown two cycles of crops each year on this land - often rice in the summer and then wheat or vegetables in the winter. As the local agricultural economy expanded, the population of the Chengdu Plain rapidly rose along with it. In the early 20th century, the Chengdu Plain had become one of the densest populated areas in China.

The prosperous agricultural economy and the growing population had strongly driven local socio-economic development. In the Late Imperial Era⁵, many towns had been built to provide markets and daily entertainment to nearby villages. On the main streets, various provincial and clan halls had become homes to native-place associations set up by merchants and officials from other parts of China and some large lineages. Shops had been opened in main cities, selling a wide variety of goods to their customers. There were also many new shrines and temples established for worshipping gods, conducting regular religious rituals, and celebrating special festivals. In the centre of the Chengdu Plain, the city of Chengdu, the city wall and gates, as the representation of the imperial power, had been completely renovated.

Compared with the socio-economic development, the regional administration before the early 20th century still heavily relied on the ancient *baojia*, or mutual supervision, system: Ten neighbouring households were grouped as a unit and held mutual responsibility for monitoring the conduct of all families in this unit. Officials who designed and tried to implement the *baojia* system believed that a multifamily unit should be able to integrate the changeable social relations into fixed geographical relations to effectively control the large population. But, in practice, this system had become powerless due to the growing floating population and increasing social stratification (K. Stapleton 2000, 20-21). Consequently, at the end of the 19th century, the local government actually could not effectively control people's

⁵ In this thesis, the Late Imperial Era refers to the 1880s and 1890s. Although the Qing Court was finally overturned in 1912, I don't include the 1900s in the Late Imperial Era because this decade was under an entirely different regional administration.

activities (D. Wang 2003, 23) and the members of all social classes enjoyed considerable autonomy in using private and public spaces.

This lack of effective regional administration did not lead to a social disorder. On the contrary, local people still maintained harmonious relationships with others. The reason for this could be partially attributed to the far-reaching implications of the traditional Confucian ethos. In this chapter, I examine the everyday landscape of the Chengdu Plain in the Late Imperial Era and its underlying relationship with the Confucian hierarchy and morality. This chapter also analyses popular culture and ordinary people's daily life from a landscape perspective. It argues that although the government seldom directly intervened in local affairs, the everyday landscape had woven individual lives into a traditional Chinese social pattern based on Confucianism.

2.1 Houses and the Confucian hierarchy

The commonest things in the everyday landscape are people's houses. However, ordinary people's houses are not always built at their discretion. In ancient China, imperial architects and theorists had conceived the ideal template for people's houses based on Confucian notions and cosmological ideas. In practice, this template had profoundly influenced nearly all forms of Late Imperial houses ranging from magnificent imperial palaces to lower-class makeshift shelters. Francesca Bray (1997, 71) outlines this archetypal Chinese house as a walled enclosure in which buildings are arranged parallel or at right angles to the front façade to define one or more courtyards. And simultaneously all courtyards and rooms followed the cosmological principles of orientation, axuality, and symmetry (see Figure 2.1). Bray contends that despite the great variety in details of construction and layout, all traditional Chinese houses always seek to embody a fundamental unity of design and a clear-cut set of principles (F. Bray 1997, 74).

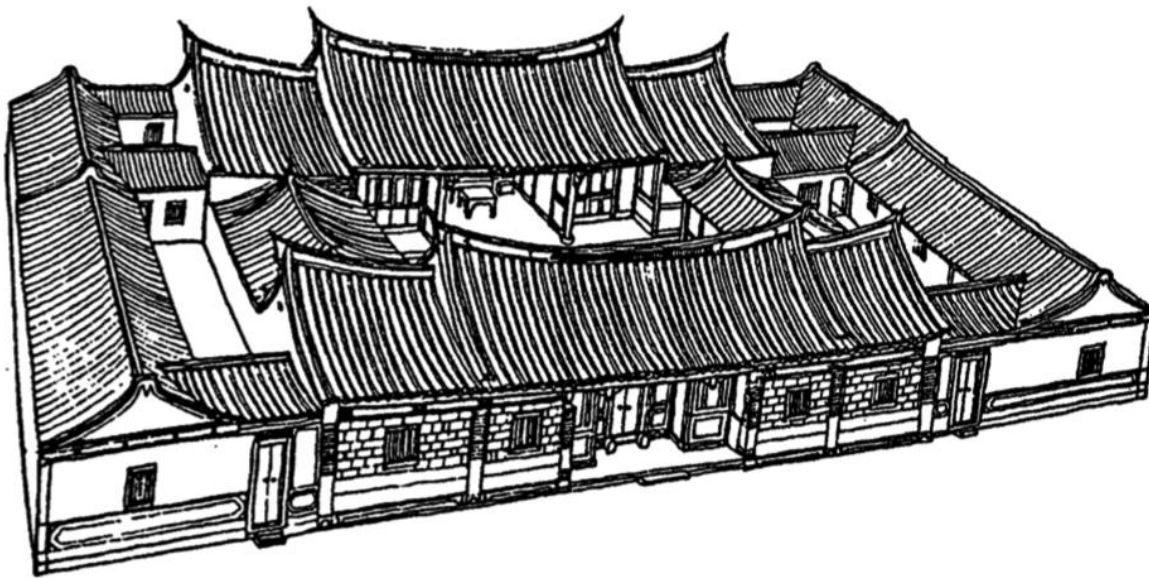


Figure 2.1 The archetypal wealthy Chinese house. Source: Francesca Bray (1997, 72).

This ideal template for houses is applicable to a study of the house compound in the Chengdu Plain. According to an investigation, the form of the rural house near Chengdu mostly fell into the nationwide pattern: A walled enclosure; axuality; and a central courtyard or two with

several rooms around it (L.-r. Dai 1928, 165). In another sociological study, a more comprehensive account of a middle-aged widow's house and its surroundings can be found:

“Woman Fu’s house is located on a small path three miles from the local market, surrounded by rice paddies, lush bamboo trees, and a bamboo-fence wall. The main gate of the house faces south. There are eleven to twelve rooms in the north, east, and west sections. Three north rooms have pass-through doors, and three east rooms have the same. An east side-room contains a kitchen, and the south room is the family hall for worship of the Buddha. A big west room is as large as four; it is a storage for grain and tools. In both the northeast corner and the kitchen, there is a small door going to the backyard, which has a stream dividing it from the paddy field. Along the stream there is a fence with a door leading to the stream for fetching water. By the stream there are large stones for washing clothes. In the yard also are bamboo trees and a line of pigsties, feeding eight pigs. The toilet is south of the pigsties. At two sides of the main gate, straw sheds are built for the water buffalos.” (quoted from D. Wang 2018b, 19-20)

This account also confirms that the internal spatial arrangement of the house compound in the Chengdu Plain was remarkably similar to the imperial ideal template. Local people had become very accustomed to these house compounds because their spatial forms and visual expressions had been passed down from generation to generation along with the dominant Confucian ideology. In their view, a house was not only a comfortable shelter for all family members but also a cultural domain illustrating the Confucian hierarchy inherent to the Chinese social order and promoting a “decent” lifestyle suited to the Confucian regime.

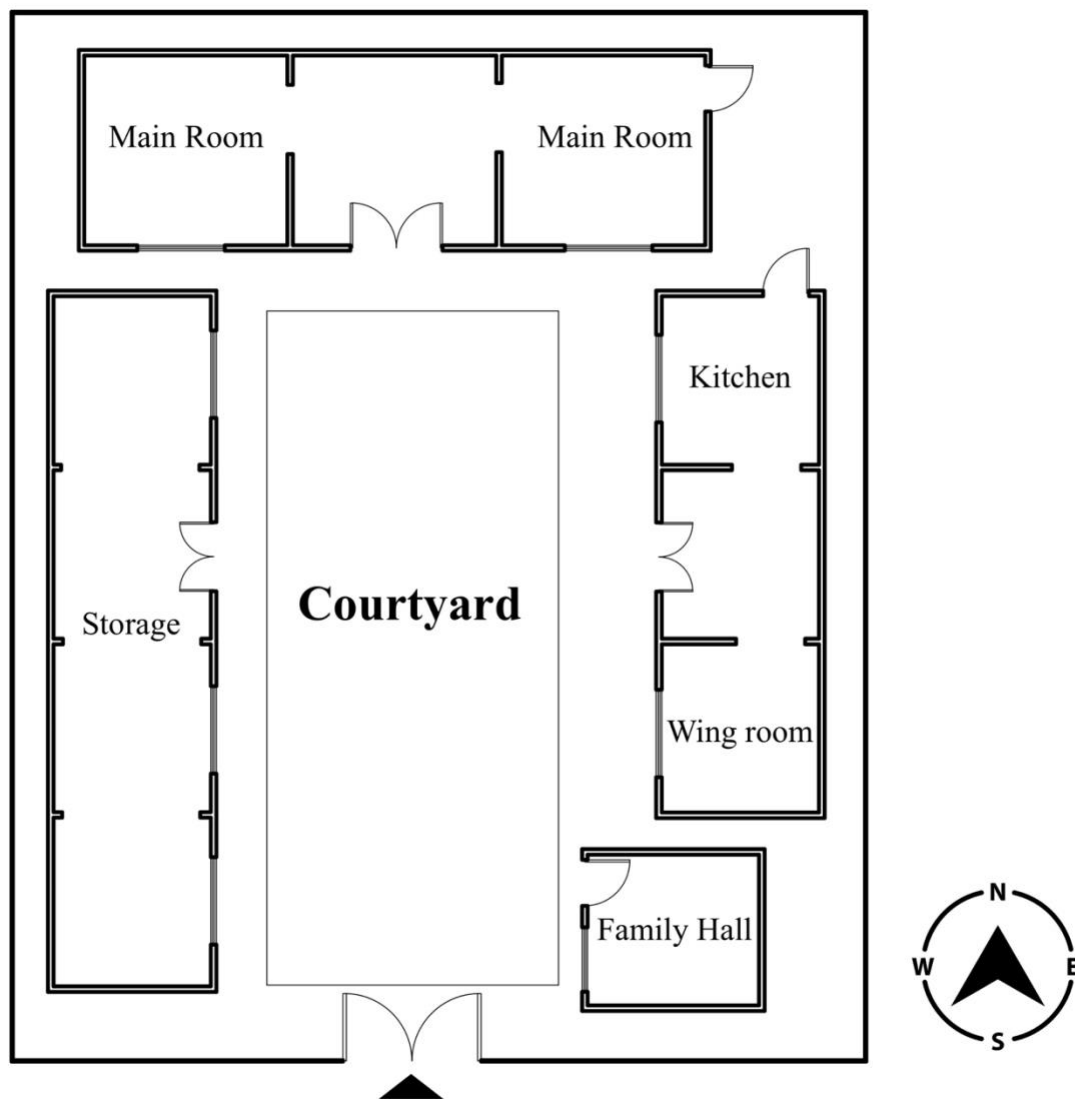


Figure 2.2 The supposed floor plan of Fu's house compound. Source: The author.

Specifically, the common experience associated with houses was the spatial hierarchy of Confucian social roles. Using Fu's house (see Figure 2.2) as an example, the most important part of her house was the building sited along the northern side of the compound facing south. These three rooms were known as the main rooms, representing the highest position in the spatial order, and were occupied by the most senior male, the patriarch of the family and his wife. Fu was supposed to live in one of the main rooms since she had been the most senior person in her family. The middle one of the three main rooms was called the family hall. In the Confucian house template, it was the centre of both the whole house and the family living in it. Its importance lay in its two features. On the one hand, the family hall was rendered as

a sacred site by the Confucian moral discourse since it was seen as the space where the spirit or soul of the ancestor dwelled, and the offspring showed their filial piety. Visually, ancestor tablets, images of elders, and genealogical scrolls were displayed in this space to emphasise its spiritual linkage with ancestors. Besides, regular ancestor worship was held here. On the other hand, the family hall had its distinct spatial advantage in the house compound. It was located at the end of the spatial axis. As all other rooms lay on the two sides of the axis, people sitting in the family hall took a spatial advantage of easily and instantly taking in everything happening within the house domain. By contrast, the wing rooms were subjected to this surveillance. The spatial advantage of the family hall produced a spatial regime in which the junior family members who lived in the wing rooms and their outdoor activities in the courtyard were constantly monitored by the senior members who lived in the main rooms and sat in the family hall. The outcome of this spatial regime was young family members passively accepting the high position of seniors and they were raised to respect seniors. At this point, Fu's case was relatively special since her husband as the patriarch of the family had passed away many years and she was generally seen as an outside member of her husband's lineage. Thus, it was fairly likely that in order to marry again, she did not want to show her relationship with her husband's lineage and took the initiative to move the family hall to a south room.

Confucian thought was also embodied in the layout of the wing rooms flanking the courtyard to the east and west. In ordinary people's homes, wing rooms still followed the form of the main room. Three rooms had pass-through doors while a hall was set in the middle. According to the Confucian hierarchy, the east side wing room should be occupied by male members who ranked next below the patriarch in a family hierarchy and their wives and children: either the oldest son of the family patriarch or his younger brother. Certainly, as the patriarch of his small family, the male could still sit in the wing hall and monitor his wife and children. Then, according to the hierarchy, the second-ranking male took another east side wing room. If there was a third-ranking male or domestic servant, he had to live in the west wing room which was regarded as the most inferior in family position. If not, these unoccupied wing rooms would become the kitchen or storage rooms like Fu's home.

Finally, the Confucian differentiation of social roles was expressed in the lack of a family dining room. In orthodox Confucian ideas, eating was seen as a social rite and should comply with people's social roles and positions. In line with this notion, family members ate separately depending on their different ages and sex, and different guests were entertained in different parts of the house depending on their intimacy with family members (F. Bray 1997, 75). Even in poor households, young members were not allowed to dine with those senior members and thus, in most houses, you could only see small tables in different rooms for separate eating. The possible large table in the family hall was not for family eating but for placing ancestral tablets, worship food, and vases of flowers to placate the ancestral spirits and visually emphasise their highest position in a family.

For local people, the physical arrangement of the house space, the visual emphasis on the family hall, along with the Confucian moral discourse had converted the house compound, the commonest things in the everyday landscape, into a site for understanding the authority of the patriarch, a cultural domain to instil the Confucian morals, and a machine for training young people to respect seniors. In the Chengdu Plain, despite being rich or poor, people attempted to follow this ideal template to order their living space so as to conform to the requirements of a decent and respectable lifestyle set out in the Confucian moral codes.

In addition to Confucian morality, the popular understanding of a house compound also involved general knowledge of the environment. In the Late Imperial Era, the popular notion of environment was geomancy, or *fengshui*, based on Chinese cosmology. Notwithstanding there were some geomancy masters who served well-off households in their house spatial planning, ordinary people only knew some simple principles of geomancy. Fu's house reveals three widespread simple principles. Firstly, a house compound should best face south and inside all the buildings should be arranged either north-south (vertical) or east-west (horizontal), with the most important rooms benefiting from the southern aspect of the horizontal structure. The reason for this was that the south was generally seen as an auspicious orientation in the ideal cosmic space. If a house had to violate this principle, the ancestral tablets placed in the family hall at least ought to face south. Secondly, ideally a small stream should flow in front of or in the back of a house. In popular culture, many fairy tales and folklore told local people that in the cosmos, flowing water connoted life and wealth while

stagnant water meant death and privation. Consequently, a stream near a house had been seen as an auspicious sign to help a family accumulate a large fortune and simultaneously kept family members' bodies strong. Thirdly, the layout of a house compound should look symmetrical. The popular notion of the cosmos was that it had a symmetrical structure and north and south, east and west were balanced with each other (Tuan 1973, 414) so that it could maintain perfect harmony. Commoners had transferred this symmetrical structure to their house layout and believed symmetry in the layout could foster harmony between human beings and nature, individuals and groups. In the Late Imperial Era, geomancy and its principles, embedded in the knowledge about the form of a house compound and its surroundings, showed a state-endorsed artistic form of living together with nature - a pre-modern Chinese landscape interpretation.

Summarily, Fu's house compound, as a representation of ordinary people's houses, reveals the socio-cultural connotations of a house. A house was not only a simple matter of providing shelter using the most appropriate materials, but also a cultural domain of morality based on the Confucian hierarchy, and a spatial reproduction of the harmonious cosmological model. It produced two major effects. Firstly, a house compound established a spatial regime to foster senior-respected people. Secondly, it reinforced the notion of the mysterious cosmos that was an integral part of the state-sponsored ideology.

2.2 The local house variations

Except for these general principles, the local house variation showed possible different interpretations of a house compound in the Chengdu Plain context. Firstly, compared with the ideal house pattern, many local farmers did not build compound walls. Instead, they only planted some bamboo groves or rows of young trees along their houses to roughly mark out the house space (see Figure 2.3). Some scholars attribute this variation to the economic benefits provided by this extra planting and the potential building function of bamboo. This argument explains this variation through a production and technology perspective but ignores its social meaning. In my view, the replacement of walls with plants revealed the cultural distinction between the profane and sacred, the immoral and moral, based on spatial isolation of the solid walls, had become weak to some extent in the Chengdu Plain. This argument can

be justified by local women's various activities and relatively equal position to men during the Late Imperial Era. According to orthodox Confucianism, women should stay in their rooms and be segregated from popular men's activities, such as farming, drinking, and public entertainment by the compound walls (F. Bray 1997, 53). But in the Chengdu Plain, according to the accounts of women farming in folk poetry⁶, after the 18th century, rural women no longer stayed at home, fully engaged in domestic work but worked in the fields like men. Besides, the accounts of women who participated in public entertainment, drank wine, and attended religious rituals can also be found in other folk poetry⁷. This evidence proves that the Confucian moral restraint imposed on women had been partially removed with the replacement of solid walls with plants in the landscape.

⁶ This folk poetry can be translated as "After the rainy season; young rural women took off raincoats; fresh mountain breezes gently kissed their faces, but their feet were still covered by moist mud; rural women hailed others to sing Yangkos together".

⁷ For example, two poems written by a local magistrate, Xiangyi Chen. The first one can be translated as: "A neighbour's son got married last night; well-dressed rural women attended the wedding this morning; after the wedding, these women got drunk, forgetting the way to home; until dusk, you could still saw them riding on the back of buffalo, slowly fading in a beautiful sunset." The second one can be translated as: "There were folk operas on the stage in front of Chuanzhu temple; the loud voice of drums shook the pervasive desolation after upheaval; rural women did not stint on their *Man* shoes, walking a long distance to enjoy the attractive operas; they opened parasols not for shadow but to block gazes from males."



Figure 2.3 An ordinary rural house in the Sichuan Province. Source: Needham Research Institute.

Secondly, the main gate of a house compound had often been simplified as an archway or a door-size opening on the house wall. Xun Zhou (X. Zhou 1987, 5-6), a local magistrate in the late Qing period, observed that most ordinary urban people actually did not live in independent house compounds but shared a house compound. In popular culture, these urban houses were called “ten-household compounds”, which meant that there were often ten households sharing a compound. Visually, compared with an independent house compound, the main difference of this multiple household compound was the disappearance of the main gate that embodied the same lineage and traditional collectively oriented Confucian family ethic. Instead, occupants only built a simple archway (or a door frame) or made a door-size opening. The disappearance of the main gate to some extent weakened the traditional social governance which was grounded in the Confucian family ethic and laid the primary responsibility for preventing deviant behaviour on the family (K. Stapleton 2000, 37). For example, the early 20th-century local reformists commonly attributed various social issues

such as large numbers of beggars and prostitutes, to the suspicious occupants in these no-gate house compounds (K. Stapleton 2000). The traditional imperial officials also worried over the disappearance of the main gate because without a gate, everyone could get access to a house compound and thus the mutual supervision system would be useless. Different from reformists and imperial elites, I argue that the disappearance of the main gate could not be simply seen as a threat to the social order. It in effect redefined the realm of the Confucian family, extending it from the enclosed single household compound to the no-gate multiple household compound and open settlements. This redefinition implied that most personal private family affairs became public affairs and saw the emergence of the modern public space⁸ in the inward-looking traditional enclosed house compound. Both complications could be proved by the new popular form of daily chatting in the Chengdu Plain: During the Late Imperial Era, every day, ordinary people spontaneously gathered near these archways to chat about neighbourhood rumours. They saw these archways as a sort of public space where they could freely and fully express their contested opinions. In everyday speech, people called the door frame or archway the “dragon gate”⁹ and named these interesting daily chatting and contested discussions “deploying troops under a dragon gate”. Evidently, “deploying troops under a dragon gate” as a sort of popular culture developed with the local variation of the house gate in the landscape that erased the key distinction between the Confucian family and the public realm.

Thirdly, many house compounds in township areas or the city of Chengdu had removed their compound walls that abutted busy streets to build shops (see Figure 2.4). Chongju Fu (1987), a local social reformist in the Late Imperial Era, observed that most house compounds in east Chengdu had demolished their compound walls to build shops and leased these shops to businessmen as their shophouses. In other towns, these phenomena were also widespread. Due to the economic growth at the end of the 19th century, a huge commercial force had actively intervened in the Confucian notion of the enclosed house compound, stressing distinguishing the family from other families as well as from other social organisations and activities. Consequently, in the landscape, the streetscape in many towns became dominated by various streetside shops representing the commercial culture rather than continuous

⁸ This is similar to what Jürgen Habermas (1991) terms “public sphere”.

⁹ This name emerges in many local folk poems.

compound walls representing family unity and solidarity (see Figure 2.5). In line with this visual transformation, the focus of daily life shifted from the house compounds out onto the streets. There had been twelve street fairs every lunar month and many regular markets for everyday selling. In order to attract customers, “huge signs and banners were strung crosswise from one side of the street to the other, so densely that one covered another (D. Wang 2003, 38)”. Ordinary people also spent much of their spare time in street life. They drank tea in streetside tea houses, watched operas performed on the street stages, and celebrated festivals in the street squares. The transformation from house compound walls to shops can be explained as a sign of the declining importance of the Confucian family unit at the end of the 19th century. In the Chengdu Plain, this decline strongly promoted local commercial development. Alternatively, the transformation can be understood as the Confucian family unit that had begun to turn outward, affecting street space and public culture. This was because many popular street operas and performances in effect expressed conventional Confucian morality like filial piety, loyalty, and chastity.¹⁰ Likewise, many street ceremonies¹¹ were in effect family- or lineage-based.

¹⁰ For example, the most popular opera in the Chengdu Plain, Mulian, tells a story about a son seeks the help of the Buddha to rescue his mother.

¹¹ The most typical family-based ceremonies were the rituals of death and wedding. In the Late Imperial Era, they had moved from the house compound to the street.

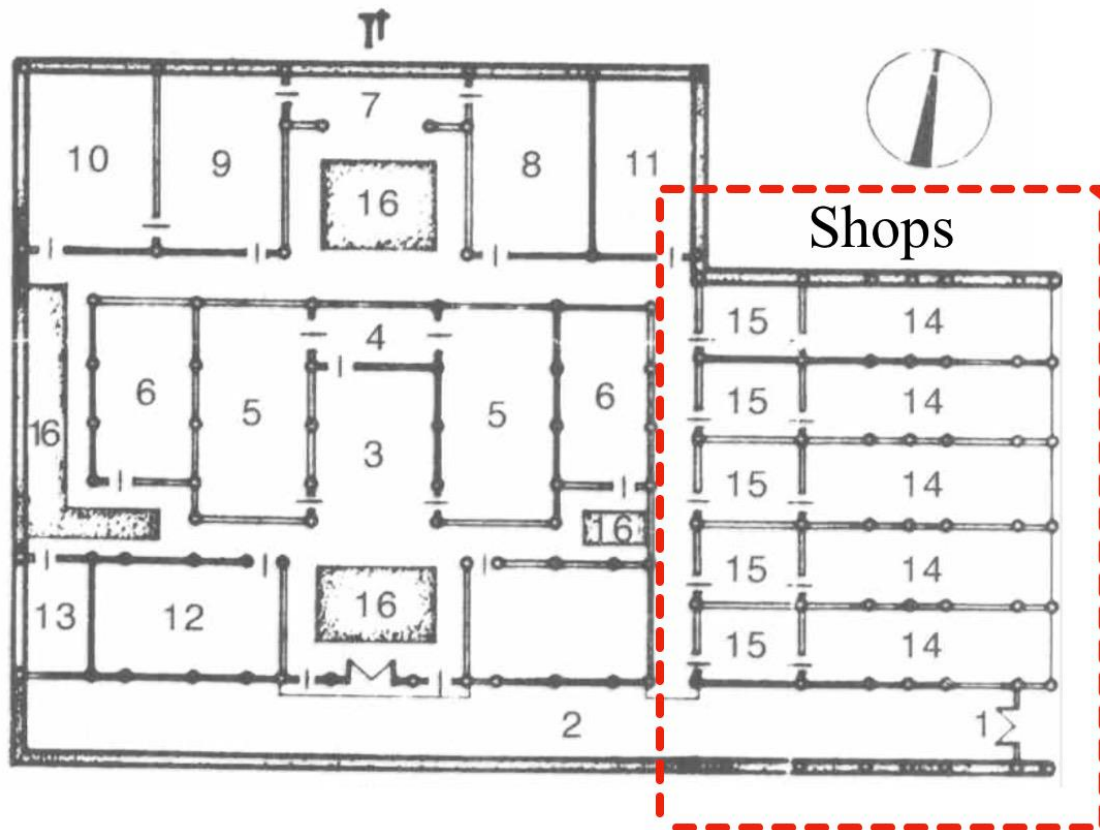


Figure 2.4 The floor plan of a very large house compound. It is clear that five new shops (the area marked out by the red line) had been built outside the old compound walls. Source: The committee of Sichuan Construction (2004, 144); (1997, 72).



Figure 2.5 The streetscape of Fuxin Street in Chengdu. Source: J.-p. Yang et al. (1928).

In summary, the ideal Confucian house pattern stressed morality, hierarchy, and family unity and solidarity. In the Chengdu Plain, rich households still favoured the “orthodox” form and embraced the orthodox Confucian ideas embedded in it. Nevertheless, in the everyday landscape, the local variations had become fairly widespread. Farmers no longer built the compound walls but planted bamboo and trees to mark out their houses. Urbanites made a similar change. They demolished the compound walls to build shops. And lower-class people who shared a house compound transformed the main gate into a door frame or a door-size opening. All these variations could be seen as the outcome of local landscape practices and revealed ordinary people’s daily life. Local rural women had attained a relatively equal position to men. Hence, we see, the solid and high compound walls signifying the spatial seclusion of women had been removed. Public awareness and discussion gradually emerged among commoners, which led to the transformation of the main gate. The economic development increased the commercial force and reinterpreted the compound walls abutted

busy streets with their potential commercial value. Thus, these walls were demolished, and new shops were built.

2.3 Streetscape: The urban rank system and outside the rank

The previous section has shown the negotiation between orthodox Confucian ideas, popular culture, and new social forces in the building of a house compound. Undoubtedly, this negotiation also took place in streetscape making. In the Late Imperial Era, like the house compound, main street planning also followed the rules of Confucian hierarchy. The highest rank in the planning was the streets linking the Imperial City (one of the two inner cities in Chengdu) and the Chengdu city gates (see FIGURE 2.6). Located in the centre of Chengdu, the Imperial City was seen as the representation of the emperor's authority and all provincial government agencies were set in this area. A foreign traveller gave an account of these highest rank streets:

“From the East Gate almost to the corner of the Imperial City leads the East Great Street, probably the broadest and perhaps the longest straight street in Chengtu; It is thronged from daylight to dark with carriers...From the South Gate a similarly broad busy street leads directly into the city ... (the streets) runs straight into the south entrance of the Imperial City; Shops with homes behind line these streets continuously on each side.” (Hubbard 1923, 125)

The characteristics of these streets were straightness and broadness because, in ideal Confucian notion, they symbolised the regularity and splendour of the heavens down to earth: perfect axis and infinite extension. These characteristics also reflected the way the potentate viewed his territory from a well-placed, elevated seat: a fantasy of geometric order stretching as far as the eyes could see (Tuan 2002, xv). For ordinary people, these straight streets were understood as an analogue of their house axis, reminding them of the Confucian social hierarchy and cosmological orders.

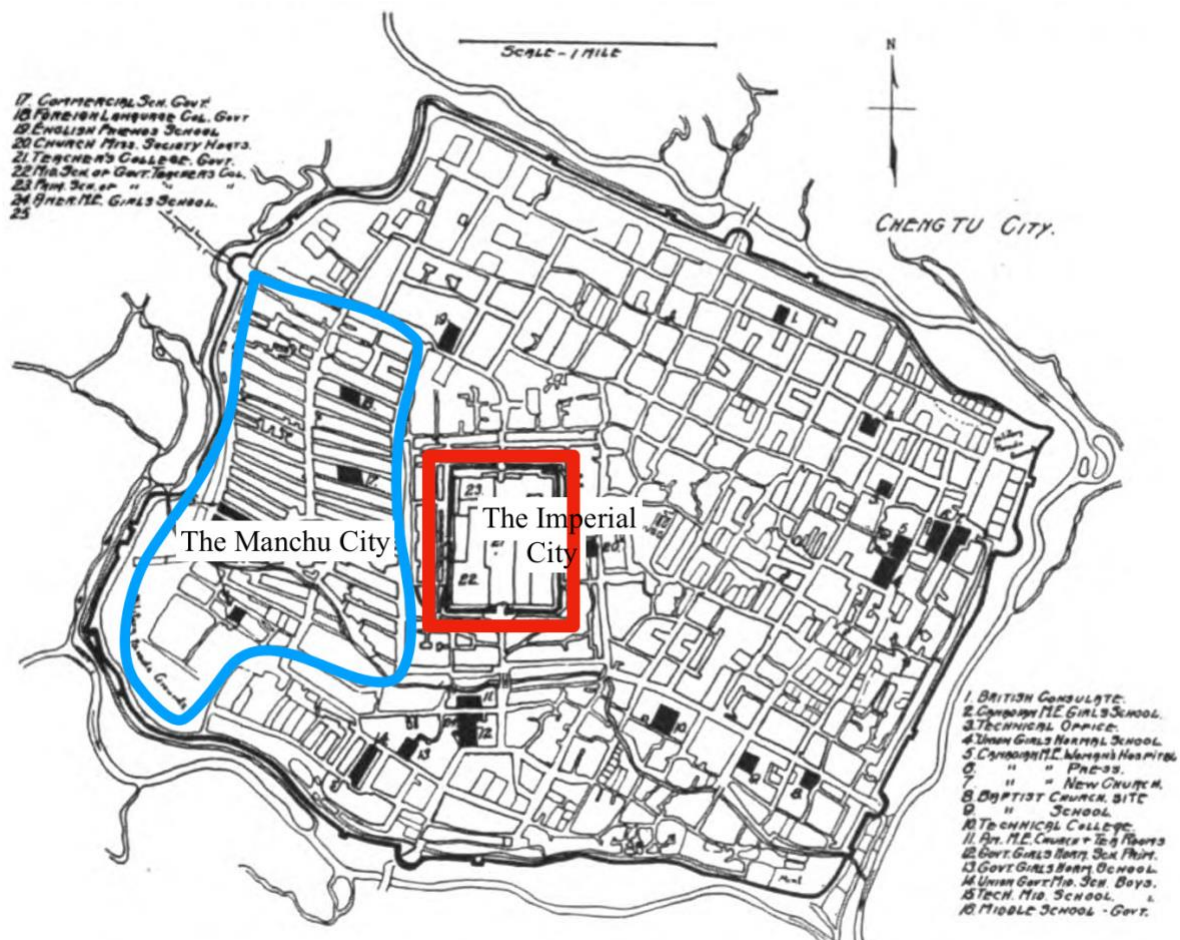


Figure 2.6 The Street Map of Chengdu in the early 20th century. The red line marks out the Imperial City and the blue line marks out the Manchu City. Source: Hubbard (1923, 121).

The second rank was the main street in the Manchu City (another inner city in Chengdu) (see Figure 2.6). Compared with the Imperial City, the Manchu City, lying in the west of Chengdu, was home to the Manchus and a garrison of the imperial troops in the Chengdu Plain. Although the Manchus were a minor ethnic group, they ruled the whole of China and were seen as privileged groups until the collapse of the Qing Court in 1912. Therefore, the streetscape in the Manchu City showed their relatively good economic condition and superior social status. Isabella Bird (1899, 352) who had a walk in this inner city at the end of the 19th century praised the streets here as neat, clean, charming, and even better than those of Beijing. George Hubbard offered some general descriptions:

"West of the Imperial City is a section called the Manchu City...(The) streets (are) laid out more regularly than in any other part of the whole city; Usually the streets are

placed with some reference to the walls of the inner city or to the outer wall...The result is a network of major and minor streets which, if known, serve the populace very well."
(Hubbard 1923, 124)

The foreign missionaries in Chengdu revealed more details: "The streets in the Manchu City are straight and broad, but look lifeless and deserted, practically no business being carried on by either Manchus or Chinese within its borders (Davidson and Mason 1905, 46)." From the accounts of the streetscape, two features can be identified. Firstly, the streetscape was treated as the production of rigorous military discipline, assuming straightness and neatness. As the second rank of the streets in the Chengdu Plain, the vision of these streets adequately represented the military might of the emperor to control people and govern the state. Different from the highest rank, here, spatial straightness no longer symbolised the regularity of heaven but signified the order and discipline of the imperial troops. Secondly, the streetscape was lifeless, reflecting the relatively exclusive lifestyle of the Manchus and the underlying racial segregation of the Manchus and Hans. As a privileged group, the Manchus did not struggle to make a living like the Hans but lived on the government allowances and their land rentals. According to Stapleton's (2000, 30) study, in the Late Imperial Era, the Manchus living in the Manchu City actually seldom worked outside but always stayed at home, enjoying whatever pleasures they here could get. In addition, as a nominal garrison, the Manchu City did not allow the Hans to live. Both the exclusive lifestyle of the Manchus and the racial segregation resulted in the Manchu City becoming the lowest density area in Chengdu, looking deserted somewhat.

The third rank was the main street in the commercial districts and the centres of market towns. Strictly speaking, these streets had been outside the Confucian rank of street planning and their commercial streetscape could be better regarded as the production of rising local commercial activities. A French tourist who visited Chengdu in the 1890s depicted these streets:

"The streets are broad, with pedestrian paths like the big roads in Shanghai; All stores, such as those dealing in silk and satin, jewellery, local banks, china, and antiques, are decorated magnificently, presenting an unexpected vista...Guangdong, Hankou,

Chongqing, and Beijing cannot match it; Among the urban landscapes I have seen, that of Chengdu is the best.” (quoted from D. Wang 2003, 36)

Likewise, at almost the same time, Isabella Bird was also attracted by the commercial streetscape,

“...Well-paved streets, crossing each other at right angles, and the handsome shops make far more display than is usual in China, the jewellers’ shops specially, with their fine work in filigree silver, and even rich silk brocades are seen gleaming in the shadow in the handsome silk shops...Within (the shops), respectable, richly-dressed shopkeepers await customers and serve them with due dignity, but make no attempt to ensnare them.” (Bird 1899, 354)

The main feature of this streetscape was not the emphasis on the Confucian hierarchy and the power of the emperor but the visual commercial symbols: various commodities and services, handsome shops, shopkeepers and customers (see Figure 2.7). Since local officials had little control over commercial activities in the Late Imperial Era, the streetscape in the commercial districts strongly reflected the ongoing competition and cooperation between different merchants. Shop owners always sought to expand their visibility in the streets by adding signs, banners, stalls, and tables (D. Wang 2003, 38). Consequently, huge signs and banners were strung crosswise from one side of the street to the other (D. Wang 2003, 38), becoming the most popular streetscape. Meanwhile, despite the competition, merchants maintained traditional cooperation with their competitors. In the hot summer, all shops contributed money to build awnings to shield themselves from the sunshine (D. Wang 2003, 38). These cross-street awnings created an impressive vision of the streets in the commercial district and market towns.



Figure 2.7 A main commercial street in late imperial-era Chengdu. Source: Wyss (2009, 80).

Finally, outside the main rank was the common street and narrow alley in the Chengdu Plain. These streets were often not splendid, neat, and straight, but closely associated with people's daily life and tradition and customs. Even in the heart of Chengdu, there were many such ordinary streets. Hubbard observed that

"No place is without its children, chickens, and pigs playing in the streets...These side streets off the main streets... had few or no shops; here homes alone fill the streets and come to the front; In every home something is manufactured for sale...The production of these home activities are shouldered by some member of the family and peddled, or are taken out to a store on a more frequented street." (Hubbard 1923, 125-126)

From Hubbard's account, it is reasonable to infer that ordinary people had appropriated these side streets and alleys as the extension of their houses. This appropriation was very evident and widespread in the poor residential areas because "poor people lived in shabby rooms that

were so small that daily activities such as meals, handicraft work, and hobbies had to be conducted outside (D. Wang 2003, 32)". The streetscape of these streets was dirty, narrow, sometimes unpaved, and crowded with stalls, tables, and makeshift stands of different shapes and sizes.

Except for appropriation as an extension of the home, the commonest streets were also characterised as a daily worship space. A missionary living in the Chengdu Plain was surprised by the street worship scene,

"Candles, paper, and incense, are frequently burned at the doors of the shops and houses; Little children have been seen playing at worshipping the sun, one teaching the other how low to bow, etc; Little boys of two or three years are led out into the street to worship the new moon, and old men may be observed morning after morning prostrating themselves in the open thoroughfares in the attitude of worship."
(Davidson and Mason 1905, 47-48)

It was common to see rows of lighted candles placed along the streets every day. Other religious figures such as paintings of gods and small shrines were also ubiquitous in the streets. To some extent, the streetscape was changed in accord with the main traditional festivals. During Spring Festival, for example, the streetscape was dominated by the portraits of door-gods, Spring Festival couplets or mottoes, and "sacred edicts". By contrast, in the Pure Brightness Day Festival, temporary altars would be built in the streets by nearby residents for worshipping the neighbourhood patron deity for seven days.

In summary, the examination of the streets in the Chengdu Plain shows a hierarchical reading of the streetscape. Firstly, the highest rank streetscape was designed to symbolise the Confucian ideal order and reflected the way the potentate viewed his territory. Regularity, axes, and splendour were visually highlighted to constantly remind people of the array of cosmologically determined symbolic spaces and to reinforce the power of the emperor and his government. Secondly, the second-rank streetscape was created to show the military might of the emperor and the discipline of the imperial troops. However, its lifeless appearance also illustrated the relatively exclusive lifestyle of the Manchus and the racial segregation between the Manchus and Hans. Thirdly, the third-rank streetscape was the production of the

rising commercial activities in the Chengdu Plain. It represented the competition and cooperation between merchants. Finally, the lowest rank and most ordinary streetscape was observed in those side streets and narrow alleys. It was dirty and crowded with stalls and makeshift stands because it had been appropriated by people, particularly lower-class ones, as an extension of their small houses. Meanwhile, it was dominated by different religious figures at different times of year because it was also directly created from customary practices.

2.4 The rural landscape

Land management had always been an important task on the political agenda in the whole feudal era. In Chinese history, the heavy concentration of land in certain groups or individuals was regarded as a serious threat to the power of the central state. Consequently, when a new dynasty came to power, it would institute radical reforms to redistribute land to ordinary farmers for free (F. Bray 1997, 33). Nearly all land reforms could be understood as some variations of “an equal field system by which big estates were broken up and individual farmer households were allotted an amount of land depending on the fertility of the soil and perhaps the number of household members (F. Bray 1997, 34-35)”. In the early Qing Dynasty (the 17th century), in order to recover the agricultural economy and increase the local population, the government also adopted a “land reform”¹². The land reform policy aimed to rebuild land ownership through allowing farmers to legitimately reclaim the uncultivated land and become the owners of their land (Fang and Zhou 2011, 84). The outcome of this “land reform” was increased rice fields of irregular shapes dominating the rural landscape. Meanwhile, because the Chengdu Plain was rich in natural resources, farmers tended to build their independent houses within their fields rather than living with other households in a concentrated residential area (D. Wang 2018b, 18).

In the late 18th century and early 19th century, the land resources of the Chengdu Plain had been nearly wholly used due to a five-fold population increase¹³ during the first two centuries

¹² The main policy of this reform is outlined as “insert and occupation (*cha zhan*)” institution. This institution allows farmers to legitimately reclaim any uncultivated land and then gain the legal ownership of the land (Fang and Zhou 2011, 84).

¹³ The population of Chengdu region in 1728 was 695,000 and this number increased to 3,830,000 in 1812 (Fang and Zhou 2011, 85).

of the Qing Dynasty. The expanded number of farmers also led to massive constructions of agricultural infrastructures. According to Zhi-rong Fang and Jian-hua Zhou's (2011, 84-85) historical study, many ditches and channels were built during this period to improve agricultural production. In addition, many family-based residential clusters emerged in the Chengdu Plain because of the increased number of family members. These clusters, replaced former independent houses in the fields, becoming the main residential pattern of local farmers (Shu, Zhao, and Chen 2015, 90). In the 19th century, the pressure of population growth further drove many farmers to farm their land intensively. Bamboo groves were widely planted in yards. Fruits and vegetables were grown in the small and piecemeal plots between houses. Except for rice, other crops, such as potatoes, wheat, and rape, were planted in the interim period of rice production (Fang and Zhou 2011, 85).

According to population statistics in the Late Imperial Era, the local population remained essentially the same from the middle Qing Dynasty¹⁴. This similar social setting resulted in that the Chengdu Plain landscape retained most of its middle-Qing features. The huge plain was divided into countless small squarish areas by continuous dykes, ditches, and ridges (see Figure 2.8). Every similar squarish area represented a field that had been rented to or owned by an independent household. The main agricultural crop grown in the fields was rice. The size of a squarish field (about 0.65 hectare)¹⁵ had been carefully calculated to almost match the labour of an average unit of cultivation - a family of five people - at the end of the 19th century. Rows of trees were planted in the peripheral areas of the fields as a sort of natural boundary. Family-based residential clusters were randomly scattered over the plain. Finally, various sized ditches could be found in the landscape. The main ditches channelled water from brooks to large blocks constituted by several fields. Between fields were small ditches. They channelled water from block skirts to interior fields and residential clusters.

¹⁴ The population of Chengdu region in 1812 was 3,830,000 and the number in 1910 was 4,120,000 (Fang and Zhou 2011, 85).

¹⁵ The area of arable land (hectares per capita) was 0.12 in 1910 (Fang and Zhou 2011, 85).



Figure 2.8 The rural landscape of the Chengdu Plain. Source: Wyss (2009, 119).

Zhi-rong Fang and Jian-hua Zhou (2011) argues that the relatively stable landscape pattern of the Chengdu Plain during the 19th century can be attributed to two factors. Firstly, A balance between local natural resources and the workforce was achieved after the initial population increase (Fang and Zhou 2011, 85-86). Secondly, the development of the land tenancy system built a socio-economic regime to strengthen the relationship between capable farmers and land (Fang and Zhou 2011, 87). His argument is insightful because it highlights the natural and social conditions that support the landscape pattern formation. However, his landscape analysis is also problematic to a certain extent. For example, why did family-based residential clusters still dominate the landscape when the land tenancy system reconstructed the relationship between households and land? In my view, Fang overlooks the cultural factors contributing to the formation of the landscape. The Confucian culture emphasises the enormous moral value of the family and makes the considerations of family solidarity override other concerns in daily life. This privileged role of the family in culture supports the continued existence of family-based residential clusters. In addition, the close connection between farmers and land was also strengthened by a cultural interpretation of rural life. In traditional Chinese poems and paintings, hard-working men tirelessly transplanting rice seedlings in wet-

paddy fields are the most popular idyllic scene. This cultural image evoked the symbolic imagery of farmers loyal to the land and devoting themselves to farming. It also eased the possible tension between tenant farmers and landlords and indirectly maintained the land tenancy system.

In addition to the early 19th century characteristics, some new landscape elements became prominent in the landscape. Lineage temples signifying local dominant clans and neighbourhood patron deity temples providing collective symbols of the local autonomous communities started to appear widely in the Chengdu Plain. It is essential to highlight the important social effect of the neighbourhood patron deity temple on ordinary people's daily life. According to Di Wang's (2003, 65-67) probe into the local communities, the neighbourhood patron deity temple had become the communal space where many ceremonies and rituals were performed. Such temples also saw individuals being organised into collectives because village meetings were held here to discuss local management and settle local leaders among residents. Additionally, the temples became a focus for public service and social welfare. When natural disasters occurred, local leaders gathered people in the neighbourhood patron deity temple and distributed free food to help them pass through this tough time. During the Pure Brightness Day festival, the leaders organised people to clean the ditches and maintain the main dykes to prevent potential floods. In the late 19th century, the neighbourhood patron deity temples were the centres of the rural communities in the Chengdu Plain. It defined the neighbourhoods and communities which lacked shape and physical boundaries in the field landscape.

In summary, the transformation of the rural landscape from the early and middle Qing Dynasty to the Late Imperial Era illustrated changing local social reality. Intensively farmed fields and widespread family-based residential clusters showed that the increased population had resulted in heavy land use and expanded family spaces. The popular neighbourhood patron deity temples were a reflection of the development of local rural autonomous communities in the Late Imperial context. In addition, the Confucian culture highlighting family solidarity supported the continued existence of family-based residential clusters in the landscape.

2.5 City-god temples: A complement to Confucian morality

In the Late Imperial Era, like in other parts of China, the popular religion that centred on placating ghosts and spirits played an important role in ordinary people's daily life and local landscape practices. In the streetscape, we have seen how people's seasonal worship (e.g., the door-gods worship before the Spring Festival) created the seasonal streetscape. In the

fields, the neighbourhood patron deity temples were also the product of the popular religious practice in the landscape. In this section, the city-gods temples as widespread historical religious sites which enjoyed high popularity among ordinary people are examined to inquire into how they were built as a vehicle for reinforcing governmental control, integrating the state and local society, and most importantly, offsetting the possible disadvantages of Confucian morality.

Different from the neighbourhood patron deity temples, the city-god temples were mainly built by the government. They always lay in the core of the town or city and looked very splendid (see Figure 2.9). The government transferred the architectural form of the government hall to that of the city-god temple. The main hall was arranged on the axis of the compound and on each side of the main hall, the same amount of wing rooms was built to house the Taoist priests. The main hall itself was a two-storey high wooden and red-brick building with a tiled double-pitch roof. Its entrance was a Chinese archway with a multilayered pitched roof. Visually, this archway was generally slightly lower than the main hall. In front of the main hall, a squarish courtyard was enclosed by walls and possibly wing rooms for some large rituals and ceremonies. Finally, at the end of the temple axis, located opposite the main hall, on the other side of the courtyard a Chinese-style gate opened onto the main street. With a small, pitched roof, this gate was lower than the archway of the main hall. This difference between the main hall, its archway, and the gate in height produced a symbolic spatial order to emphasise the high status of the main hall.



Figure 2.9 A city-god temple in the Chengdu Plain. Source: Bird (1899, 363).

It is also essential to give some accounts of the interior of the main hall because of the special duty of the city god. Overall, the main hall was designed to create scenes of other-worldly judgment and punishment similar to actual imperial court scenes. There were two standard components of each city god temple. One was a court in which the statue of the city god stood on a throne, “reading” people’s statements, and “settling” the disputes or “handing out” appropriate punishment (see Figure 2.10). The other was the punishing site in which scenes of infernal punishment were illustrated. In imperial China, the interior space of the city-god temple showed that the city god temple was not an ordinary religious site for pleasing gods and placating ghosts but was considered as a place to seek and enforce justice, and thus maintain social order.



Figure 2.10 The interior of a city-god temple in the Chengdu Plain. Source: Needham Research Institute.

The city-god temple as a representation of the religious landscape in the Chengdu Plain was not a product of popular religious practices but an outcome of the complex social interaction between local and state, Confucianism and religious faith. Firstly, the public rituals held in and near the city-god temple were mainly practised or sponsored by the government and local communities rather than common residents. This suggested that the city god temple was not only associated with the supernatural realm but also had a practical governance function. The city-god parade illustrated this amalgamation of supernatural force and practical governance. Every year, on the Pure Brightness Day, the ghost festival, and the first day of the tenth lunar month, grand city-god parades were held under the organisation of the local government and nearby community leaders. The city-god temple was decorated according to the appearance of a government building and the parade team was dressed as imperial officials and servants. Popular culture explained the spectacular ritual of parading city-god images through the streets as a joint inspection of the local social order by other-worldly city gods and actual imperial officials. Through the visual overlap between the city-god temple and the

government building, the city gods and the officials, the government reinforced its political authority and legitimated its governance.

Secondly, the building of the city-god temple reflected the process of integrating the state and local society. In imperial China, a city-god temple was seen as the protector of the local society, thus commanding the allegiance of local elites and ordinary people. When a city-god temple was built, the central government would award an imperial title to the city god “living” in it and co-opting him into the state-approved pantheon (Poon 2008). After that, the state became the patron of the patron deity and was able to extend its control into local society. To some extent, the building of the city-god temple showed a double recognition. On the one hand, it was recognised by the local society including ordinary people, local elites and officials because the city god was widely regarded as the local protector. On the other hand, it gained state recognition through the ritual of awarding a title.

Thirdly, notwithstanding religious background, what Paul Katz (2004) has described as everyday worship in the city-god temple was much like a “judicial ritual” and this “judicial ritual” significantly affected the meaning of the temple. For example, a newspaper published a story about a boat woman who claimed another boat woman had cursed her husband to death (Poon 2008, 259). The two women went to the city-god temple for a divine verdict rather than calling the police (Poon 2008, 259). They believed that by performing a ritual in front of the statue of the city god, the city god would uphold justice by punishing the wrongdoer. They decapitated a chicken and burned yellow paper bearing a description of their case (Poon 2008, 259). Although the outcome is unknown, the ritual might have contributed to resolving the dispute. Through the “judicial ritual”, the two women had appropriated the city-god temple as a court or a police station. In the Chengdu Plain, this appropriation was widespread. It transferred the symbols of judgment and punishment in popular literature and folklore to the interior decoration of the city-god temple. For instance, in the main hall of the Chengdu north gate city-god temple, many hair-raising images could be found: knife hills, fire pits, blood ponds, tortures of hot pillars, and so on (Liu and Luo 2004). Most of these images did not derive from orthodox religious culture.

Finally, the perception of the city-god temple can be understood as a complement to the dominant Confucian morality. William Rowe (1989, 173) suggests that when examining traditional Chinese society, the divorce between Confucian morality and popular religion must always be kept in mind. The rituals and activities in the area of the city-god temple had created a distinct perception compared with the typical Confucian space noted in this chapter. The scare scene of punishment did not exist in the harmonious world that Confucian theorists sought to achieve. Likewise, Confucianism argued that the best way to deal with disputes was using a higher standard of morality to redeem wrongdoers, or in short, repay evil with good, rather than imposing harsh punishment. The “judicial scene” of judgment was also underplayed in the Confucian practice of the law that emphasised people’s proper position within society. The figure of the city god itself was out of the Confucian hierarchy of power because popular culture had described the city god as a super judge who could exercise power in the whole society. Interestingly, though, the Confucian elites in imperial China did not see the city-god temple as a big threat to the Confucian moral system. Conversely, they treated it as a complement to Confucian morality by integrating the city god into the moral discourse. In the Late Imperial Era, people’s dissatisfaction with incompetent officials and the corrupt government had been widespread. To relieve this dissatisfaction, the popular city god was depicted as the reincarnation of the most honest and competent Confucian officials in history who continued to help local rulers administer the region, protect local people, and reinforce social justice (S.-d. Zhang 2020). In this sense, the city-god temple had become an integral part of the Confucian regime in Late imperial China. It provided a place for ordinary people to express their dissatisfaction with the Confucian high tradition and morality without severely undermining the political authority of the government and the moral authority of Confucianism.

The city-god temple appeared quite distinct compared with other places in the everyday landscape. Its layout and appearance were visually similar to that of a government building so that the government was able to share the authority of the other-worldly administrator. Its interior appearance was designed based on “judicial rituals” rather than traditional religious rituals to embody divine judgment and scare punishment. In popular culture, it was understood as a place for seeking social justice that had been somewhat absent due to the disadvantage of the Confucian hierarchy and morality. However, the Confucian elites had

sought to integrate the city god into their moral discourse and treated the city-god temple as a complement to Confucian morality. For them, the social function of the city-god temple was not to make it a learning device for people to internalise the Confucian ideology like house compounds, but to offer a space to lessen people's growing dissatisfaction with Confucianism.

2.6 Conclusion

Throughout China's history, Confucian ideas have widely influenced the state regime, local society, and people's daily life. Many historians have interpreted Confucianism as a symbol of Chinese culture. To them, Confucianism represents the rigid social hierarchy of gender and generation, traditional production based on the family, and the symbolic social contract between the state and people. In terms of landscape, I argue that the Confucian ideology has not only been inscribed in the everyday landscape as dominant ideological symbols of hierarchy, a production pattern, and state power, but also deeply influenced the forms of spatial and social practices related to the everyday landscape. In taking this position, I have critically examined the landscape during the Late Imperial Era to reveal how everyday landscape practices can provide significant insights into both ordinary people's daily life and the training of Confucian subjectivity.

Specifically, a house compound, the commonest thing in the everyday landscape, had been deeply influenced by the ideal house template based on Confucian notions and cosmological ideas. Its form was designed to illustrate the hierarchical social relationship required by Confucian morality and the harmonious cosmological spaces. Different ranks among the family members were clearly visualised in the spatial allocation of the rooms. The Confucian theorists sought to use houses to establish a spatial regime in which people could internalise Confucian morality and become dwellers who respected seniors and the authority of the patriarch. Nevertheless, my analysis of the local house variations shows that to a certain extent, this "orthodox" Confucian form had been changed in the local context. The compound wall signifying the spatial seclusion of women had been replaced by rows of bamboo, which illustrated that local women had attained a relatively equal position to men in the Chengdu Plain. Likewise, the increase of "ten household compounds" at the end of the 19th century resulted in the disappearance of the compound gate, which facilitated the development of the public realm in the everyday landscape and reflected local urban people's growing public awareness. Finally, the economic growth in the Late Imperial Era drove some urbanites to dismantle their compound walls to build shops, showing that a commercial force had intervened in landscape making.

Similar to the house compound, the streetscape also served to embody and diffuse Confucian ideas. The appearances and forms of the first- and second-rank streets were designed to symbolise the Confucian hierarchy and the power of the emperor. Regularity, axes, and splendour were their identifying characteristics. By contrast, the third-rank streetscape was largely created by commercial activities and illustrated cooperation and competition between different merchants. Finally, the streetscape of common streets and narrow alleys outside the main rank were dirty, narrow, and crowded with stalls, tables, and makeshift stands of different shapes and sizes because ordinary people used this space as an extension of their houses in daily life. In terms of the rural landscape, the privileged role of the family in Confucian culture was an important factor supporting the continued existence of family-based residential clusters.

Finally, the city-god temples as a popular religious landscape can be understood as an important complement to Confucian morality. Their appearance and interior layout were designed according to the form of a government building and the scenes of cruel punishment and divine judgment. In imperial China, ordinary people treated the city-god temple as a place to seek absent social justice due to incompetent officials and the corrupt government under the Confucian moral institution. But the Confucian elites, through integrating the city-god temple into their moral discourse, successfully turned it into a space to lessen people's growing dissatisfaction over Confucianism without severely undermining the Confucian moral authority.

Chapter 3 The landscape during the Republic of China

The everyday landscape in the Late Imperial Era reflected the far-reaching influence of the Confucian ideology on people's daily life. Nevertheless, the local society was still largely autonomous. There were no policemen in the streets. Effective regional administration also had not been formed. The whole society was sustainably managed by voluntary local leaders. These leaders followed ancient traditions and customs and the landscape was relatively stable.

However, significant alterations occurred first in the state, and then in the Chengdu Plain at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1901, after the defeat of the Boxer uprising, foreign powers forced the Qing Court to accept a reform program (K. Stapleton 2000, 4). As a result, many Chinese elites were dispatched to the neighbouring country Japan to learn how the Japanese had defeated the Qing Court in the war of 1894-1895. When they returned to China, they applied their knowledge of building a modern state to a social reform program in the last ten years of the Imperial Era, which was known as the New Policies of the late Qing period. These Chinese elites believed that modernising should be a panacea for the feeble empire. From 1901 to 1911, in the Chengdu Plain, an array of reforms was introduced. The local reformists (i.e., the elites who had studied abroad) poured plenty of energy and money into making a new "civilised"¹⁶ landscape. It was hoped that this "civilised" landscape could bring modern civilisation and simultaneously create a civil society in southwest China. This was the first time that the state was deeply involved in the everyday landscape practices.

In 1912, the Qing Court was toppled, and the Republic of China was founded¹⁷. However, the Chengdu Plain, from 1912 to 1936, was not governed by this nascent Republic, but by five potent warlords¹⁸, which resulted in severe turbulence in this region (Kapp 1973). Local people's daily life was greatly affected by the widespread disorder and the frequent regime changes. The local economy and society also experienced an unprecedented setback. To

¹⁶ Different from the general understanding in English world, civilised or Civilisation in this thesis refers to the implementation of modern administration and training well-mannered residents under modern administration. In the Chinese context, civilisation is a term derived from the Japanese term *bunmei*, and originally denotes the process of Japanese modernisation based on the modern legislative and administrative reform.

¹⁷ For Sichuan province, the governance of the Qing Court was toppled in November 27, 1911.

¹⁸ These five most powerful warlords are Xiang Liu, Wenhui Liu, Xihou Deng, Songyao Tian, and Sen Yang.

tackle the social disorder, local gangs¹⁹ and guilds, as non-governmental organisations, began playing an important role in social mobility and regional administration. They introduced many landscape practices to promote community solidarity and help small traders survive in the tough times. The transformation of the everyday landscape during this period reflected how certain symbols and spatial forms were created to confer upon ordinary people a collective-oriented identity and simultaneously strengthen the relationship between people and gangs and guilds.

Starting in 1937, the Nationalist central government directly controlled the Chengdu Plain. From 1937 to 1949, different from the former reformists, the Chinese Nationalists (*Guomindang*) did not apply popular Western ideas like civil society. On the contrary, they tended to follow traditional Confucian ideas to create a new state-Confucian form of landscape. The Nationalist landscape practices focused on promoting a state-centred lifestyle and reconstructing the national identity.

This chapter examines the main landscape practices and their outcomes in the Chengdu Plain during the Republic of China. Considering the significant social reform and noticeable landscape change in the last decade of the Imperial Era, the specific period studied here is from 1901 to 1949. The chapter also explores the socio-cultural process of redefining the dominant values and good lifestyles, which is closely intertwined with the everyday landscape transformation. It points out that an ongoing crisis had occurred in the traditional everyday landscape in the first half of the 20th century because new cultures and ideologies, such as modernisation and state-Confucianism, had replaced traditional Confucianism and resulted in new landscape practices. It further suggests that this landscape transformation led to local people's constant reconstruction of their social and subjective identities. In the 1910s, a "civilised" landscape was made by the reformists to foster well-mannered residents. In the warlord period, the landscape practices of the gangs and guilds developed a collective

¹⁹ It is noteworthy that during the Republic of China, local gangs were not all criminal organisations. According to Di Wang's (2018b, 42) historical study on the largest local gang *Gelaohui*, its members could be divided into two categories: members who relied on crime and had no work profession, and those who had work legitimate professions and joined for protection. In everyday speech, the former was called "muddy water" while the latter had the nickname "pure water" (D. Wang 2018b, 42).

identity. In the 1940s, the Nationalist practices sought to reinterpret Confucian morality to train people who obediently followed the Nationalist state lead.

3.1 The “civilised” landscape in the 1900s

Due to the Boxer uprising and the continued defeats in wars, in 1901, an imperial edict was issued by the Qing Court calling for officials to carry out wholesale reform (S. Zhu 1958, 135-136). Soon, wide-ranging discussions about creating a “civilised” landscape took place in Chengdu. Over the next decade, an array of policies related to the transformation of the landscape were formulated and implemented. As a result, in the 1900s, the traditional everyday landscape was remarkably refashioned.

3.1.1 “Under Surveillance” plaques

The first remarkable change took place at the gates of common families’ house compounds. In the Late Imperial Era, there were paintings of door gods pasted on each door. Popular culture interpreted these paintings as the family guardian angels that protect a family from potential criminals and invisible demons. However, the magical effect of these traditional paintings started to disappear at the beginning of the 20th century. Various crimes were increasingly reported in local newspapers after the first newspaper *Shu xue bao* (Sichuan Study Gazette) was founded by a social reformist Zhidong Zhang in 1898 (L. Wang and Cheng 1993, 2-3). In the *Sichuan Guanbao* (Sichuan Official Newspaper) and the *Chengdu Ribao* (Chengdu Daily), for example, there were always some detailed reports of vicious crimes²⁰, implying that the Qing Dynasty *Baojia* (mutual supervision) system to prevent crime had utterly failed. Through propaganda by local newspapers, social reformists sought to persuade ordinary people to wholeheartedly support their reform. Reforms, particularly those about improving regional administration and keeping social order, had been so urgent. Social reformists commenced applying the knowledge they learnt from Japan to the Chengdu Plain landscape making to mould it into a modern civil image. The first measure they adopted was establishing a record of residents of all types and making this record easily visible to regional administrators such as policemen. In 1906 and 1910, two censuses were taken to help the government supervise ordinary people (K. Stapleton 2000, 106; D. Wang 1993b, 592-593). At the gate of every household, a list of household members with information about their names, ages, and jobs was hung to help the newly founded police team detect potential crime (D.

²⁰ For example, the criminal cases in the *Sichuan Guanbao* no.1, 1905, page 21-22 and no.14, 1906, page 36-37. For the *Chengdu Ribao*, see the report of a criminal case on 20-12-1904.

Wang 2003, 303; Qiao 1984, 72). Social reformists believed that a list in front of gates was more effective in preventing crime than paintings of door gods because it was based on the experience of the model civil society like Japan, and it was seen to function well in advanced countries.

In addition to lists of household members, for some suspicious households, according to the *Sichuan Tongsheng Jingcha Zhangcheng* (Police Guideline of Sichuan Province), the police would nail “under surveillance” plaques to their gates, showing that these households needed more attention in daily patrols. Reformists argued that these plaques would wipe out possible places where prostitutes, beggars, and gamblers congregated, and bring them under adequate supervision by the government (Qiao 1984, 72). The headman of police in the 1990s, Shanpei Zhang, who was also a zealous reform activist, claimed that “household under surveillance” had become an “elegant, civilised” name for those suspicious households (Fu 1987).

Notwithstanding, reformists insisted that both lists of household members and “under surveillance” plaques were important symbols in a civil image, but these top-down practices encountered strong resistance from the lower classes. In 1907, a rumour spread in the Chengdu Plain. It was said that an innocent woman committed suicide because her household was labelled as “under surveillance” (K. Stapleton 2000, 131). This rumour enraged many residents. A local story revealed that a furious resident made a plaque bearing the title “the chief of households under surveillance”, nailing it to the door of Shanpei Zhou’s (the headman of police, a reform activist) own residence, implying that he was “the chief prostitute”. Both the rumour and the story suggested that when social reformists sought to create a new appearance of the household gate for the sake of civil society, they in effect openly opposed the traditional cultural practices and customs related to the symbol of the gate. Consequently, their practices inevitably met with resistance from the lower classes who still followed the traditional customs.

Notably, even those scholar-officials who represented the attitude of the state government had reservations about these practices. The governor-general in Chengdu publicly complained that “under surveillance” plaques were not a sound way to address crime and worried that

they would possibly produce negative effects if they were nailed erroneously (K. Stapleton 2000, 131). To dismiss their concern, reformists promised that these plaques were nailed very carefully and for some uncertain households, they only recorded them and attached secret plaques on them (K. Stapleton 2000, 131). Nevertheless, it can still be speculated that both a list of household members and “under surveillance” plaques as signs of civil society in effect did not receive substantial official support. Consequently, until the end of the 1900s, in the vast rural area still largely controlled by traditional gentry, this transformation did not widely occur.

3.1.2 New streetlamps in the clean streets

The second change happened in the streets. In the Late Imperial Era, it was widespread to see stalls, tables, and makeshift stands in the street since ordinary people had appropriated the street space as an extension of the home (see chapter 2). People also burnt candles, paper, and incense in the streets for daily worship (see chapter 2). At that time, no one felt these activities were concerning.

In the 1900s, reformists employed many measures to re-shape traditional streetscape to make it in accord with a new civil lifestyle. Firstly, they defined the traditional activities in the street as “uncivilised” elements and removed these “uncivilised” elements from the streetscape. Relying on the newly founded police force, they expelled mendicant priests, vagrants, beggars, prostitutes, and gamblers from the streets (Fu 1987, 200).²¹ Equally, butchers who used the streets as slaughterhouses were required to move their business to the periphery of townships and cities (Fu 1987, 563). Even the carriers of water who delivered water from nearby rivers to households in townships were prohibited because reformists thought these carriers always wet the streets in the process of delivery (Davidson and Mason 1905, 42). In some main streets, horses and buffalos were not allowed to emerge since their faeces would dirty the streets.

Secondly, reformists defined the elements in the modern Japan streetscape as “civilised” symbols and added these “civilised” symbols in the local streetscape. With the help of the

²¹ Also see the article “Szechuan Police Force” by missionary J. Vale in the *West China Missionary News* on 04-1904.

police force, they covered the water channels along the roadside with stone slabs to widen the streets. In the Late Imperial Era, people used these channels to wash rice, do the laundry, and dispose of domestic sewage (D. Wang 2003). But now, these channels which were quite valuable for ordinary people, completely disappeared (Fu 1987, 563). Likewise, “manure pits” on the roadside used for men to urinate were replaced by newly built public toilets (D. Wang 2003, 135). Furthermore, many street sweepers, seen as “civilised” symbols, were employed by the police to keep the streetscape neat and clean. According to the account by missionary J. Vale, these street sweepers wore a distinctive uniform, pushing a wheelbarrow, carrying a wicker basket and a broom, collecting household rubbish, and sweeping the streets every day.²²

Thirdly, reformists argued that unlit streets at night had been a significant threat to society and modern region administration. Therefore, they installed many streetlamps to light the street at night. In 1903, in the streets of Chengdu and nearby towns, two thousand lamps had been mounted on posts about six feet high, at intervals of about one hundred yards. A missionary was very surprised at these new streetlamps in the Chengdu Plain and offers an account of them.

“The shape of the lamp is similar to those used in small towns or railway stations in the homeland. A small tin can, holding about two ounces of vegetable oil and a rush wick, is raised about five inches from the bottom of the lamp by means of a tripod made of tin attached to the bottom.”²³

Reform activists, like Fu Chongju, highly praised these streetlamps. In their eyes, the streetlamps were the most powerful symbol in the region’s quest for a “civilised” streetscape because they could disperse the darkness that attracted crime and then created a safe environment for night activities and lives.²⁴ After the widespread emergence of the streetlamps, traditional wood barricades set up by local communities at night to stop passers-

²² See the article “Szechuan Police Force” by missionary J. Vale in the *West China Missionary News* on 03-1904.

²³ Quoted from J. Vale’s article “Szechuan Police Force” in the *West China Missionary News* on 03-1904.

²⁴ For example, a social reformist Fu Chongju (1987), claimed that streetlamps could help carters to calculate their riding distances and fees at night so that disputes between carters and employers would decrease.

by from entering were pulled down (K. Stapleton 2000). The streets started to be open to everyone for 24 hours.

After decades of effort, a new streetscape formed in Chengdu and nearby towns. It left travellers with positive impressions. A foreign teacher William Sewell (1970, 101) publicly praised a street named Wheelbarrow Lane, claiming that “it is a real road” with slab stones covering sewers and a hard surface replacing old ruts. Likewise, a British diplomat described the new streetscape in his eyes.

“A striking feature of present-day Szechwan is the surprisingly modern and up-to-date appearance of many the large towns... A wholesale reconstruction within the past few years, and are now conspicuous for their wide streets, rows of clean and uniform houses and shops, and good sanitation.” (quoted from Kapp 1973, 57)

Notwithstanding that those travellers saw the new streetscape as a positive symbol of modern society, residents, particularly lower-class ones, did not always welcome these transformations. Two facts can explain this. Firstly, the new streetscape was made based on the experience of reformists who mainly belonged to the upper classes. These reformists seldom or never stepped into the neighbourhoods where the lower classes lived. Consequently, they argued that ordinary people would benefit from these new streetscape practices, gradually becoming well-mannered people like those in advanced countries. But according to Di Wang’s (2003, 32) study on the local street culture, for lower-class communities in the Chengdu Plain, houses were so small that residents had to use the street space to cook, do the laundry or handicraft work, and have recreation. Consequently, the new streetscape practices, although creating a neat and clean appearance, in effect circumscribed ordinary people’s daily life. The water channels were entirely covered, which forced people to give up their traditional daily activities such as washing rice and doing the laundry at the roadside. Likewise, the regular street cleaning by the official street sweepers broke the traditional cooperation among street merchants and residents in maintaining the street environment. In these aspects, the new streetscape, although establishing a new spatial regime that underpinned a modern lifestyle, was incompatible with ordinary people’s living conditions and social customs.

Secondly, the streetscape practices to some extent increased the economic burdens ordinary people bore. In the 1900s, provincial and national revenues had shrunk significantly due to wars and uprisings. Therefore, except for certain important streets in Chengdu, the expenditure of the streetscape practices was levied as “a lighting oil tax” on people living along a street (D. Wang 2003, 136). As a result, residents did not get direct benefits from this landscape transformation but lost their money. A piece of folk poetry revealed ordinary people’s resentment against the rising burdens. “Every household needs to contribute a streetlamp tax; There is no night in the street; Looking at the moon, you cannot hear any bark; But surprisingly the thefts are still the same.” (K. Lin 1986, 89)

In the 1900s, the new streetscape can be read as an ideal image of society envisioned by the reformists. It not only promoted a modern lifestyle but also was closely linked to the nation's future based on modern administration and well-mannered citizens. However, the studies on lower-class communities and folk poetry revealed that not everyone preferred modernity. Many commoners, particularly those lower-class ones, still favoured the traditional street setting. Consequently, although reformists struggled to re-make urban street settings in the Chengdu Plain, their aim was only achieved in Chengdu and nearby towns. In rural areas, the traditional streets were still unchanged to a large extent.

3.1.3 The new appearance of a temple

Historian Prasenjit Duara (1988, 248), studying the social changes in north China at the beginning of the 20th century, claims that nowhere was state penetration more severe than in temples during this period. His argument also applies to the Chengdu Plain. In the everyday landscape, significant changes had occurred in various temples that played an important role in people’s daily life.

Firstly, the religious symbols such as the images of gods and the shrines were erased from some rural temples and the interior spaces were re-arranged according to the layout of a classroom for student instruction. Consequently, despite the appearance of traditional temples, these temples had been converted into modern schools to spread science and knowledge. In the Chengdu Plain, due to the lack of the designated funding, reformists could hardly build new schools, particularly in rural areas. Thus, they started new schools in extant

temples everywhere in the Chengdu Plain to conduct new public education. A local missionary Wallace (1903, 82) was very surprised at this conversion, saying that “temples were to be cleared of their idols and turned into schools”. The academic staff in Ginling College, Yu-chi Tsu, gave more accounts of this transformation. “Sometimes the idols and the shrines and all the symbols of religion are swept out by the new broom of government. Nothing but the architecture of the building reminds the caller on official business that the place of its transaction once was devoted to the worship of the god (quoted from Treudley 1971, 234).”

Secondly, like rural temples, religious symbols were erased from urban temples and their interior spaces were re-arranged for factory production. Reformists built official workhouses in these urban temples so that vagrants and beggars who were expelled from the street could make a living within. Missionary J. Vale estimated that there were at least 15,000 beggars in Chengdu in 1906, but later on, most of them had been sent to different workhouses set up in former temples situated near each of the four city gates.²⁵ Today, little is known about the interior of these workhouses. But several photos captured at that time illustrate that except for religious idols, few things in temples had been changed (see Figure 3.1, which illustrates that the Buddhism couplets in the gates of the temple were not changed; see Figure 3.2, which illustrates that the interior was similar to a traditional temple). Furthermore, the activities within these new workhouses were very similar to the worship within traditional temples. The beggars under a “master” supervision learnt related skills and morality, finally becoming “devout followers” of modern civilisation who were hard-working and well-mannered.²⁶

²⁵ See the article “Beggar Life in Chentu – A Revolution” by missionary J. Vale in the *West China Missionary News* on 09-1907. In addition, the caption of a photo capture in the 1900s also showed that a workhouse was the former city-god temple (K. Stapleton 2000, 129).

²⁶ See the article “Beggar Life in Chentu – A Revolution” by missionary J. Vale in the *West China Missionary News* on 09-1907.



Figure 3.1 A beggar and orphanage marching band in front of a workhouse (temple) in the 1900s. Source: K. Stapleton (2000, 130).



Figure 3.2 Beggars in the interior of a workhouse. This photo was captured in 1906 and 1907 by Harrison Sacket Elliott. Source: Johnson (2006, 19).

Finally, for certain temples, although the appearance and interior decoration were not dramatically transformed, the actual religious space within had shrunk to half or less of its original size while new social spaces were added. For example, in the 1900s, with the increase of missionaries in the Chengdu Plain, many temporary hospitals shared the space of temples for conducting simple operations, pulling teeth, and giving medicine to help local people (Wallace 1903, 138-139). In addition, social reformists like Weixin Chen (1875-1955) advocated that temples should become public leisure spaces.²⁷ Their impulses galvanised the government, and some public parks were built based on the sites of traditional temples. For example, the forest park was built on the site of *Zhijishi* temple (Gu 1989). According to Yuanzhong Gu's (1989, 75) account of this new park, hundreds of big trees and the main building of *Zhijishi* temple were retained, and people entered this park through the old entrance of the temple.

²⁷ See the *Guo Min Gong Bao* from 2-4-1924 to 10-4-1924.

In the 1900s, reformists insisted that temples as the symbolic representations of traditional society should be re-made to manifest a set of new social values, including modern education, factory production, and public leisure. Thus, they brought new forms and spaces to traditional temples. Religious symbols were no longer visible, and the temples were turned into the modern facilities of civil society such as modern schools, workhouses for beggars, and public parks. However, this transformation was not utterly successful as reformists expected. In the rural areas of the Chengdu Plain, ordinary people and the rural gentry strongly resisted this transformation. According to Yu-chi Tsu's observation, until the 1940s, rural temples were still used for religious worship in the interim of schools (Treudley 1971, 232-233). The reason was that ordinary people played a proactive role in the (re-)making of the everyday landscape. They were not merely voiceless and passive recipients of the top-down landscape practices focusing on building a civil society and representing new social values. In the 1900s, religion remained an integral part of ordinary people's daily life and the persistence of religious worship still strongly defined these new appearances of temples as places of worship.

3.1.4 Police stations

Reformists built many police stations in the Chengdu Plain.²⁸ According to missionary J. Vale's record, in early 1903 the chief office of the police force was opened in Chengdu in the Chao Chong Ancestral Hall, near the east parade ground.²⁹ Later, six district offices and six subordinate offices were established throughout the city of Chengdu.³⁰ In 1910 and 1911, in almost every county seat, there had been a police station in operation (Gugong bo wuyuan Mingqing dang'an bu 1979, 795).

Since the government budget for building police stations was relatively limited in the 1900s (K.E. Stapleton 1997), almost all stations (see Figure 3.3) occupied former temples and *gong guan* (official residences). Nevertheless, at first glance, they assumed a new appearance. Viewed from afar, people could see there was a spacious and empty court in front of a police building. Two yellow flags of the Qing Dynasty were floating conspicuously on the court, showing it was a bureaucratic institution of the state. Closer, a white plaque could be seen

²⁸ See the article "Szechuan Police Force" by missionary J. Vale in the *West China Missionary News* on 03-1904.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

displaying the name of the police station and suspended on the right side of the wide entrance.³¹ On each side of the plaque, two big wooden boards were erected.³² Police regulations and duties were inscribed on these boards to remind new policemen about their responsibilities and rights in the new police regime. When people entered the main entrance, couplets were seen in the gate of the main hall, stating “*cai wai, zhuo zhong, shi gu* (learning aliens, considering natives, inquiring ancients)” on the left and “*bao an, zheng su, wei sheng* (protecting peace, rectifying custom, keeping clean)” on the right (Xiong 2001, 357-358). These couplets again reminded people of the principles and aims of the police force.

Compared with the exterior, the interior of a police building was pretty similar to that of a traditional government hall. Two pencil drawings posted on the *Tongsu Huabao* (Popular Pictorial) (see Figure 3.4, 3.5) well described its interior layout. A long table was set at the back of the hall, leaving plenty of space to interrogate suspects and punish criminals. A chief policeman with his assistants generally sat behind the long table as judges. When there was a case or a dispute to handle, the hall would be flanked by armed policemen to maintain order.

Reformists saw these police stations as their most important practices in the Chengdu Plain because they both symbolically represented the modern region administration and added a “modern flavour” to the traditional landscape. Reformists envisioned that these police stations could replace widespread traditional neighbourhood patron deity temples, becoming new visual and social centres of local communities (for neighbourhood patron deity temples, see chapter 2). Moreover, they also attempted to modernise the regional administration by these new administration sites. It was hoped that when many police stations were built, the residents would no longer discuss local management in the neighbourhood patron deity temples with the local gentry but settle all kinds of community issues with well-trained police officers according to the new social regulations. The appearance of the police station was designed to embody the extensive differences between the traditional administration and the modern one. For example, two wooden boards bearing the social regulations, police duties and responsibilities were suspended at the entrance of a police station. They helped commoners understand their rights before lodging a complaint and simultaneously supervise

³¹ See the *Sichuan Guanbao* 1906, no.12.

³² *Ibid.*

the behaviour of the police. By contrast, two sculptured stone lions were erected at the entrance of the traditional government hall to amplify the governmental deterrent effect. Likewise, the high compound wall was replaced by a low fence, embodying the idea of open and transparent administration in a police station.

Compared with reformists, the provincial governors-general and other traditional imperial administrators appeared less enthusiastic about the new police stations in the Chengdu Plain. On the one hand, they agreed that these police stations were impressive progress in the regional administration because they represented the implementation of the modern technology of surveillance, investigation and control. On the other hand, they worried about the rising budget deficits caused by the expansion of the local police force and the conflicts between the police force and atrophied traditional local militia controlled by the local gentry and magistrates.

In summary, the widespread police stations had become monuments to the region's quest for modernity and civil society in the 1900s. Their appearance illustrated their fundamental differences with imperial government halls and traditional community centres. The reformists wanted to highlight these distinctions to make a complete break with the traditional administration based on Confucian bureaucracy. But their ambitious goal was subject to the limited government budget. The contradictory attitude of the traditional imperial officials reflected the government's dilemma of pursuing an ambitious modern agenda while struggling to balance the budget.



Figure 3.3 A police office in Chengdu Plain in the 1900s. Source: K. Stapleton (2000, 82).



Figure 3.4 Police beating a wrongdoer with a stick as punishment. Source: The *Tongsu Huabao* (Popular Pictorial) 1912.



Figure 3.5 The scene of judgment. Source: The *Tongsu Huabao* (Popular Pictorial) 1912.

3.2 The landscape practices of the gangs and guilds from the 1910s to the 1930s

3.2.1 Militia lanterns and red labels

From 1912 onwards, the police force had been severely crippled because of the constant upheaval in Sichuan. According to Di Wang's (2003, 222) study on the local society, the local police force had in effect become a "puppet" organisation, and the social order started to collapse. Violent crimes such as robbery, assault, and murder frequently happened, directly threatening ordinary people's livelihood. The reputation of the police force had become poor. In local newspapers, policemen were publicly criticised for failing to settle disputes and abusing their power. Local people no longer believed that the police could help and protect them.

Thus, ordinary people had to protect themselves and self-defence had become a popular topic people talked about every day. But personal power was too weak to meet this duty. Therefore, people began to seek help from those local elites like street headmen and gang leaders. In 1917, due to the sharp deterioration of social order, many street headmen urged the government to restore the traditional community militia to effectively protect the communities (D. Wang 2003, 231). In the 1920s, under the organisation of the street headmen, communities started to guard themselves. During this time, some households suspended a lantern outside the house gates (D. Wang 2003, 231). The name of the community militia was written on these lanterns, showing that these households had been organised into a collective defensive unit under the protection of a united militia (Jieren Li 1947). As a collective symbol, these lanterns conferred upon residents a collective-oriented identity in this turbulent time.

In the rural areas and small towns, slightly differently, people posted red labels on their house gates to show their identities within a collective defensive unit (D. Wang 2003, 237). "So and so society" or "so and so public harbour" was written on these labels, showing these households belonged to and were guarded by an offshoot of *Gelaohui* (Sworn Brotherhood Society, the most influential gang in the Chengdu Plain) (D. Wang 2003, 237). *Gelaohui* was a secret gang mainly constituted by ordinary people, particularly from the lower classes. After

the 1911 Revolution³³, *Gelaohui* which was banned by the Qing government but actually never entirely disappeared, started to publicly surface in the Chengdu Plain. Different from the community militia active in the densely populated cities, *Gelaohui* was prevalent in the rural area. Many farmers participated in their nearby offshoots of *Gelaohui* to get the gang's protection. The red label was the identity symbol of this membership. According to the social investigation of T'ai-ch'ü Liao (1947, 162), seventy percent of adult males in the Chengdu Plain had become *Gelaohui* members during the warlord period. Perhaps his data were a little overstated³⁴. But it suggests how widespread these red labels as the gang's identity symbols had become.

Later, due to the damaging effects of the wars between warlords, except for militia lanterns and red labels, more transformation occurred in the appearance of the houses. People only covered the house roofs with a layer of tiles so that roof maintenance and restoration could be easy and fast (Jieren Li 1999, 190). During the war, it was very common that the roof was completely destroyed and this simple tiling made the loss less serious. Likewise, the simple architectural form had become the most popular and the traditional architectural decorations were seldom seen (Jieren Li 1999, 190). In the Chengdu Plain, the last well-decorated house compounds were mainly the guild (or the gang) headquarter buildings. Owned by the influential local guilds (or gangs) that had a very close relationship with different warlords and local communities, they were seldom harmed in the war and regional conflicts.

In summary, the militia lanterns and red labels were the products of the collective-oriented social and cultural practices in a turbulent time. They provided ordinary people with a collective identity and communal solidarity which were very different from the traditional family identity embodied in the Confucian template of the house compound (for the Confucian template, see chapter 2). They reflected that the social turbulence had led to the emergence of collectivism in the local society. In addition, the other transformations in the house's appearance illustrated the adaptation of house building practices to the new

³³ The Xinhai Revolution, breaking out in 1911, ended the Qing dynasty and led to the establishment of the Republic of China.

³⁴ In some official gazettes such as Jiajiang Gazette, there were about 1 *Gelaohui* members in 5 people in 1949 (Chunwu Wang 1993a, 39). But considering the strict prohibition of *Gelaohui* in the 1940s, this number should be much higher in the 1920s.

circumstances. Using the simplest architectural forms and materials to build their houses had become popular architectural practices because it could minimise the possible serious losses in wartime.

3.2.2 The shop planning of the guilds

The streetscape was different from the 1900s. The most noticeable transformation was the spatial re-arrangement of street shops. Although reformists endeavoured to create a neat, clean, and modern streetscape, they did not pay much attention to the management of street shops. The competition between different merchants was still seen in the streets. Yu-chi Tsu offers an account of this competition, “a shop makes money; another shop is opened close beside it, and still another and another, until no one is living well (quoted from Treudley 1971, 61).” At that time, albeit many trade guilds had started to serve the different professions, as Weber (1951) relates, they in effect did not possess enough strength to directly affect their members’ commercial activities. In other words, as Golas (1977) claims, these guilds were more mutual-aid organisations rather than a vehicle to manage and control the professions and their members.

However, in the 1910s and 1920s, the guilds played an important role in the re-making of the streetscape. From the 1910s onward, it was increasingly difficult to see the same shops opening together in the street. Most trade guilds had formulated rigid spatial rules to manage their members’ shops in the street. For example, according to the rules of the tofu guild, only one tofu mill could exist within a distance of at least 50 shops.³⁵ Even itinerant tofu stalls ought to maintain a distance of five stalls.³⁶ Otherwise, the guild would cancel or no longer renew the member’s membership.³⁷ Since the tofu guild monopolised the raw ingredients of tofu, a loss of membership meant a tofu seller could not continue to engage in this profession. For the candy guild, this spatial restriction was more rigorous. It only allowed a candy shop to

³⁵ See “The Treaty of the Tofu Guild”, Chengdu Archives, No. 38-11-516.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

open within 100 shops in different directions.³⁸ If a member violated this rule, the guild would cut off his candy supply and simultaneously cancel his membership.³⁹

In the 1930s, except for a few old shops, all shops, their places and sizes, had been under the management and spatial planning of the guilds. As a result, the streetscape was refashioned (see Figure 3.6). Traders no longer scrambled for the best place in the street and did not open their shops next to their competitor's shops. Shops selling similar goods or offering the same service only opened at a certain distance. Many commercial decorations for attracting prospective customers were also taken down since the spatial planning of the guilds had greatly reduced the fierce competition. In addition, this spatial planning also applied to the workers who used the street space to make a living. For instance, ricksha pullers in Chung Ho Ch'ang (a town near Chengdu) could not enter the streets of Chengdu and thus had to stop at Nine Arch Bridge, albeit their customers mainly went to Chengdu (Treudley 1971, 63). In return, ricksha pullers managed by the Chengdu ricksha guild were not allowed to enter Chung Ho Ch'ang (Treudley 1971, 63-64).

³⁸ See "The Treaty of the Candy Guild", Chengdu Archives, No. 104-1-11.

³⁹ *Ibid.*



Figure 3.6 The streetscape in the 1920s. This photo was captured by Daoqi Yizhi. Source: Kokuryūkai Shuppanbu (1928, No. 566).

This spatial planning and management process aimed at reducing competition so as to enable the guild members to survive. During the warlord period, this planning was absolutely essential because the ongoing military conflicts constantly threatened people's daily economic activities. Meanwhile, many consumer products manufactured by the newly emerging industrial factories had been introduced to the local market at low prices. They also imposed unexpected hardships on certain professions. As a way to cope with this dilemma, guilds that had traditionally held monopolies over certain professions and crafts rapidly developed and expanded their duties to the spatial arrangement of their members' shops. It was hoped that the rigid spatial planning could minimise the competition and then offer the members relatively stable employment and incomes. The new streetscape can be seen as an outcome of local people's, particularly merchants' and skilled workers', adaptation to the difficult economic and social conditions during the warlord period. In addition, this spatial practice had another layer of meaning. It illustrated that the war and the rise of modern

industry did not result in the demise of the traditional social organisations in the Chengdu Plain. As a result, it can be seen that the traditional collective-oriented organisations had successfully adapted to the new circumstances.

3.2.3 Poppy fields and collective farming

At the end of the 19th century, the appearance of the fields had been dominated by innumerable squarish paddy fields, scattered residential clusters, and ditches of various ranks (see chapter 2). In the 1900s, when the social reformists devoted themselves to creating a “civilised” landscape, the countryside did not attract their attention. Consequently, the rural landscape was still largely unchanged over that decade. The forms of the fields, houses, and temples were essentially the products of the 19th century. By contrast, when the new warlord regimes were established, rural society was affected. The former autonomous communities went under the control of the provincial militarists. These militarists crazily collected land taxes to reinforce their military power⁴⁰, which impoverished farmers and produced widespread unemployment (Kapp 1973, 43-55). To struggle against this brutal economic exploitation, ordinary farmers joined the offshoots of *Gelaohui* to protect their interests. Notwithstanding *Gelaohui* as a gang still charged small fees on farmers, the price was much cheaper than that of the land taxes (Chunwu Wang 1993a, 162-163). In everyday rural life, conflicts between *Gelaohui* and provincial militarists frequently occurred (Kapp 1973, 50-55).

The control of the provincial militarists had profound consequences in many ways. Firstly, both the provincial militarists and *Gelaohui* encouraged farmers to plant poppies in their fields because poppies could bring a much higher profit than traditional rice. In 1924, more than two-thirds of the fields in Sichuan had been turned into poppy fields (Woodhead 1924, 563).⁴¹ Local people were surprised at this transformation. They joked that you could only see poppies and weeds contending for beauty in the rural area (M. Chen and Jia 2020, 45) (see Figure 3.7, 3.8). A foreign correspondent also gives an account of the impressive poppy fields: “I never

⁴⁰ The collection of taxes was crazy and striking. According to Kapp’s (1973, 45) study, “by the early thirties, collection of annual land taxes for the 1960s and 1970s was widespread, while in some districts taxes were being collected as far ahead as the 1990s”.

⁴¹ This percentage of poppy fields in Sichuan perhaps is a little overstated. According to Wei Hu and Ping Liu’s (2013, 79) study on poppy planting, about one-third of the fields in Sichuan had become poppy land in many regions.

lost sight of poppy (in Sichuan) ...10,000 acres sown with poppy instead of wheat. (Woodhead 1924, 563)” In the 1920s and 1930s, poppy fields replaced rice paddies, dominating the view of the countryside.

Secondly, many landmarks had disappeared from sight and the new landscape had been made by the collective-oriented farming under the organisation of *Gelaohui*. The similar squarish fields marked out by dykes, ditches and ridges were replaced by large-scale poppy fields of different sizes and shapes. Households seldom farmed completely independently, particularly in those remote areas. Instead, many farmers tended to (or were forced to) join a branch of *Gelaohui* to collectively cultivate under the organisation of *Gelaohui*⁴² because, on the one hand, different from rice planting, for poppy growing, independent household farming could not rival the more productive and profitable large-scale collective farming. On the other hand, collective farming showed and promoted the solidarity of the rural gang, which was important for bolstering collective defence in wartime and collectively struggling against the warlord's economic exploitation. The rows of trees which denoted the boundary of the traditional hedged blocks had also been largely removed for this large-scale collective farming. In addition, *Gelaohui* imposed a new social structure on the rural society. A village became a new basic unit (a “public harbour” or an offshoot of *Gelaohui*) for organising farming and self-defence. Thus, people planted hedges in straight lines and constructed broad canals to visibly delineate the village’s boundary in the terrain. Perhaps elder people could still find some evidence of the former world. The neighbourhood patron deity temples were still standing in the middle of the fields but had been turned into the regular meeting places of *Gelaohui*. The traces of the former multiple household blocks remained in some places, but not much else.

Thirdly, severe poverty and a heavy tax burden led to the piecemeal abandonment of some settlements on marginal land. Many farmers who could not bear the burden of taxes left the villages to find a new livelihood elsewhere. They generally became vagrants and labour workers in nearby towns or joined the army of the warlords. Consequently, many small settlements were deserted and wiped off the scene. Their sites were marked only by several

⁴² For example, the leader of *Gelaohui*, Wen-cai Liu, founded a gang-related group named “Welfare and Progression association (*gongyi jinbu she*)” in An’ren county to organise farmers into collective-oriented poppy growing (Zhao 2011, 226-227). Due to limited sources, it is difficult to know whether farmers joined this group on their own initiative or passively.

solitary ruined buildings, while other visible signs had been obliterated by the new grass and bamboo groves.



Figure 3.7 Poppy cultivation in the Chengdu Plain in the 1920s. Source: Kokuryūkai Shuppanbu (1928, No. 570).



Figure 3.8 A poppy field in the Chengdu Plain. Source: https://sk.sina.cn/article_1985056033_p76518d2102700fcf7.html

The changes in the landscape carried two layers of meaning. Firstly, they showed that profit-driven land use had replaced subsistence rice farming under the warlord regime. The heavy burden of taxes imposed by the warlord government had impelled farmers to plant the most profitable crops - poppies - in the most productive way. As a farmer explained the poppy growing in an interview. "Today, the taxes are so heavy. Traditional cultivation has been impossible to pay that. What can I do except for planting poppies? (S. Lin and Long 1984, 104)" In addition, to promote poppy growing, the warlord government introduced a new land policy in the Chengdu Plain: "if a household was to plant rice in a year, it would need to pay three-year land taxes; but for those households growing poppies in a year, they would only pay one-year taxes. (Yuanbo Zhang 2016, 86)" Compared with the former imperial government that emphasised independent household farming, the new warlord government had a different mindset.

Secondly, independent household farming was replaced by collective-oriented farming under the organisation of *Gelaohui*. The turbulence during the warlord period broke this ancient bond between paddy fields and household farming. The rural gangs now played an important

role in people's daily farming. The old field boundary pattern was erased, and traditional dykes, ridges, and channels were re-arranged for large-scale collective-oriented farming. A new spatial regime had been created in the countryside since the large-scale fields and broad canals had been incompatible with traditional farming based on the independent family. As a result, this spatial regime, along with the collective-oriented activities of gangs, underpinned a new communal corporate lifestyle in the Chengdu Plain.

3.2.4 The civic centre – teahouses

In the Chengdu Plain, during the Qing dynasty, teahouses had been leisure centres in people's daily life. Every day, residents congregated in nearby teahouses to drink tea, have a chat, talk about their business, eat some food, cut hair, hear stories, and enjoy performances of folk opera and storytelling (see Figure 3.9). During the warlord period, in addition to relaxation and recreation, the development of local guilds and gangs added more social functions to this traditional place. Meanwhile, the social turbulence also greatly changed the traditional activities in a teahouse. As a result, the traditional teahouse had become a sort of modern civic centre very essential to local people. Its appearance also underwent some significant changes in this process.

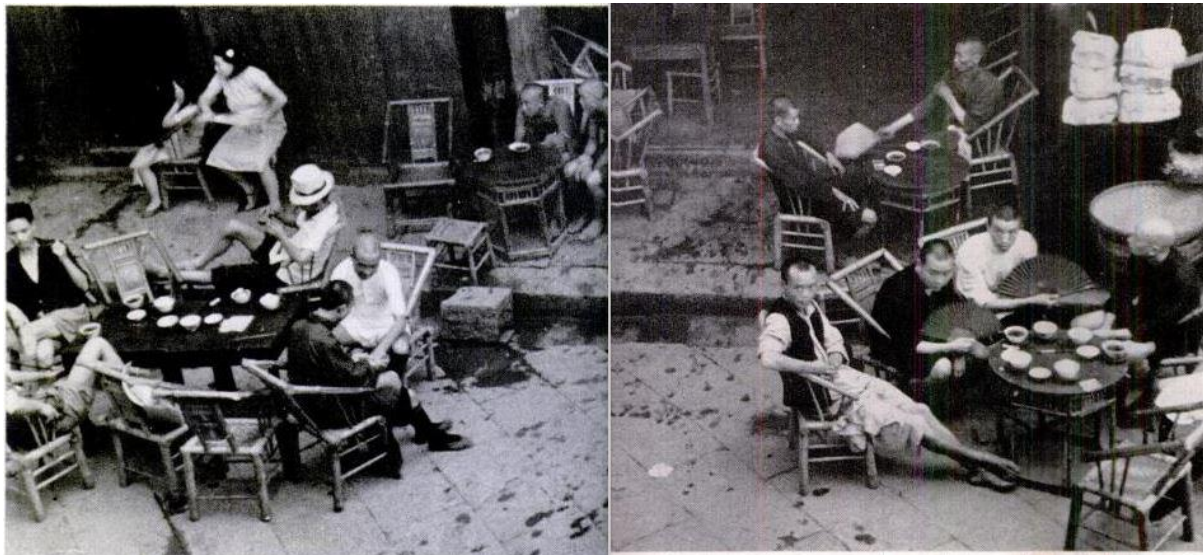


Figure 3.9 The scene of a teahouse in Long Quan Yi (a small town in Chengdu Plain), Sichuan. Carl Mydans captured this photo in 1941 for *LIFE* magazine. Source: Mydans (1941, 86-87).

The most conspicuous elements in the new teahouse were the gang lanterns or wooden plaques hung at the entrance. These lanterns and plaques were the products of the rapid expansion of gang power in the Chengdu Plain. To deal with the gang's affairs, gangs had somehow taken over teahouses and used them as their meeting places and permanent offices. The members of the gangs made these plaques and special forms of lanterns. Generally, "so-and-so harbour" was inscribed on them, indicating the name of this offshoot (D. Wang 2008). According to the reminiscences of an old teahouse patron Yin Li, nearly all rural teahouses had hung such plaques and lanterns at their entrances and had become gang's offices (D. Wang 2008). The archives of the police also made a reference to this change. It pointed out that ninety percent of the gang members went to a teahouse to have a meeting or as their headquarters. Guilds also appropriated the teahouse as their headquarters. The guild's plaque was often hung next to the gang's one.

The activities of the gang also reshaped the interior of the teahouse. Before the 20th century, the interior space was arranged for enjoying public performances like storytelling and folk operas. The tables were generally placed around a stage like the layout of a theatre. However, during the warlord period, after administering the gang's affairs had become an activity in many teahouses, at least a component of a teahouse had been arranged in the layout of a meeting room. In addition, because the police had become powerless, settling neighbourhood disputes had become a primary duty of the gang and thus a court-like layout was also seen in a teahouse (see Figure 3.10). Tables were placed on each side so that the middle space became a small "court" for people to lodge their cases in front of the gang's leader and members. However, many teahouse owners were not very willing to re-arrange their interior space to meet the requirements of the gang's activities and insisted that the traditional layout was better for their business. Therefore, a conflict between the gang and the shopkeepers in the spatial arrangement often occurred.

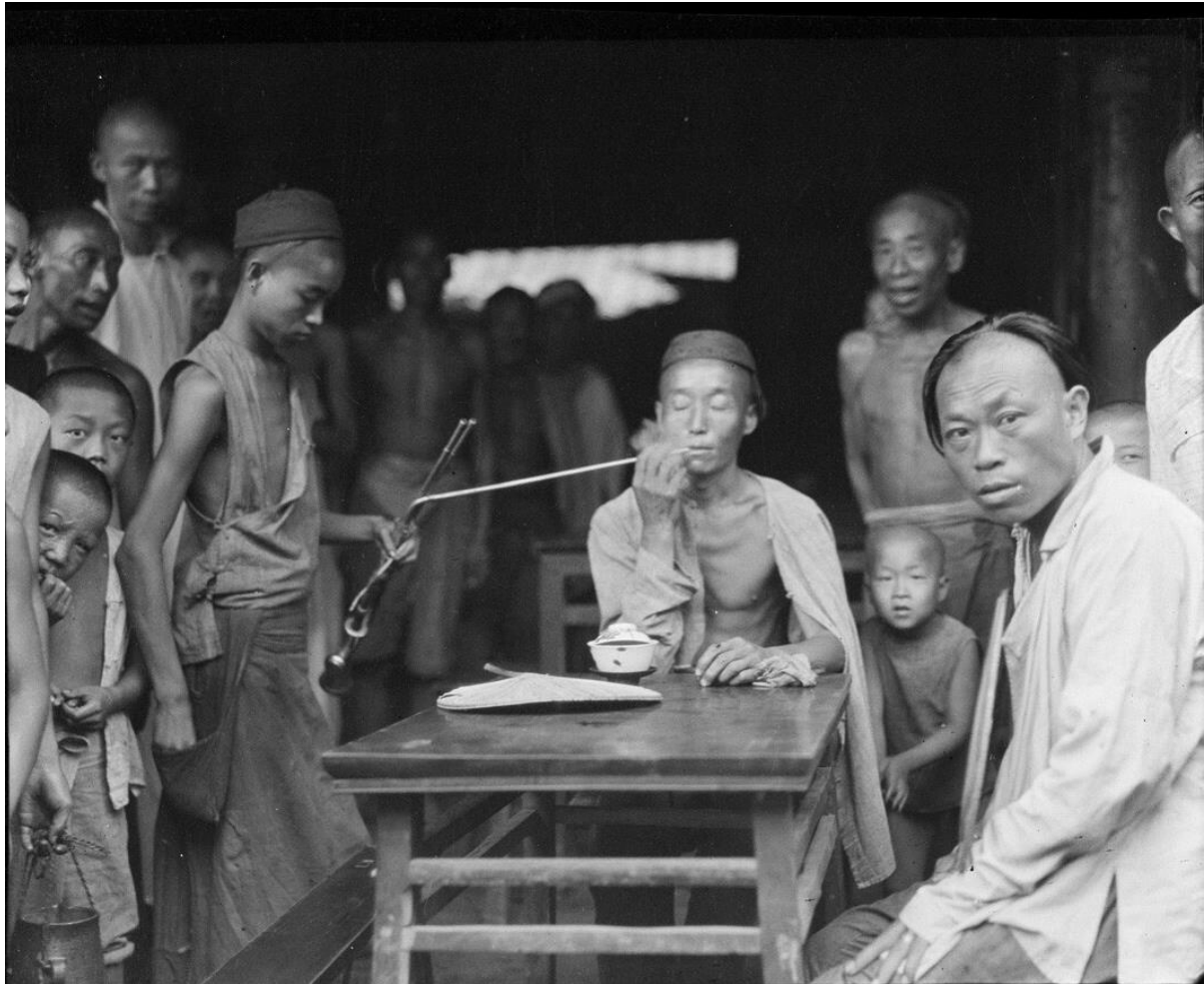


Figure 3.10 A man in a teahouse in Sichuan. According to the garment and gesture, it is likely that the man in the middle is a headman of Gelaohui and he is handling some affairs like neighbourhood disputes. This photo was captured in 1917 by Sidney D. Gamble in Yang Tao Chi, Sichuan. Source: The repository of Duke University libraries.

The social turbulence also markedly changed the teahouses. The competition for the exclusive zone between nearby teahouses often led to violent conflicts in an unstable society. Therefore, the spatial boundary between different teahouses was generally clearly drawn to avoid possible controversy over the exclusive zone. For example, in a park, a white line had been drawn between two adjoining teahouses after a conflict over the exclusive zone (D. Wang 2008). Other minor matters, such as petty theft and internal disputes, also severely threatened the operation of a teahouse when the regional administration became poor under the warlord regime. Many teahouses posted various prominent notices to remind their customers to beware of pickpockets. The shopkeeper of Huifeng teahouse even trained a

parrot to repeat a few words - "a pickpocket has been caught" - to remind people at its entrance (D. Wang 2008).

Because many people had joined gangs during the warlord period, the teahouses in effect had become the social centre for ordinary people. Consequently, elements of the modern civic centre had been gradually added to the teahouses. Various newspapers could be found in nearly every teahouse for sale or rent. Every day, people could know the latest news through these newspapers. In wartime, teahouses became the most important information centre for nearby residents to keep up-to-date on the latest news so that they could find ways to cope. The makeshift stage in a teahouse had become permanent to some extent. Apart from traditional opera performances, people frequently used this space to deliver a public speech and openly discuss social issues (D. Wang 2008). The permanent stage turned a teahouse into a public forum where different opinions could be freely expressed and fully exchanged.

In summary, as a leisure place, the form of the teahouse had been largely reshaped by the gangs' activities. The new title plaques hanging at the entrance indicated that the gangs had to some extent taken over the teahouses and used them as their offices or headquarters. The inside area had been reconfigured to meet the gang's requirements, such as holding meetings and daily administration. Except for the gangs, the shopkeepers also made some changes to the teahouses for the survival of their business. The boundary of the exclusive zone had been clearly drawn to avoid conflicts between adjoining teahouses. The social repercussions of this physical transformation of the teahouse were amplified by the extensive overlap between gang members and ordinary people. When the traditional teahouses were reshaped as the gang's offices, they quickly evolved into the civic centres of ordinary people. Every day, many public events, such as disseminating information to the public and public discussion, took place there. In these aspects, the teahouses in effect successfully promoted engagement in current affairs.

3.3 The landscape practices of the Chinese Nationalists in the 1940s

In 1937, after about three decades of tumultuous warlord rule, the Chengdu Plain was finally fully under the control of the central government⁴³. Meanwhile, both the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War and the founding of a provisional wartime capital in Chongqing had raised the Chengdu Plain to an unprecedented important position in state politics. In this context, the Chinese Nationalists (*Guomindang*) started to play an important role in the making of the everyday landscape. They sought to create a state-Confucian form of landscape to reconstruct the national identity and strengthen social mobilisation.

3.3.1 The reconfiguration of the family hall

After the central government fully controlled the Chengdu Plain in 1937, the Chinese Nationalists initiated a movement to change the local social appearance and popular culture. This movement was named the "New Life Movement" (hereafter, NLM). It aimed to promote a healthy lifestyle and unite ordinary people under a state-sponsored ideology.

NLM proposed some practical measures to alter ordinary people's houses. Firstly, it reconfigured the most important place - the family hall - in a traditional house compound (see Figure 3.11). In the Confucian house template, the family hall was rendered as a sacred place where the spirit or soul of the ancestor dwelled, and the family members conducted regular worship (see chapter 2). But the Nationalist regime, sought to reconfigure this to emphasise the state's role in family life by removing ancestor tablets, images of elders, and genealogical scrolls. Instead, the Guomindang wanted the portrait of Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925)⁴⁴, the "Father of the Nation", to be displayed in the place of the ancestor tablets. Through this transformation, the Nationalists were trying to convince people that the state had assumed the role of the patriarch of the family to manage and monitor the family. Additionally, this reconfiguration intended to develop a new concept of social obligation based on a reinterpretation of traditional Confucian morality. When the patriarch was replaced by the nation in the symbolic moral system, the moral commitment to the patriarch was naturally

⁴³ Here, the central government refers to the Nationalist government in the Republic of China.

⁴⁴ Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) was a prestigious Chinese statesman, the first provisional president of the Republic of China and the first leader of the Chinese Nationalist Party.

passed down to the nation. The Nationalists wanted people to internalise the new social obligations which was serving the country and obeying the authorities. Notably, in some compliant houses, the national flag and the Chinese Nationalist Party flag were hung at a 45-degree angle on each side of Sun Yat-sen's portrait. This configuration, except for further reinforcing the visual perception of the nation, also implied that the nation and the Nationalist Party were inseparable in the Chinese Nationalist ideology.

Secondly, NLM sought to change the messy environment to cleanliness and neatness. In the Chengdu Plain, in the warlord period, the repeated cycles of destruction and reconstruction had made daily clean-up of a house impractical. In a memoir, Grace Service gives an account of this indoor environment.

"Most of them (Chengdu people) ... thought we wasted too much time trying to be clean; clean kitchens and clean floors were no necessity to them ... Their kitchens were in what we would call sheds. Most of their floors were dingy brick or grimy wood. Frequent expectoration, together with the habit of allowing babies to urinate freely on the floor anywhere and everywhere, made for unhygienic conditions and offensive odors. Cobwebs never seem to bother Chinese. (Service 1989, 70)"

The Nationalists identified this mess as the outcome of moral deterioration and bad lifestyle habits (Ferlanti 2012) rather than of the difficult living conditions in wartime. Thus, through NLM, they struggled to alter this dirty environment and thereby revived the traditional morality embedded in the appropriate environment management and promoted a healthy lifestyle compatible with the neat vision. Specifically, according to NLM, in every household, the floor should be swept twice with a broom each day and mopped with water each week (J. Cai 2020, 37). Furthermore, furniture, windows, walls, and doors should be cleaned once each day (J. Cai 2020, 37). The ideal environment envisioned by the Nationalists could be outlined as "sheer clean beauty": clean ground, windows and doors, white walls, and no parasites. NLM re-employed the *baojia*⁴⁵ heads to propagandise this "sheer clean beauty" and supervise the maintenance of the clean environment (Ferlanti 2012, 985). In the 1940s, the mess had

⁴⁵ *Baojia* is an ancient mutual supervision system in China. Its basic unit was generally constituted by ten households.

received a real clearance. No rubbish and spit could be seen in people's houses. Few house flies could be found. Pigsties had been moved to the back of the house. White walls took the place of hedges and low wooden fences. A local intellectual felt shocked by this new vision. "Now ... what people can see has been tidy, neat, and clean ... if there is no NLM, perhaps, it is still very dirty (S. Yan 1937, 117)."

The reconfiguration of the family hall and the quest for "sheer clean beauty" in the realm of the family can be seen as the outcome of the Chinese Nationalists' practices to build the new national identity and to define new norms of behaviour. The Confucian ethos provided the ideological and cultural framework for interpreting these transformations. The replacement of the ancestor tables with the portrait of the "Father of the Nation" offered a double reading. On the one hand, it was a spatial inheritance of the traditional Confucian moral machine (for the Confucian moral machine, see chapter 2). On the other hand, it reconfigured this machine to instil the new state-Confucian morality. This new morality was that the state had assumed the role of the patriarch to manage the family and the traditional filial piety should extend to the concept of obeying the authority and "sacrificing oneself for the sake of the nation" (Ferlanti 2012, 979). Likewise, the quest for "sheer clean beauty" illustrated Nationalists' reinterpretation of the traditional code of behaviour based on the Confucian virtues of "*Li* (propriety)" and "*Chi* (shame)" from the perspective of environmental hygiene. The mess was regarded as impropriety and a shame. Cleanliness, as the visual and moral principle, was invoked as the embodiment of appropriate conduct and a healthy lifestyle.



Figure 3.11 The national flag and the portrait of Sun Yat-sen in a town leader's house in Long Quan Yi (a small town in the Chengdu Plain). Carl Mydans captured this photo in 1941 for *LIFE* magazine. Source: Mydans (1941, 90).

3.3.2 Slogans in the streets

Apart from the transformation in people's houses, the Nationalists also paid attention to the streets. After 1937, the local streetscape had been largely reshaped to spread the state-sponsored ideology. The most conspicuous change was the widespread political slogans. In the 1940s, the Nationalists and zealous intellectuals utilised every inch of street space to write political slogans. Walls and building facades were painted white and black political slogans

were written on them. Street posts and street decorations like lanterns were also utilised to display propaganda posters (Shan 1937, 10). Highly commercialised banners and advertisement boards always left their eye-catching places for painting slogans. Notably, the traditional style of Chinese architectural arches (*paifang*) which were generally built at the entrance of a street to display the imperial edicts to praise the Confucian moral models, also became important places for painting slogans. The memorial inscriptions on these ancient arches had been effaced by the government and the national emblem and political slogans were painted on their places (see Figure 3.12).

The content of the slogans was carefully worked out in accordance with the changing political situation. For example, in the new year of 1937, due to the increasing tensions between China and Japan, most slogans were about resisting the forthcoming Japanese invasion. During the Second Sino-Japanese war, “Saving the nation” (see Figure 3.12) and the enduring spirit of resistance and solidarity became the themes of the slogans. When it came to the end of the Second Sino-Japanese War, “The intellectuals go down to the countryside” was painted everywhere (D. Wang 2018b, 11). These slogans manifested that the state’s priorities had shifted from fighting to encouraging intellectuals to improve agricultural production after the war. Over the last several years of the 1940s, since the Nationalists had plunged into the civil war with the Chinese Communists, most of the street slogans were featured on the anti-communist messages (Skinner 2017, 148). Additionally, the street slogans also varied between the cities and villages. In the urban streets, slogans about promoting a healthy lifestyle and public hygiene were always popular since they echoed the theme of NLM. But in the rural streets, “Growing more food” was the most widespread catchphrase (Dickinson 1938) because of the Nationalists’ serious concern for food shortages.



Figure 3.12 The slogan “Resisting Japan and Saving the Nation” was painted on a traditional style of Chinese architectural arch. This photo was captured in Dujiangyan, Sichuan, in the 1940s by Henry Agard Wallace. Source: Henry A. Wallace Collection in the University of Iowa Libraries.

The street slogans can be read as an instance of the Nationalists’ streetscape practice, one spurred by the political will of strengthening social mobilisation and reconstructing the national identity. The Nationalists envisioned that patriots would emerge out of the streetscape transformation from the drab guild spatial planning into a symbolically rich spectacle of political slogans and national symbols. There were many historical relics from the imperial regime in the streets. The Nationalists inherited these traditional memorials and converted them into the monuments of the Nationalist China by representing the national symbols and Nationalists’ inscriptions on these ancient Confucian memorials. In the eyes of the Nationalists, the new streetscape meant not only a partial restoration of the traditional street life after the social turbulence but also a cultural re-creation of the street space. They struggled to turn the street into a cultural machine to produce and spread the new state-focused values.

It is noteworthy that although the Nationalists added many political slogans in the street, their purpose was not to strongly promote the street as a form of public space for political participation. On the contrary, they in effect rigorously controlled political activities through the centralised management of political symbols and activities in the street. The rules of street slogans suggested this tendency. For example, in 1937, the provincial police made a regulation forbidding self-made slogans to emerge in the street except for twenty-five authorised ones (The Sichuan Archive 2014, 318-319). As a result of the implementation of this regulation, some local non-governmental organisations which painted their own slogans about resisting the Japanese invasion in the street were harshly punished (The Sichuan Archive 2014, 354-355). The government also established secret police to strictly monitor normal speeches and everyday chats in the street in the 1940s. Both the strict regulation and close street supervision suggested that it is more appropriate to understand the streetscape under the Nationalist regime as an outcome of a sort of cultural governance rather than cultural development.

Finally, it is unclear how much impact these street slogans had on ordinary people. In the 1940s, most people in the Chengdu Plain were illiterates and could not readily understand the meaning carried by these slogans. Consequently, they generally simply viewed these slogans as the symbols of the Nationalist regime like the national flags at home. In a local newspaper, an author offered his insightful observation on the streetscape.⁴⁶ He confidently asserted that local people did not realise the national crisis from the widespread slogans.⁴⁷ He further claimed that due to largely overlooking the slogans, other elements in the street, such as crowded teahouses, busy shops, and street recreation, in effect conveyed a peaceful image to the public.⁴⁸ Although it is difficult to know whether this author had somewhat exaggerated the overlooking of the slogans, his observation reflects that the meaning of the streetscape envisioned by the Nationalists was largely irrelevant to ordinary people and their daily life.

⁴⁶ See “*Rongcheng xianhua* (Gossip on Chengdu)” in the *Huaxi Wanbao* (Huaxi Evening Paper) on 17-06-1942.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

3.3.3 Growing more food in the fields

After the central government controlled the Chengdu Plain, promoting agricultural production, particularly growing more food to meet the need for the Second Sino-Japan war and the civil war, was at the top of its political agenda. The government implemented some practices to systematically change former profit-driven land use and gang-led collective farming. Firstly, it revived the traditional *baojia* (mutual supervision) system, introduced new top-down rural administrative system, and nominally outlawed the rural gangs in order to enhance the government's management of daily production and land use (Chunying Wang 2004). Secondly, it actively encouraged farmers to grow certain kinds of crops like rice and potatoes and simultaneously banned poppy cultivation (Dickinson 1938). Thirdly, it dispatched agricultural experts to villages to help farmers improve their farming skills and to design the highest efficient pattern of land use according to the specific environmental conditions and the needs of the nation (College of Agriculture and Forestry of the University of Nanking 1938). In the 1940s, these practices powerfully reshaped the rural landscape of the Chengdu Plain.

The most conspicuous elements in the new landscape were the small paddy fields: small, that is, by comparison with the vast open poppy fields that had preceded them, which usually ran several hundred meters without any interruption like dykes and ridges (see Figure 3.13). As a political return to the traditional *baojia* system which was highly compatible with the small fields (for details of this compatibility, see chapter 2), the rural officials and agricultural experts sought to re-incorporate square or squarish fields in the Chengdu Plain. Consequently, in most villages, those large fields were soon reduced to a number of small fields. The size of the new fields varied according to the kind of crop. The smallest ones were about one hundred square meters and suitable for vegetable and potato growing. They were always adjacent to farmhouses. Besides, the great numbers of fields were roughly eighty meters long and nearly as broad. This dimension was ideal for traditional family rice farming.



Figure 3.13 The landscape of the Chengdu Plain in the 1940s. Source: Skinner (2017, 44).

Due to the gradual disappearance of the large poppy fields, the landscape to some extent again represented its traditional layout. The fields were much more uniform as regards size and shape than we might have expected in the villages still under the stress of war. But this did not mean the rural landscape had become markedly monotonous. In fact, because farmers often grew various crops and plants around their farmhouses, the multi-coloured patchwork of the fields was particularly noticeable in the landscape. In the fieldnote about the Chengdu rural society, the young anthropologist William Skinner offers a detailed account of this patchwork.

“A small piece in front of the house below the pool ... has on it a few young citrus trees, hongshao (sweet potatoes) in the process of being harvested and all kinds of vegetables ... Directly north of the house is ... covered with citrus trees with myriad vegetables and jasmine shrubs in between ... Further north ... are two plots in millet ... Then there is another plot further on ... all hongshao (sweet potatoes) not yet harvested

... The remaining lot is ... devoted to tangerines, and with vegetables of all kinds in between... (Skinner 2017, 66)”

Similarly, a missionary was surprised at the variety of plants and intensive usage of land in the landscape. He describes this vision in an article published in the *West China Missionary News*: “orchard trees, again, are often grown with good crops, such as wheat, kaoliang, maize, or peas among them ... the land is used so intensively (Richardson 1938).”

The government’s agricultural experts also sought to rearrange the landscape. The least fertile land was used to build fishponds. The uneven land became orchards. The remainder was divided into small squarish fields according to the convenience of the farmers. These experts laid out new main roads for the transportation network between different villages, and secondary roads between different households. They also turned the traditional temples and family halls into new rural service stations, thereby the government could be heavily involved in local rural affairs (College of Agriculture and Forestry of the University of Nanking 1938; Liao 1991; J. Dai 2019). In the 1940s, these rural service stations were the seats of various recently established rural organisations and administrative organs, such as farmer associations, rural governments, village schools and factories (College of Agriculture and Forestry of the University of Nanking 1938; Liao 1991). It was hoped that farmers who did not receive good education could get professional agricultural training and learnt new state-Confucian morality by attending the various courses offered in these stations.

The transformation of the rural landscape during the Nationalist regime can be read as an outcome of the direct government’s intervention in local agricultural production and rural administration. The uniform small squarish fields reflected the potential return to the traditional Confucian “nine-square pattern” and re-established the ancient *baojia* system in the rural area. This transformation was in accordance with the new ideological tendency in which the Nationalist state tried to construct its national identity as the patriarch of the family from the traditional Confucian landscape. Different from the reformists in the early 20th century, the Nationalists in the 1940s no longer sought to directly apply popular Western ideas like civil society to make a “Western-tone” Chengdu Plain. On the contrary, they tended to follow and reinterpret traditional Confucian ideas, such as moral hierarchy, to revitalise the

rural economy and rebuild the relationship between the state and rural society. Notably, the small squarish fields, as the representation of the traditional rice cultivation pattern, also illustrated the fundamental shift of land use from profit-driven to policy-based after the implementation of the government's policy of growing more food.

The other changes, including newly built fishponds, hilly orchards, and new rural service stations, were mainly the products of agricultural experts and government officials' new rural spatial planning and administration. Fishponds and hilly orchards reflected that the underlying principle of rural planning was planting appropriate crops on appropriate land. The basic social functions of the rural service stations resonated with the past community centres, such as neighbourhood patron deity temples, police stations, and teahouses. Nevertheless, in the 1940s, these service stations more strongly represented the dominant role of the state in organising rural life. The courses offered in the stations were designed by the central government to eradicate illiteracy and promote agricultural production and a new state-centred lifestyle (Ferlanti 2012). The administrators working in them were all dispatched by the upper government. The rural organisations set up in them were part of the state rural administrative framework.

Certainly, like other government-led transformations, the implementation of the Nationalist practices was very likely to be hindered by the grassroots power. For example, the rural gangs, although having been banned by the government, in effect still influenced the government practices. In some villages, large-scale poppy fields, as the symbol of gang-led agricultural practices, could still be seen. Rural teahouses were widespread and fairly crowded. People sometimes still tended to go to a teahouse to seek the gang's help rather than to a newly established service station to consult government experts and officials.

Finally, what this landscape transformation meant to ordinary people is revealed in the memoir of a local rural service headman Liang-ying Yin. As a government official, Yin was fully engaged in the Nationalist rural practices in the Chengdu Plain. He repeatedly observed that many farmers misunderstood the agricultural experts who went to fields to impart up-to-date farming knowledge, seeing them similar to the tax collectors appointed by the government to

investigate the number of crops planted in fields for levying the tax (Yin 1947, 48-49).⁴⁹ As a result, a number of farmers in effect were not quite willing to accept the land planning and management of the government experts. Yin (1947, 48-49) shared a true story about the farmer's extreme reaction to the upcoming field transformation. Farmers in some villages cut their plantings in their fields before the government officials arrived at their villages (Yin 1947, 48-49). The constant social turbulence over the course of the first half of the 20th century made farmers distrust the Nationalist government and its social practices. Additionally, the widespread rumours of the Nationalists' setbacks in front-line combat against the Communist Chinese further deepened this distrust (Skinner 2017). Therefore, it appears very likely that ordinary people perceived the transformation as a potential threat to their daily life more than a well-intentioned practice to improve productivity.

⁴⁹ This is perhaps the truth rather than a misunderstanding. According to Li's study of the local rural service station, the conflict between traditional rural headmen and new rural administrators was serious in some villages (Jun Li 2007). This resulted in that the relatively powerless officials working in service stations were sometimes required by those powerful rural headmen to collect the tax (Jun Li 2007, 59).

3.4 Conclusion

During the first half of the 20th century, serious social and political crises impelled various social groups to rethink the value and meaning of the landscape. As a result, many new forms of landscapes were made successively. Through the critical examination of these forms and the landscape practices underpinning them, I demonstrate how newly emerged cultures and ideologies altered the understanding of the traditional landscape and led to the making of the new landscape. Furthermore, I also argue that the re-shaping of the everyday landscape had promoted certain lifestyles and conferred upon people certain identities.

Specifically, in the 1900s, the Westernised reformists applied the knowledge of modern civilisation to making a “civilised” landscape in the Chengdu Plain. They defined the traditional landscape elements like roadside channels and temples as “uncivilised” and removed them. They simultaneously defined the elements widespread in modern countries as “civilised” and added these “civilised” elements, such as “Under Surveillance” plaques and streetlamps, to the everyday landscape. They insisted that a “civilised” landscape led to a civil society, promoted a civil lifestyle, and as a spatial regime, trained well-mannered people. Their quest for building a civil society was naturally resisted by ordinary people who still followed traditional customs. This resistance was reflected in the constant religious worship in the traditional temple sites and the failure of making a “civilised” rural landscape.

During the warlord period, the growing concern for safety and livelihood resulted in the ongoing development of the collective identity and the widespread implementation of collective-oriented landscape practices. The gangs and guilds played important roles in this process. The gangs organised independent families into a collective-oriented farming system and transformed the layout of the field fields from small squarish paddy fields into large-scale poppy fields for better collective management and higher profits. Similarly, the guilds applied rigorous planning to manage their members’ shops in the streets. The streetscape under this planning represented a new appearance. It was neat and ordered since the forms of shops always adhered to the guilds’ rules. The practices of the gangs and guilds helped local people successfully adapt to the difficult circumstances under the warlord regime and built a new form of communal corporate life based on the norms of gangs and guilds.

In the 1940s, the Chinese Nationalists sought to implement their landscape practices to create a state-Confucian form of landscape. They reconfigured the family halls, painted political slogans in the streets, and re-arranged the layout of the fields. The purpose of their practices was, on the one hand, to set up a spatial regime to mould people's behaviour according to the norms of a state-sponsored new life. On the other hand, it was to establish the national identity as the patriarch of the family through reinterpreting Confucian morality. However, examination of the landscape transformation reveals that the practical effects of these practices were limited. Ordinary people were unable to understand the precise meaning expressed by the new landscape and sometimes even regarded this transformation as a potential threat to their daily life.

Chapter 4 The landscape in Early Socialism

On December 27, 1949, the People's Liberation Army (hereafter PLA) marched into Chengdu, and later, the Chinese Communist Party (hereafter CCP) established its regime in the Chengdu Plain. Many scholars (see C.K. Yang 1959a, 1959b; Shue 1980; Schurmann 1966) mark 1950 along with 1976 as watersheds in contemporary Chinese study due to the dramatic ideological and government changes. Among them, some sociologists and historians (see Bandelj and Solinger 2012; D. Wang 2018a, 13) define the period between 1950 and 1976 as Early Socialism (or Mao's China)⁵⁰. I adopt this definition in my landscape study. In Early Socialism, the Chinese socialists, like their predecessors the Chinese Nationalists (for the practices of the Chinese Nationalists, see chapter 3), sought to reshape the everyday landscape to facilitate a reconstruction of society and culture.

With the strong support from the Soviet Union, the aims of the landscape practices of the Chinese socialists were more ambitious than those of the Nationalists and Late Qing reformists. Socialists no longer merely focused on reshaping the landscape to address specific social problems, such as the reconstruction of the national identity and the reform of the traditional regional administration (see chapter 3). But they sought to systematically apply various socialist principles to re-making the landscape. The specific goals mainly include three points. Firstly, it was to show new socialist values through new socialist landscapes and socialist aesthetics. Secondly, it was to make a fundamental transformation of ordinary people's lifestyles through the rearrangement of the living environment. Thirdly, it was to build Party-centred and production-oriented communities through the new community spatial forms.

The social circumstances imposed by the socialist regime offered fertile ground for fully implementing the socialist landscape practices. The overthrow of capitalism made possible the abolition of bourgeois private land tenure, thus providing an unprecedented opportunity

⁵⁰ Early Socialism is also known as Mao's China because it is under both the orthodox Marxism and Maoism additions. In addition, due to the importance of Mao in Early Socialism, it is essential to give the brief introduction of him. Mao Zedong (1893-1976) was the first-generation leader of the CCP and seen as the founder of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Mao was the highest leader of the CCP until his death in 1976 and his theories, military strategies, and political policies are widely known as Maoism in the West and Mao Zedong Thought in China.

for an entire rearrangement of the everyday landscape. This condition is unimaginable before 1949. When the private ownership of land and property dissolved, the path was clear for central planners and designers to begin reconfiguring the landscape to meet the needs of the socialist society. On the other hand, under the influence of the Soviet planning ideas, the new generation of Chinese architects and planners saw themselves as “technicians in the service of a primarily political project (i.e., the quest for a socialist society), rather than as the vanguards of social transformation⁵¹ (D. Bray 2005, 83)”. In their opinion, their primary task was to design landscapes, buildings, villages, and cities that would “reproduce and reinforce the political, social and productive relationships demanded by socialism (D. Bray 2005, 83)”.

In this chapter, I examine the transformation of the everyday landscape in Early Socialism and explore the ways in which various forms of the landscape were designed to bring about a synthesis between the technical/functional and the symbolic. I begin by analysing the landscape practices of the Chinese socialists from 1950 to 1965. Drawing on the concept of the spatial regime, I suggest that reshaping the forms of the everyday landscape contributed to stripping away the traditional values and ways of life, forging a new workplace-based identity, and promoting a socialist collective lifestyle. I also point out that the new form of the landscape symbolised the privileged position of the Party in socialist production and life. This chapter finally provides an account of the landscape practices of the political radicals during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976)⁵². In this part, I argue that the everyday landscape rapidly transformed into cult places in the context of the growing personality cult of Mao.

⁵¹ Some Western modernist architects, for example Le Corbusier (1887-1965), see themselves as the vanguards of social transformation.

⁵² The Cultural Revolution (formally known as the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution) was a socio-political movement launched by Mao Zedong between 1966 and 1976. According to the official introduction, its goal was to purge the remnants of capitalist and traditional elements from Chinese society, and to re-impose Mao Zedong Thought as the dominant ideology in mainland of China. In practice, it was characterised by the personality cult of Mao Zedong.

4.1 The landscape practices of the Chinese socialists from 1950 to 1965

In the 1950s, following Soviet practices in creating new socialist landscapes, CCP authorities launched their own socialist construction drive. Chinese socialist architects and planners started to draw detailed blueprints for a new world, including new communal living environments, socialist-style streetscapes, state-owned work units (widely known as the *danwei* compounds), cooperative farms, and people's communes. Because of the state ownership of land, the hard effort of the socialist architects, and substantial support from the Soviet Union, the socialist scenes envisioned by the Chinese socialists quickly unfolded before ordinary people. They, in many ways, copied the Soviet forms and principles under Stalinism but also represented certain Chinese sociocultural symbols.

4.1.1 Socialist-style buildings

The first transformation occurred in the commonest houses. In this transformation, one of the main challenges to the CCP was establishing a new socialist way of life to accompany the new political and economic regime. But traditional house compounds were designed to embody Confucian hierarchy and cosmological orders and promote family solidarity suited to the Confucian regime (for the details of the traditional house compounds, see chapter 2). They were by no means compatible with the new socialist values. Thus, the socialist architects started to refer to the construction methods of the Soviet Union to design new forms of housing so as to replace the traditional ones. They believed that, like those successful cases in the Soviet Union, a scientific rearrangement of residential environments could significantly improve people's living conditions and lead to a new socialist life.

According to David Bray's (2005, 134) socialist spatial studies in China, in practice there were two primary forms of housing adapted by the Chinese construction authorities. The first was "a simple dormitory style consisting of individual rooms opening off long corridors with shared toilet, washing, and cooking facilities (D. Bray 2005, 134)." The Chinese socialist architects designed the layout and appearance of this dormitory-style housing according to the principles of standardisation and simplicity developed in the Soviet Union for housing construction. Firstly, the building and its internal functional spaces assumed a simple square or rectangular shape (see Figure 4.1). This geometrical design reduced the cost and the

difficulty of construction. On the other hand, it conveyed the socialist utopian vision of dwelling, i.e., a highly ordered life based on an exact grid-like geometrical arrangement. This vision was initially presented by the early socialist theorist Robert Owen (1771-1858) in his utopian Owenite community in Indiana (see Figure 4.2). In the 1950s, Owen's design concept was applied to Chinese dormitory-style housing. The resultant design widely adopted the square, rectangle, or parallelogram as the basic form for spatial arrangement so as to promote living a new ordered socialist life. Secondly, individual rooms were to be of a standard form (see Figure 4.3): the size was about 10-15 square meters, which only accommodated one or two beds, a table, and several small wardrobes. There was no personal kitchen or traditional family worship space. According to Bray's (2005, 137) analysis of the Chinese socialist space, this standard form was the outcome of the long series of design meetings, competitions, and debates throughout 1955 and the first half of 1956. It aimed at scientifically reconfiguring the residential space to manage people's private activities at home. The relatively compact size was carefully calculated for bed rest and intentionally excluded other popular private activities such as cooking or worship. The socialist architects used compact size and standardised form to build a spatial regime to regularise and standardise people's activities so as to change people's traditional lifestyle habits and promote a new simple lifestyle. Thirdly, the appearance of a dormitory building was austere (see Figure 4.4). This appearance reflected the Chinese socialists' aesthetic preference for simplicity in residential architecture. In 1955, because China's economic and industrial foundation was much weaker than that of the Soviet Union, the overly "artistic" style in housing design and construction was criticised as wasteful and extravagant by the CCP leaders like premier Zhou Enlai (1898-1976).⁵³ As a result, the socialist architects quickly adjusted their aesthetic preference, shifting from the nationalist style to a relatively austere industrial style. "Roofs that had previously been designed with traditional eaves and gables were flattened (D. Bray 2005, 137)." Building façades were mainly red brick or grey concrete. Balconies were dispensed with, and ornaments such as arches and gardens were eliminated. This austere appearance also provided indirect proof of the regional social shift from consumption to production that marked the 1950s and 1960s.

⁵³ This tendency for anti-waste in construction and architecture appeared in the wake of premier Zhou Enlai's report to the first National People's Congress (D. Bray 2005, 134).

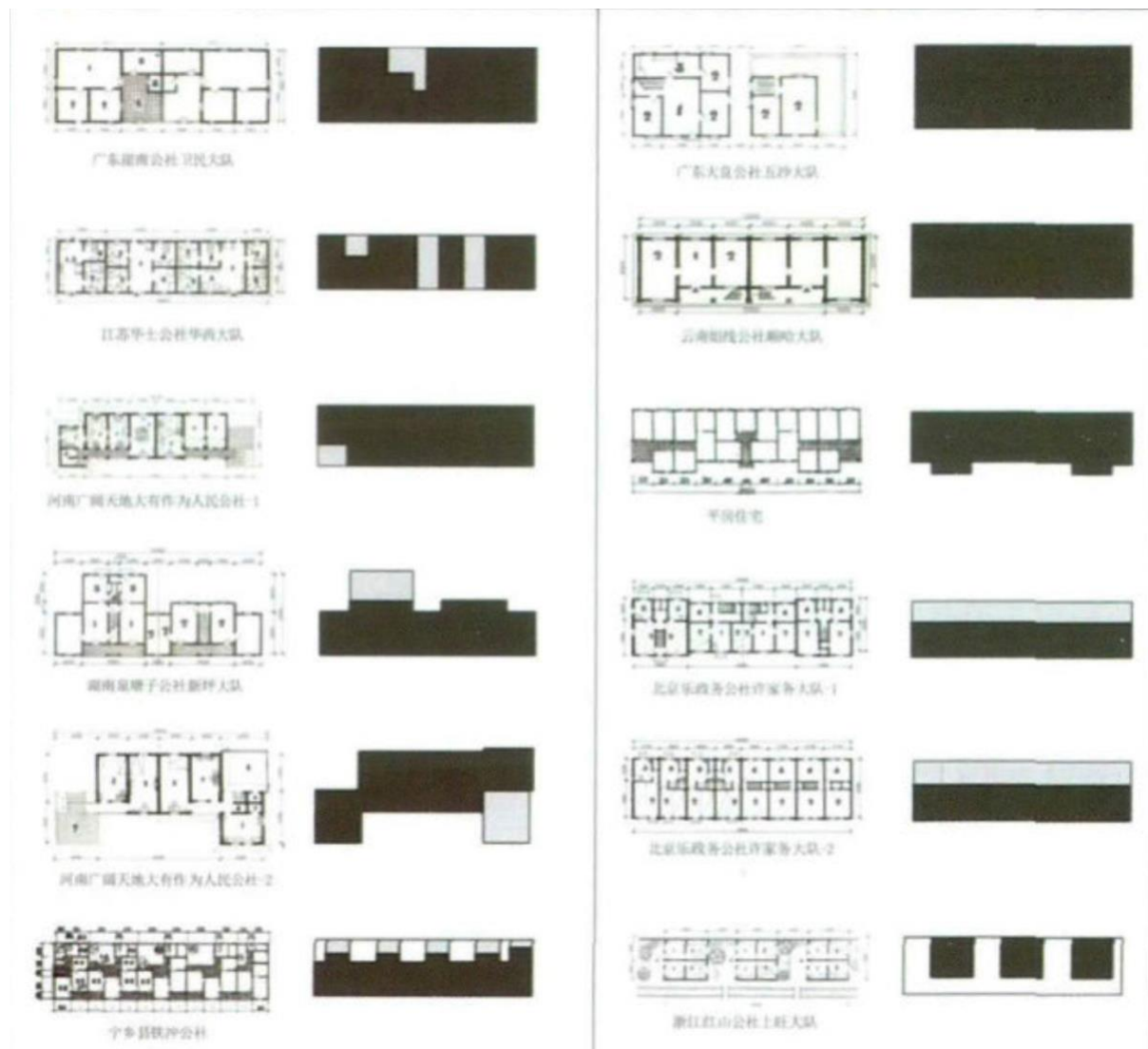


Figure 4.1 The popular geometrical forms in the 1950s and 1960s housing design. Source: Y. Huang and Ye (2017, 61).



Figure 4.2 Design for an Owenite community at New Harmony, Indiana. Source: D. Bray (2005, 78).

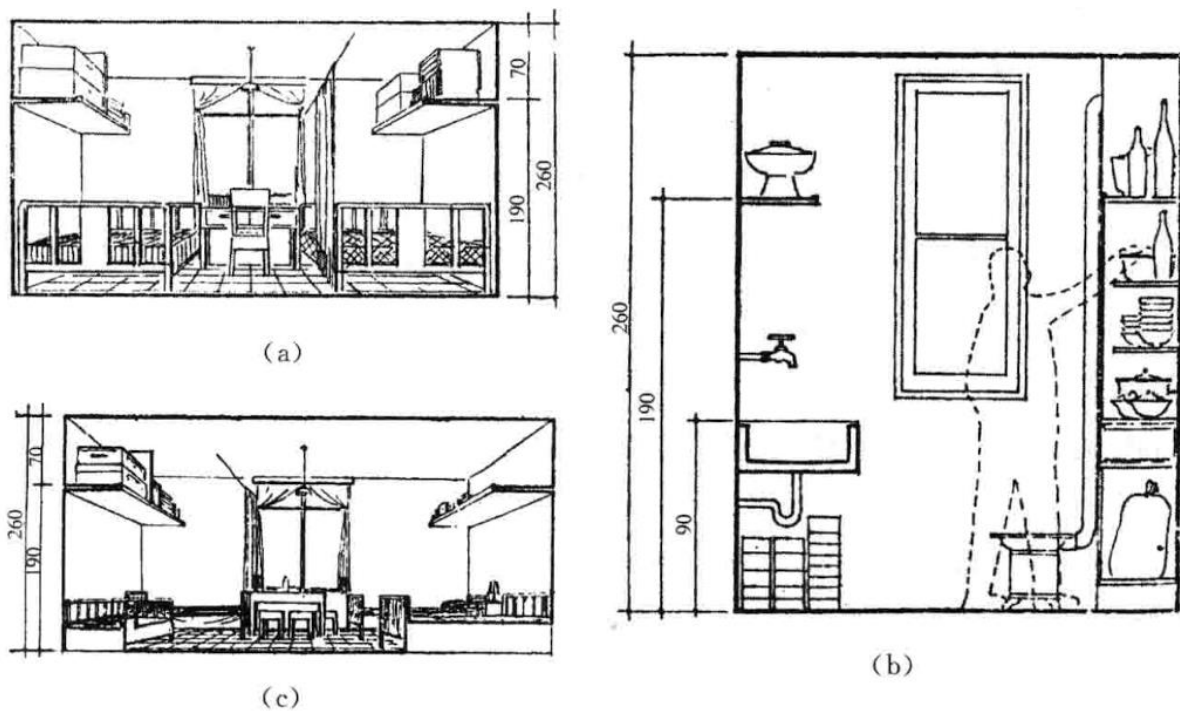


Figure 4.3 The standard spatial form of an individual room. Source: D. Bray (2005, 138-139).



Figure 4.4 The appearance of dormitory-style housing in the Chengdu Plain. Source: F. Long and Tang (1958, 48).

In addition to dormitory-style housing, another primary form was apartment-style. “Two or more rooms forming an independent residence - designed in units, or *danyuan*, consisting of a set of apartments sharing an entrance and stairwell (D. Bray 2005, 134).” Different from dormitory-style housing mainly built for unmarried workers, high school and university students, this form was designed for married couples with children. The focus of the socialist architects in designing apartment-style housing was developing a blueprint for a new socialist family life from several different levels. At the basic level, like dormitory-style housing, a shared toilet and kitchen were built within each basic housing unit consisting of three to five families. This arrangement could considerably reduce the cost of construction and simultaneously offered a collective life on a small scale. At the next level, a communal laundry (see Figure 4.5), a communal bicycle shed, and a communal leisure area were set up every two or three buildings. These facilities allowed for the socialist family life to be carried out on a medium scale and among a cluster of housing. Finally, at the block level, collective canteens, medical clinics, clubs for aged people and middle-aged women, a playground for children and youths, schools, and nurseries were built and shared by all families living in the block. Notably, the layout of a residential area also embodied the quest for a collective lifestyle. Generally, two to four individual house buildings were grouped together to form a square or rectangular residential compound. Then, two or more such compounds were grouped to form a larger

residential block (see Figure 4.6). At the cluster and block level, public space and communal facilities were arranged at the centre to strengthen the centralised role of collective activities in the new socialist life.



Figure 4.5 A communal laundry. Source: <https://www.zhihu.com/question/54619234/answer/403417365>

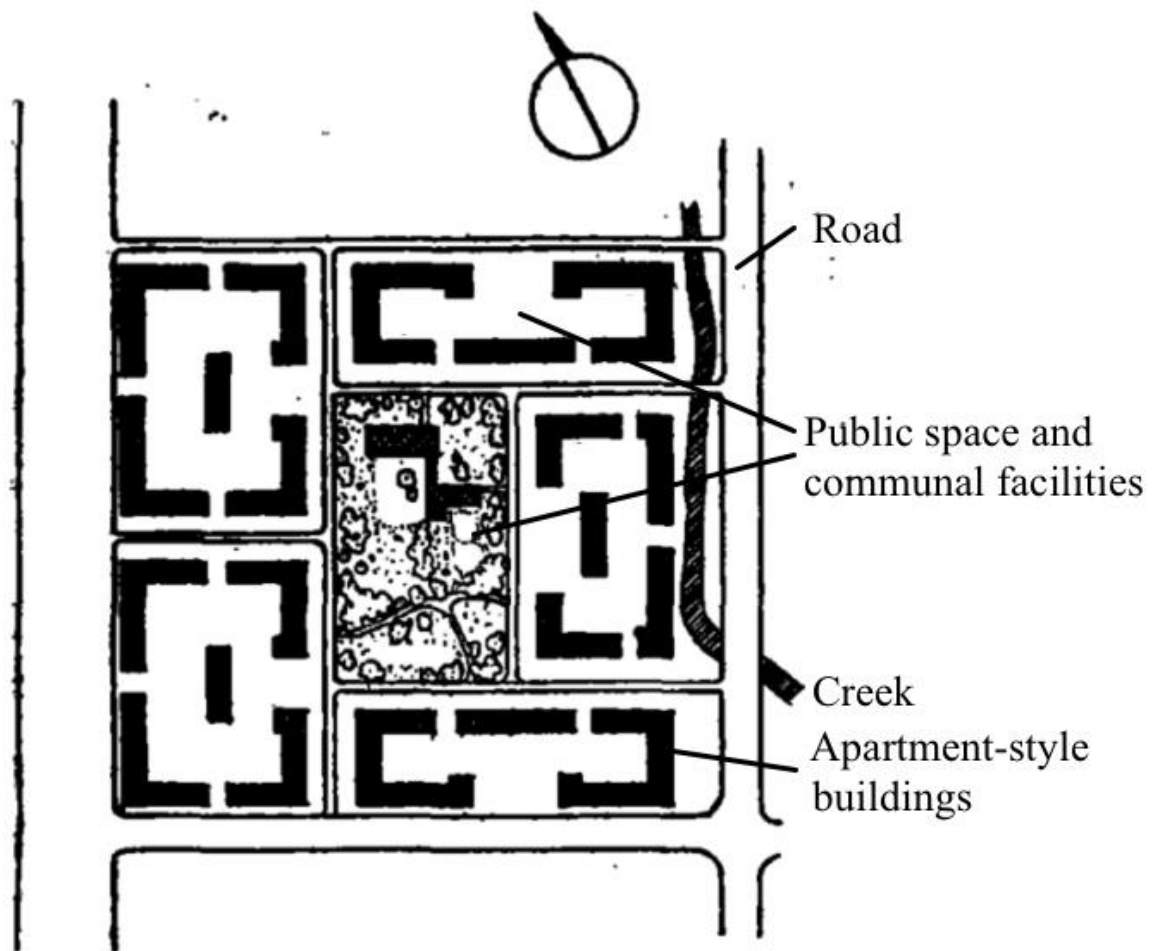


Figure 4.6 The general layout of a block. Source: H. Wang (1956, 54).

In Early Socialism, the traditional form of housing - primarily a product of folk artisans and an embodiment of the Confucian concept of family - was rapidly replaced by highly standardised and industrialised socialist-style housing. In the Chengdu Plain, three- or four-storey dormitory-style housing buildings and apartment-style housing blocks widely emerged in the everyday urban landscape. They improved people's living conditions and used new residential spaces and environments to promote a socialist lifestyle. The daily life envisioned by socialists was that ordinary people, according to their age and gender rather than their family ties, were organised into certain collectivised activities: people were to sleep in dormitories, cook in shared kitchens, eat in communal canteens, socialise in collective-sponsored clubs, and enjoy entertainment in communal leisure areas. The principles of collectivity were so important that some other regulations, such as the rule of sunshine, were often overridden in many design cases.

Notably, when new residential spaces and environments were given a collective context, many Chinese architects were still not happy with this transformation. In the last several years of the 1950s, inspired by the social campaign of the Great Leap Forward (1958-1962)⁵⁴, the leading architectural journals published many articles on radical ideas in design and planning. As David Bray (2005, 141) observes, many radical ideas and utopian projects reflected the radical Soviet architects' visions in the 1920s. For example, in an article about the design of new residential buildings, the layout and form of the vast and grandiose residential building evidently echoed those of the "social condenser"⁵⁵ proposed by the Soviet OSA group (Organisation of Contemporary Architects) three decades ago (see Figure 4.7).

⁵⁴ The Great Leap Forward was an economic and social campaign led by the CCP from 1958-1962. It aimed at reconstructing the country from a traditional agrarian society into a communist industrial society. One of its famous slogans was "Exceeding the UK, catching the USA", which reflected that the exaggerated confidence had been inspired in the whole society during this campaign.

⁵⁵ The "social condenser" was an entirely new form of collective residential unit developed by the Soviet Constructivists in the 1920s (Day 1998, 54). Under the influence of the machine age on architectural innovation, the architects envisioned that residents could harmoniously and efficiently live in this "social condenser" and became people who had the same socialist lifestyle and ideology. This mechanism was similar to a condenser concentrating various electric currents passing through it into a single, regulated one. Specifically, a "social condenser" was designed with large communal facilities on the ground floor and typical residential units on the upper stories. Additionally, it often took the form of a triangle.

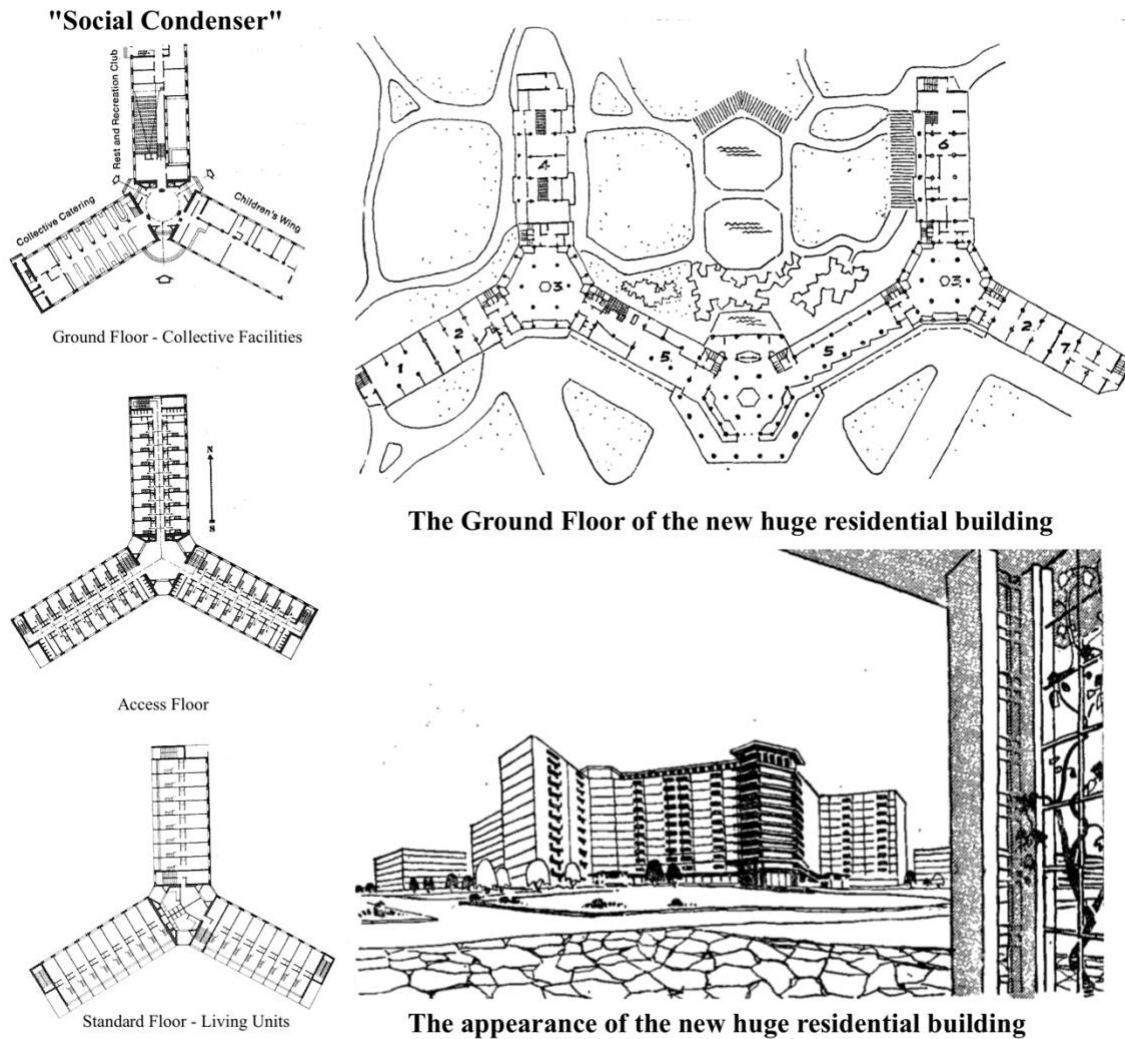


Figure 4.7 The left drawing was the Soviet “social condenser”, and the right ones were the ground floor of the new huge residential building and its appearance as posted in a Chinese architectural article. Source: D. Bray (2005, 88), Jin (1960, 37).

These radical and somewhat utopian residential buildings and environments represented the apogee of the practices of the Chinese socialist architects and planners. But in fact, due to the severe economic and political setbacks caused by the radical social transformation during the Great Leap Forward, many of the promised facilities in newly built socialist-style buildings were poorly or never supplied. Consequently, many residents had to make their meals in the corridors instead of cooking in a shared kitchen (see Figure 4.8). Even for those built communal kitchens, bathrooms, and toilets, due to lack of daily maintenance and management, there was always “a potential for conflict over who was using whose supplies and whose garbage was being left lying on the counter and floor (Whyte and Parish 1984, 81)”.

In the Chengdu Plain, a widespread rumour revealed that people sometimes surreptitiously kept one or two hens under their beds to lay eggs (Chang 1991, 229). A possible reason for this was a severe lack of communal hen houses. Nevertheless, socialist-style housing did not fail in every aspect. The spatial regime established in socialist housing was relatively successful and carried profound implications. It fundamentally altered the traditional spatial form stressing family unity and solidarity (for the relationship between traditional spatial forms and family solidarity, see chapter 2), driving people to enjoy a collective life, and fostering a socialist subject in daily life.



Figure 4.8 Residents living in an apartment-style building cooked in the corridors in Early Socialism. Source: The new media of real estate (2019).

4.1.2 Neoclassical public buildings and socialist regional planning

Apart from socialist-style housing, the Chinese socialists also sought to reconstruct public space. Their first endeavour was to build new forms of public buildings embodying the new socialist state and identifiably distinctive from those of imperial China and the capitalist West. In the 1950s, due to the influence of Stalin's monumentalism, a new state-sponsored

architectural form was widely applied by Chinese architects to the design and construction of new public buildings in the Chengdu Plain. This new official style was neoclassicism, representing the socialist aesthetics developed from the Soviet architectural practices during the Stalin period⁵⁶, and aimed at giving buildings a no-nonsense, powerful look that mirrored the forceful personality of the socialists.

The quintessential examples of these neoclassical public buildings lay along the main streets in Chengdu's showcase areas. The Exhibition Hall of Native Agriculture, located on the north-to-south road, was a direct outcome of these architectural practices. It had a typical neoclassical appearance (see Figure 4.9). Its reticulating façade was constituted by stripped-down, symmetrically spaced pilasters - a device borrowed from neoclassicism. The distribution of volumes and details was also strictly symmetrical according to the principle of neoclassicism. In addition, in decoration, the architects intentionally added local historicist elements, such as Sichuan-style pavilions, to its neoclassical façade to represent the local culture. In an article introducing the initial ideation, the architects claim that their original goal was to create an aesthetic form that would be favoured by ordinary people and inspire onlookers (The southwest industrial design institute 1960). They did not make a reference to classicism or neoclassicism in their discussion of the aesthetic form. Instead, they interpreted this neoclassical form as the product of socialist ideology (The southwest industrial design institute 1960). Evidently, compared with Western architects, in the Chinese context, neoclassicism was still a relatively new concept for these Chinese architects. In their understanding, this neoclassical form merely represented a Soviet means to convey socialist ideology and values.

⁵⁶ The representations of this aesthetics were the Lenin Library and the Palace of Soviet (an unrealised project) designed by Vladimir Shchuko (1878-1939).

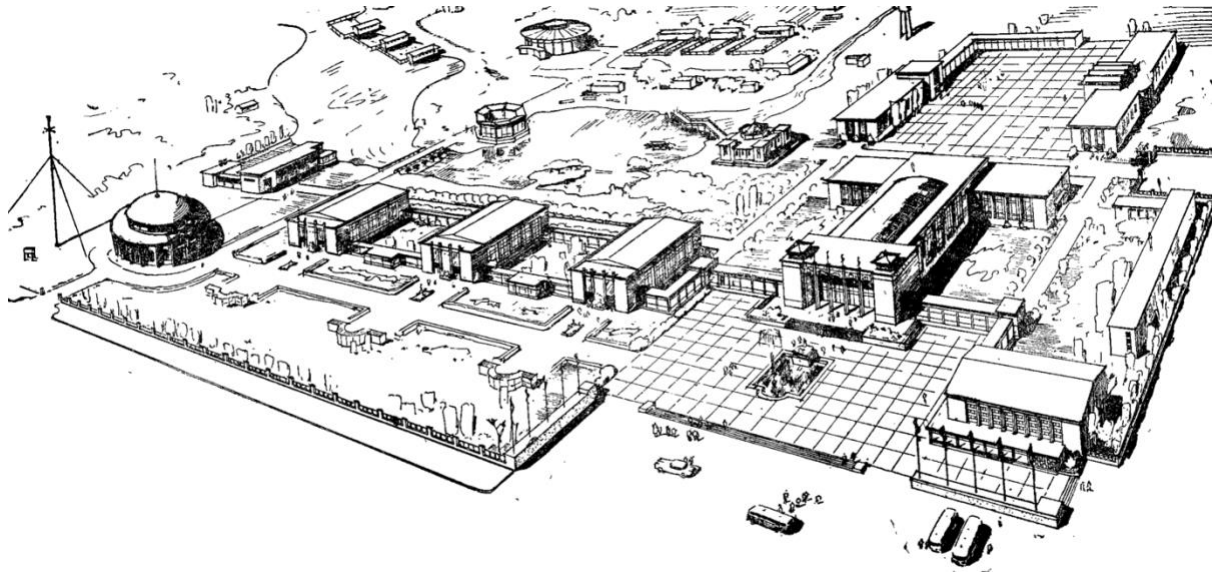


Figure 4.9 Artist's impression bird's-eye-view of the Exhibition Hall of Native Agriculture.
Source: The southwest industrial design institute (1960, 33).

Another landmark building was the Exhibition Hall of Mao Zedong Thought built in the 1960s. Different from the Exhibition Hall of Native Agriculture located on the main street, the Exhibition Hall of Mao Zedong Thought lies at the geographical centre of Chengdu, directly opening onto the intersection of the south-to-north and west-to-east roads. As a symbolic representation of the regional socialist transformation, its appearance clearly shows how neoclassical aesthetics and Stalinist-style monumentalism are carefully applied to designing a local monumental building (see Figure 4.10). Firstly, like most newly built public buildings during Early Socialism, this building has a neoclassical façade featuring strict volumetric and decorative symmetry. Moreover, a colonnade made of ten white marble pillars is set in the central section of its façade and in front of its recessed entrance. This façade pattern gives the building a sense of grandiosity and a no-nonsense look that mirrors the tremendous power of the socialist state and the forceful personality of the socialists. Secondly, as a visual ensemble, simple cornices and squarish window frames are symmetrically arranged on the façade. This simple, rational, and austere decoration style is very different from the traditional one of the imperial state featuring double eaves, Chinese-style pitched roofs, and ornate decorations. It implies a shift in the national aspirations from using extravagant displays to show its supreme authority to achieving a sort of frugal modernisation. Finally, a huge white marble statue of Mao Zedong is erected in the centre of the entrance square (see Figure 4.11). This statue is

full of symbolism. Its base is 7.1 meters broad, implying that the CCP was founded on the First of July. The statue is 12.26 meters tall, suggesting that the day of Mao Zedong's birth is the Twenty-sixth of December. The statue and its symbolic significance illustrate the prominent role of the Party leader in the socialist state.



Figure 4.10 The bird's-eye-view of the Exhibition Hall of Mao Zedong Thought in the 1960s.

Source: https://www.sohu.com/a/298773457_100283232



Figure 4.11 The statue of Mao Zedong in front of the Exhibition Hall of Mao Zedong Thought.
Source: China southwest architectural design and research institute (2020).

Other newly built public buildings, such as the Sichuan Opera House (see Figure 4.12) and the Chengdu Stores (see Figure 4.13), also embodied the principle of neoclassicism, thereby having similar looks. In addition to new public buildings, architects also considered that the existing buildings were inappropriately socialist style in their looks and started a comprehensive reworking of these buildings' exteriors. Consequently, many traditional façades featuring eaves and plastered walls were reshaped and covered by newly built neoclassical decorations, such as colonnades and symmetrical squarish window frames. In the

1950s and 1960s, the streetscapes of major thoroughfares in the Chengdu Plain were all marked by the rapid emergence of landmark public buildings and the reworking of the existing exteriors.



Figure 4.12 The Sichuan Opera House in the 1960s. Source: Tang, Ma, and Hu (1959, 13).



Figure 4.13 The Chengdu Stores in the 1960s. Source: Mi (2022).

Notably, the Chinese socialists' practices for reconstructing the public space did not only focus on building new forms of public buildings but extended to a broader scope. In the early 1950s, the first generation of socialist planners, under the help of Soviet planners, started to undertake regional planning and sought to use this approach to promote a total socialist transformation of public space. The new socialist government also saw this planning as an opportunity to bring regional growth under government control and enhance the overall socialist flavour of the Chengdu Plain.

The archives recording the discussion between local planners and Soviet planners like A. S. Mochin in 1953 and 1955 reveal the formulation process for the initial planning. The local planners focused on balanced land-use zoning, including rearranging industry symmetrically on the periphery of Chengdu, creating residential zones in the western area to balance the regional population density, and setting up an administrative centre in the geographical and historic core (i.e., the ancient Imperial City). They also designed a new concentric-ring form of the road network to improve transportation according to the local geographical environment and the ring road layout adopted in the Moscow planning. Compared with local planners' focus on relatively technical matters, Soviet planners paid attention to the symbolic features of urban planning and the political significance lying in these features. Soviet planner Mochin, who reviewed the original draft of the regional planning scheme, pointed out that its major

defects were the inadequate representation of socialist symbolic features and spatial incompatibility with the new socialist regime. As a leader of the Soviet urban planning team in China, he offered suggestions on this planning. He advised local planners to use public squares to enhance the symbolic significance of the main public space and buildings. He referred to the public square in front of Moscow University and pointed out that the purpose of planning a square was to exaggerate the symbolic significance of the new socialist building so that people could be inspired and understand that they lived in the communist age (Hao Li 2015, 159). On the other hand, Mochin proposed that the spatial configuration should form a visual emphasis on the new political centre. He sought to refigure the spatial relationship between roads, buildings, and the political centre so that they could symbolically represent the centralised role of the government in socialist social organisation. He outlined his vision in detail.

“The government apparatus must be in the city centre ...It is best that each new district centre can clearly see the city (political) centre. A broad and straight avenue should be built to link the city (political) centre to the riverside close to the new cultural centre. Additionally, the main buildings should open onto the city (political) centre. (quoted from Hao Li 2015, 159)”

The final regional planning scheme was a combination of the initial draft prepared by the local planners and the recommendations made by the Soviet planners. The core area was defined by its historic concentric-ring layout. Other areas were defined by balanced land-use zoning for residential, industrial, and green-space use. The total layout followed the principle of symmetry to give a uniform look and feel (see Figure 4.14). Notably, symbolic features were highlighted in the final planning. The primary radial and ring streets were broadened to at least 20 meters across at the expense of existing buildings, trees, and greenery (see Figure 4.15). They markedly improved local transportation and symbolically represented the regime's transformation where street patterns were no longer determined by the traditional social fabric but by state-sponsored regional planning. Many public squares and neoclassical buildings were planned along the major thoroughfares as a way to decorate the streets and shape a socialist-style streetscape. Additionally, as Mochin suggested, an entirely new administrative centre was created in the geographic core of Chengdu at the expense of the

traditional imperial buildings. The whole apparatus of the socialist government would be relocated to the new grandiose government buildings facing the south-to-north thoroughfare and a huge civic square (see Figure 4.16). Meanwhile, nearby traditional-fashioned houses were replaced by newly designed public buildings opening onto the square and the government buildings. The new appearance of the regional centre implied the fundamental social transformation from the imperial regime to the socialist one. It also illustrated that the Chinese socialist revolution did not like the former Nationalist one, mainly focusing on changing ideological superstructures, institutions or political apparatuses. Socialists simultaneously possessed a creative capacity for reconfiguring the region's space and built environment.

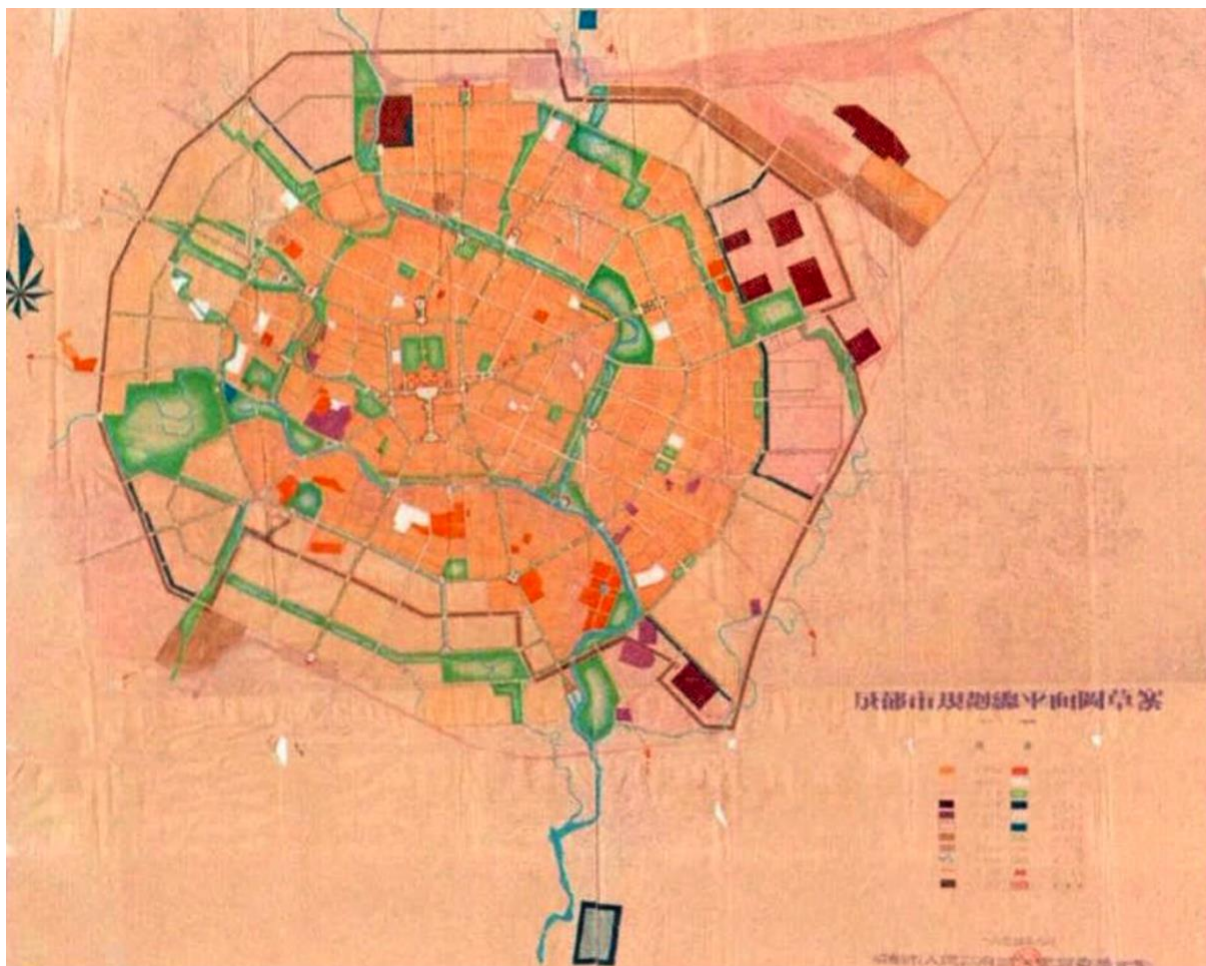


Figure 4.14 The draft of Chengdu planning. Source: Hao Li (2015, 160).



Figure 4.15 The new appearance of South Renmin Road in the 1950s. Source: Tang, Ma, and Hu (1959, 15).

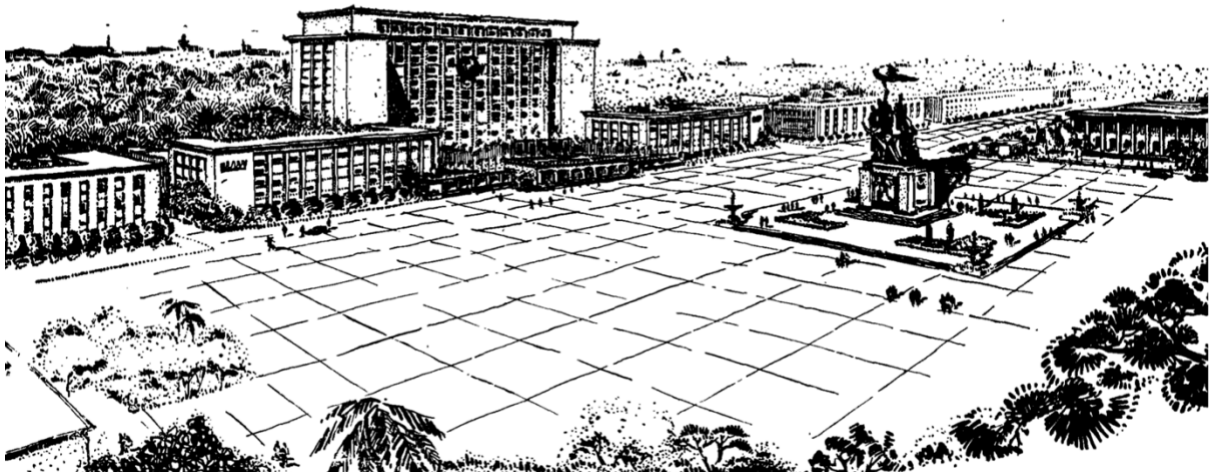


Figure 4.16 The artist's impression bird's-eye-view of the planned centre square. Source: Tang, Ma, and Hu (1959, 11).

Although the planning blueprint was not wholly achieved due to the economic hardship in Early Socialism, it outlined the regional spatial layout and shaped its landscape pattern for the future. In the 21st century, the local spatial configuration still embodies the principle of symmetry established in the initial planning. South Renmin Road, the south-to-north thoroughfare, is still the spatial axis serving commuters and conveying the regional image. But it has been widened to 80 meters, extended to 80 kilometres, and reached the Chengdu Plain's edge. There have been six concentric-ring roads from the core to the periphery of the plain.

Furthermore, the symbolic squares and neoclassical buildings still lie in the regional centre. They have become a primary business centre and a recreational park.

Finally, for ordinary people, the significance of the planning was not only the transformation of the region's look but also the rearrangement of daily life. According to the national policies that emphasised industry and overlooked commerce in Early Socialism (Murphey 2005, 80), the new land-use zoning was designed to promote a shift of daily life from consumption to production. As a result, traditional markets, entertainment venues, and business centres were removed or turned into new state-owned factories and public enterprises (such as factories, hospitals, and research institutes). This transformation dramatically reduced people's consumption of goods in daily life. Meanwhile, many industrial zones were arranged within (or close to) the traditional residential areas to organise people into the new socialist production system. In addition, new cultural venues transformed cultural and recreational life from grassroots activities to highly organised socialist ones. During Early Socialism, according to the planning, numerous state-sponsored theatres and cultural centres were established along the main streets to provide new collective forms of socialist entertainment to nearby residents. By contrast, old-style private-owned entertainment places like teahouses decreased to their lowest point. This reconfiguration of cultural space resulted in the quick rise of socialist entertainment in daily life.

4.1.3 The *danwei* compounds

The region's planning offered the basis for the massive construction of state-owned factories and public enterprises. Meanwhile, the special governmental organisational model adopted by the CCP in Early Socialism enabled each large enterprise to get its funds directly from the central government rather than the local one⁵⁷, further speeding up the construction of factories. Consequently, in the last several years of the 1950s, various state-owned enterprises became the most popular elements in the everyday landscape. They organised

⁵⁷ This special governmental organisational model is generally named the "strips and chunks structure (*tiao-kuai jiegou*)" (D. Bray 2005, 129). "Strips" refer to the administrative hierarchies established by the central government. The *danwei* is at the lowest end of this hierarchy. By contrast, "chunks" denotes the territorial domains of city, town, and regional governments. In practice, although the *danwei* is situated in the territorial domain of certain governments, it is not managed by the local governments.

urban people into new state-led production and economic systems⁵⁸ and served various social functions. In everyday speech, Chinese people tended to use the term *danwei* to refer to this new workplace so as to distinguish it from ordinary private mills. They also named the new spatial mode of the socialist workplace a *danwei* compound. In this thesis, to highlight the distinctiveness of this socialist workplace in the Chinese context, I adopt its Chinese pinyin *danwei* rather than its English translation to designate it.

Before examining the *danwei* appearance and spatial form, it is essential to give a brief account of the *danwei*'s distinct social functions in socialist China. Unlike typical enterprises focusing on production and revenue growth, a *danwei* was conceived as a comprehensive solution to offer a social guarantee and workplace mobilisation (D. Bray 2005, 122) under the socialist principle of equality and collectivisation. According to the genealogical study of the Chinese *danwei* system in the 20th century by David Bray (2005, 64), the CCP-led grassroots units in Yan'an, China⁵⁹, that sought to organise the population to meet the economic and military demands of a revolutionary war, can be regarded as the proto-*danwei*. In addition, the guild- and gang-led neo-Confucian corporations under the Nationalist regime also reflect some characteristics of the socialist *danwei* because they likewise organise individuals into various collective enterprises (D. Bray 2005, 63-63). In Early Socialism, *danwei*'s socialist functions were more complex than these early *danwei*-like organisations. Firstly, the *danwei* aimed at effectively tackling the rising unemployment after the civil war to achieve a steady social transformation. Throughout Early Socialism, the *danwei* offered ample job opportunities and adopted a staff quota system to effectively guarantee employment. This cast-iron guarantee is why ordinary people often praised the *danwei* as "an iron bowl" in everyday speech. Secondly, the *danwei* fulfilled the social function of the police to supervise and change people's lifestyle habits and provide security. Minor disputes and conflicts were always settled by the leaders of the *danwei* instead of police officials. A *danwei* also had a security team on its premises. Thirdly, the *danwei* was in charge of everyday governmental administrative matters such as marriages and divorce, household registration, awarding merit

⁵⁸ According to national statistics in 1957, ninety percent of the non-farm population had become employees in different state-owned enterprises.

⁵⁹ Yan'an is a city in Shaanxi Province, China. During the Second Sino-Japanese War and Chinese Civil War, Yan'an was the capital of the CCP-controlled region. The leaders of the CCP, such as Mao Zedong, initiated many important social reforms in the late 1930s and 1940s.

and carrying out disciplinary action. Fourthly, the *danwei* was the main channel to provide its members with a basic level of social guarantee and welfare services. Most *danwei* had their own clinics, staff housing, dining halls, childcare centres, kindergartens, and bathing houses. These facilities were free of charge for its staff and their family members. Finally, the *danwei* gave people the feeling of community, a social identity, and a sense of belonging when traditional social relationships like guilds and clans broke down under the new socialist regime. “We are of the same *danwei*” always provided people with the warmth of community in daily chat. By contrast, the lack of a *danwei* identity was seen as suspicious and dangerous. In summary, in Early Socialism, it would not be an overstatement to say that a *danwei* was the basic social unit for the majority of the non-farm population. It was not only a workplace but a small independent kingdom due to the various social functions it served.

The distinct social functions gave *danwei* a different look from those conventional industrial complexes. A prominent architectural feature of a *danwei* compound was the high enclosing wall that surrounded it. This enclosing wall delineated the territory of a *danwei* and manifested that the rules and norms of the *danwei* were supreme within this territory. It told people the independence and distinctiveness of a *danwei* from its surrounding city and village. In addition, socialists argued that the members of a *danwei* should closely cooperate like intimate family members. Therefore, the enclosing wall can also be seen as a larger version of the traditional residential compound wall. It invoked a familial metaphor that suggested the emotional connection between the traditional family and the socialist *danwei* as a “family”.

Another feature of the *danwei* compound was its standardised layout. After the widespread adoption of the standardised residential unit in the socialist construction drive and the nationwide anti-waste campaign of 1954-1955, this principle of standardisation was also applied to the spatial arrangement of the *danwei* compound. Socialist architects and planners put much time and effort into considering a standardised spatial relationship between different buildings inside a *danwei* compound. They finally worked out two universal spatial templates corresponding to two primary forms of *danwei* compounds.

The first one was widely adopted by the large-scale *danwei* that had a large number of employees and occupied a small-town-size territory. Two separate components could be

identified from the layout of this *danwei*. One was a production compound containing industrial plants and administrative offices. Another was a residential compound providing housing for its staff. Generally, these two compounds were very close so that workers could save commuting time. A typical example of this layout was the 132 Factory (now known as Chengdu State Aircraft Factory) planned and built in 1958 with assistance from the Soviet Union. Located north of the Chengdu Plain, 132 Factory was one of the largest local *danweis*. Its production compound had its own airport, train station, research institutes, power station, and massive assembly and manufacturing plants (see Figure 4.17). Opposite this production compound, on the other side of the main road, an independent residential compound containing several clusters of apartment-style and dormitory-style staff housing, schools, stores, parks, bathing houses, and childcare centres, was built for its more than 10,000 employees and their families (see Figure 4.18). The pattern of this large-scale *danwei* gave the impression that it was a small industrial town. Residential blocks surrounded the core production plants. All buildings, including staff housing, communal facilities, and manufacturing plants, represented an austere industrial style because they were all built by the *danwei* under unified planning. Residents lived a simple way of life in a self-contained *danwei* community.



Figure 4.17 The entrance of the production compound of the 132 Factory. Source: Cover News (2021).
Figure 4.18 The residential compound of the 132 Factory. Source: Cover News (2021).

In contrast to the first layout of separate production and residential compound, small to medium *danweis* tended to adopt the second layout that placed workplace (factory, school, office, etc.), living quarters, and service facilities all within a single compound. Because most

newly built *danweis* in the Chengdu Plain were small- and medium-scale, this all-in-one layout was more widespread than the first one in the everyday landscape. In addition, in the view of the Chinese socialist architects, building an all-in-one compound had other benefits. Firstly, the all-in-one compound clearly embodied the close integration of production and life in a socialist society. Secondly, to a certain extent, the form of a single compound echoed the long-established tradition of Chinese spatial structure since it, in many ways, resembled a large version of the conventional residential compound. Arguably, this spatial similarity provided important cultural familiarity to ordinary people so that they could quickly accept the new *danwei* in a changing social context. Finally, the all-in-one form was flexible because it could be directly applied to a wide range of circumstances. For example, after the middle-1950s, many micro all-in-one compounds were built in traditional residential neighbourhoods as the workplace of new cooperatives and collective-owned factories. These compounds provided traditional private operators, such as hawkers, artisans, and shopkeepers, with a collectivised workplace to gradually organise them into socialist production.

In addition to the overall spatial layout, more cultural significance lay in the detailed spatial configuration within a *danwei* compound. Therefore, it is essential to further examine the design blueprint of the *danwei* compound. I use the 1950s master plan for Southwest Jiaotong University (a local university *danwei*) as an example (see Figure 4.19). The key characteristic revealed by this plan is the utilisation of a central axis to organise different spaces and key buildings. This spatial organisation method is probably borrowed from the traditional symmetrical layout and spatial axis widespread in Chinese-style residential compounds, imperial palaces, and temples (for the traditional layout and spatial axis, see chapter 2). Notwithstanding the similar form, the axis of the socialist *danwei* conveys the opposite symbolic meaning. The traditional axis in the designs and spatial plans for compounds and palace complexes, as David Bray (2005, 147) points out, always represents an axial progression of major architectural and spatial elements - the elements of lesser importance in the forefront while those of greater importance at the end - so as to mark out the rising of the ranks of the Confucian social hierarchy (see Figure 4.20). By contrast, the symbolic meaning of the axuality of the socialist *danwei* is the opposite (see Figure 4.21). In the plan for the university campus, the principal building, a magnificent multiple-use building for administration and teaching, is placed in full view at the forefront of the axis, immediately

across from the compound's entrance (see Figure 4.19). This building serves both practical and monumental purposes. On the one hand, it is the seat of the administration office and the Party organisation. Daily administration, management, and party conference took place in this building. On the other hand, this building was seen as the embodiment of the CCP's leadership and direct supervision of the *danwei* production and people's daily activities in the *danwei*. It emphasises the primacy of the socialist state and presents a powerful image of the new socialist regime. Then the buildings of major faculties are placed along the axis behind the principal building. These buildings are closely associated with the primary duties of the *danwei*, including teaching, research, and production. Meanwhile, as the sites of study and labour⁶⁰ under the unified management of the socialist state, they also embody the practical means through which a socialist society is to be achieved. Finally, the university dormitories and other communal facilities like bathing houses and dining halls are at the end of the axis. They are regarded as relatively unimportant places in the *danwei* compound because they do not bring direct benefits to production. In some cases, staff dormitories and facilities were built to a very poor standard because the leader of a *danwei* tended to allocate more money for production rather than dwelling.⁶¹ This trend also echoed the popular socialist slogan "Production first, life later" which first appeared in the 1950s and permeated all Early Socialism. In summary, the socialist architects reversed the traditional axial arrangement in order to create a socialist built environment to represent the new socialist value system. The socialist axuality put the symbol of the socialist state in the forefront to represent the open face of the socialist state power and the significant role that the CCP played in *danwei* production and life. Then, along the socialist axis, other important buildings associated with the primary business of the *danwei* were placed behind the principal building. This arrangement assumed the particular significance of collective labour in a socialist society. Finally, residential blocks were situated at the end of the socialist axis, indicating the inferior position of dwelling within the socialist value system.

⁶⁰ Socialist university education emphasises the combination of study and productive labour. Therefore, there are many labour activities in these study sites.

⁶¹ A typical case is the Chengdu Measuring & Cutting Factory built in the 1950s. Due to the funding cut in the construction period, the director of this *danwei* decided to allocate the limited funding to the construction of the production plants (A commentator for the People's Daily 1957). As a result, the residential buildings and facilities were built to a very poor standard (A commentator for the People's Daily 1957).

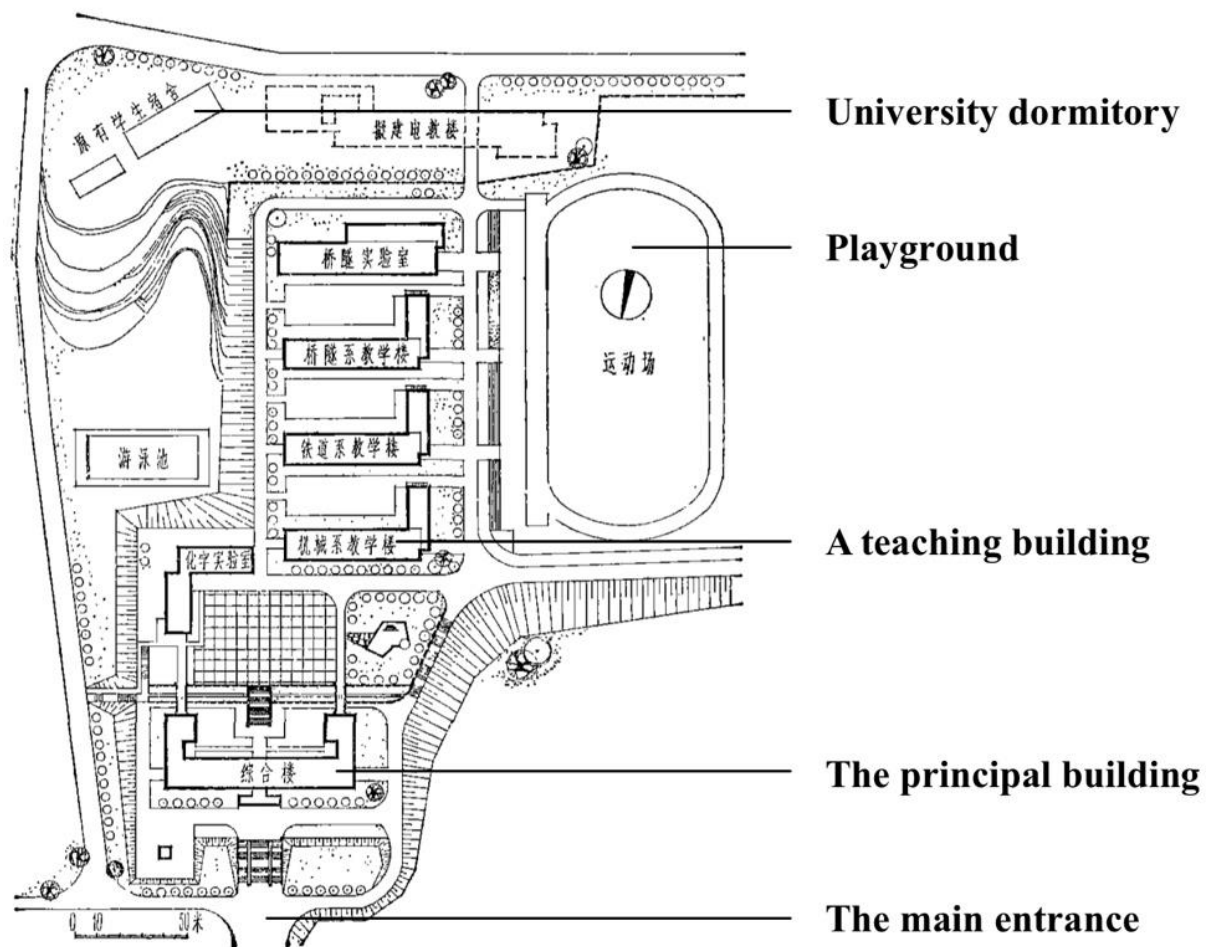


Figure 4.19 The design plan for Southwest Jiaotong University. Source: Sichuan Provincial Architectural Design and Research Institute (1979, 40).

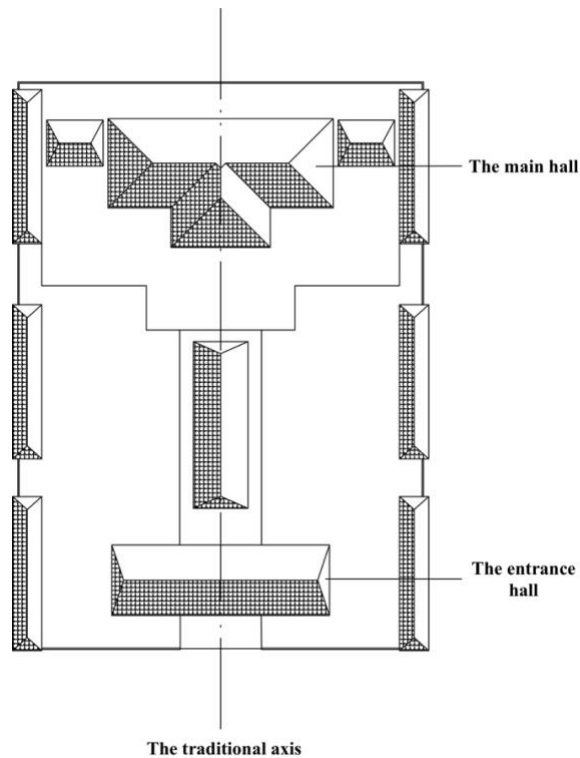


Figure 4.20 The traditional axis. Source: The author.

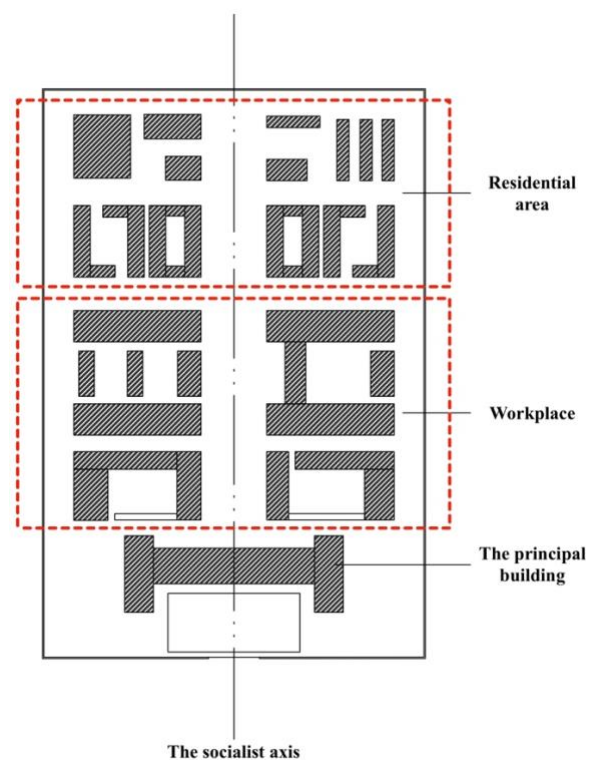


Figure 4.21 The socialist axis. Source: The author.

In addition to the spatial axis, another characteristic identified from the *danwei* plan is the squarish compound at various scales. Socialist architects sought to use these multiple-scale compounds as a spatial strategy to systematically promote a collective lifestyle among people who lived and worked in a *danwei*. I use another university plan to further explain this characteristic (see Figure 4.22). In this plan, the whole university *danwei* is firstly designed as a huge squarish compound with an enclosing wall and the main entrance. This walled *danwei* compound cuts the social relationship between the *danwei* and the outside world. It simultaneously strengthens the internal connection based on collective labour and life in the realm of the *danwei*. Secondly, according to specific kinds of collective activities, the main road network and greens within the *danwei* compound divide the *danwei* compound into several medium compounds. In this plan, there are eight such compounds located around a central playground. It is argued that when a huge *danwei* compound constitutes the basis of collective life, *danwei* members then form several large groupings to undertake their work and daily activities in these medium compounds. Finally, independent buildings within the medium compounds are grouped together to form several micro compounds. In the design of

the socialist residential compounds, shared facilities, a central yard, and public space are arranged in these micro compounds to promote collective-oriented practices at a neighbourhood level.

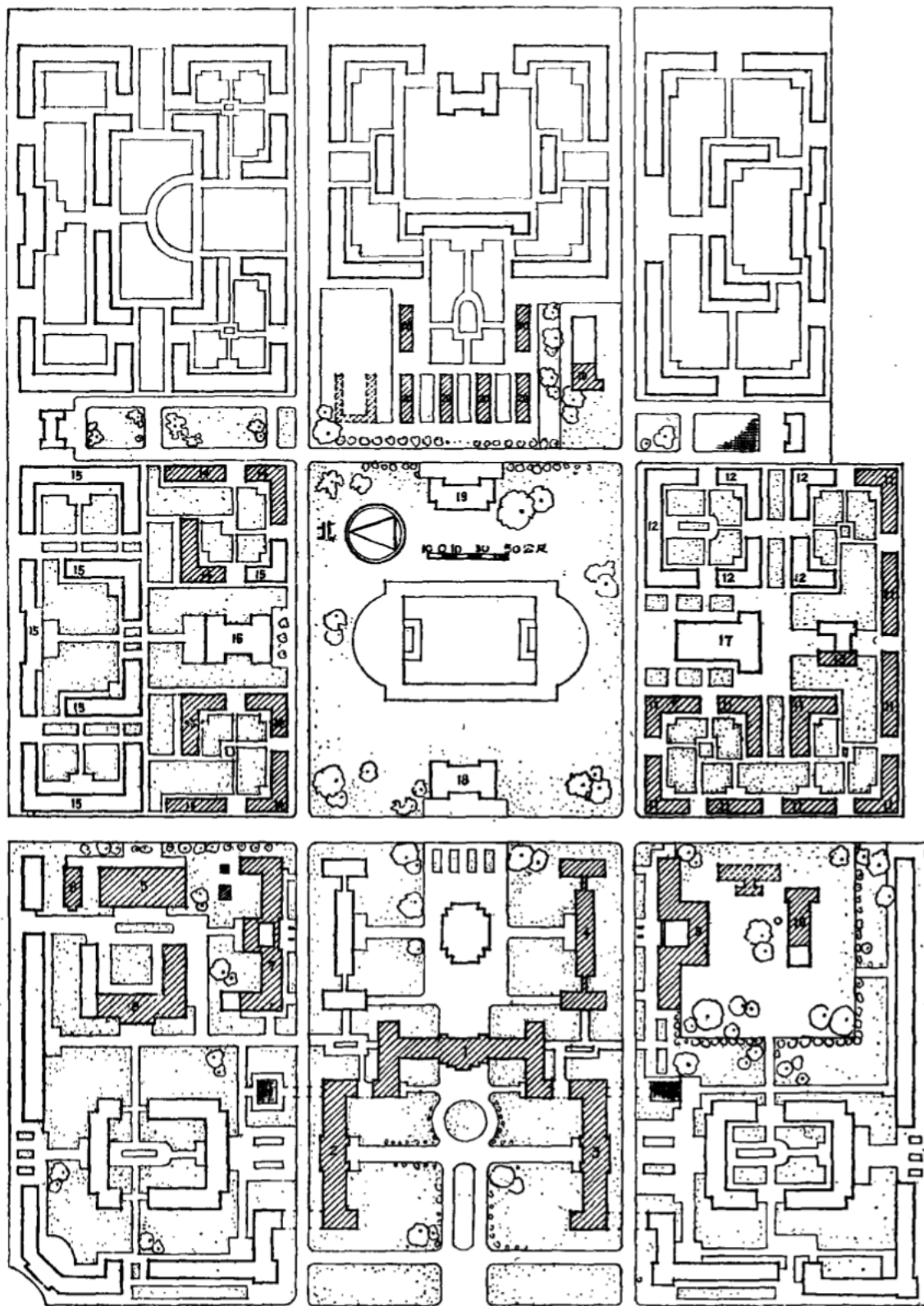


Figure 4.22 The plan for a university in the 1950s. Source: Q. Wu and Zhou (1956, 86).

In Early Socialism, the rapid emergence of the *danwei* compound in the everyday landscape resulted from the increased integration of daily work and socialist collectivism in socialist China. As a new built environment suited to the demands of a highly collectivised life, two layers of meanings are revealed by examining the *danwei* blueprints. Firstly, a socialist axis was widely adopted to symbolise the order and value system of the socialist state. Secondly, multiple-scale compounds promoted a collective lifestyle among the *danwei* members. In design, socialist architects were very likely to refer to the spatial form of traditional residential compounds and palace complexes. But as David Bray (2005, 156) suggests, “this is not to say that the reappearance of compound forms throughout Chinese history betokens a seamless cultural continuity”. In fact, an entirely different, even opposite, meaning was conveyed. For ordinary people, notwithstanding the compound-style formation assumed new socialist cultural significance, it still somewhat reinvoked the cultural memory of the traditional family life in a conventional residential compound before the socialist revolution. In popular culture and everyday speech, the *danwei* compounds were often interpreted as a “(little) public family”⁶², suggesting the subconscious cultural mix of the traditional family spaces and the new collective life. Since the socialist regime in the 1950s and 1960s was highly influenced by Mao’s famous “mass line” that underscored the inseparability between the Chinese socialists and the masses, this popular interpretation was not rejected by the socialist authorities. As a result, until now, the “(little) public family” is still a synonym for the socialist *danwei*.

4.1.4 The standard strips and concentrated residential and production centres

In the countryside, the landscape also underwent alteration with the nationwide transition to the collectivisation of agricultural production and rural life under the socialist regime. The Chinese socialists insisted that traditional farming based on independent households and closely associated with non-government groups⁶³ was incompatible with the new socialist society emphasising equality and cooperation. Thus, following the Soviet example, they gradually introduced large-scale mechanised farming and collective institutions, including lower- and higher-stage cooperatives (i.e., *kolkhozes* in the Soviet Union), communes, and state farms (i.e., *sovkhoses* in the Soviet Union), into rural daily production and management.

⁶² Ordinary people generally use “big public family” to refer to the socialist state.

⁶³ For example, rural gangs and clans.

The socialist planners and architects also started to design new residential and production centres to foster the integration of collective farming and daily life in the countryside. By the early 1960s, nearly all private farms in the Chengdu Plain had been absorbed by newly established cooperatives and communes (The compilation committee of the gazetteer of Wenjiang 1990, 386-387). The rural collectivisation overall reached completion.

The new standard strip fields were the most conspicuous elements in the new landscape. In the 1950s, the concept of standardisation that developed in the socialist construction drive inspired the popular imagination of the socialist countryside. Government officials believed that, like standardised housing, standardised fields could allow for efficient and rapid deployment of technical resources and embody the principle of equality necessary for socialist collectivisation. Thus, when the local farmers entering the cooperatives transferred their land to the cooperative farms, the officials of the cooperative farms quickly consolidated the former largely piecemeal, uneven, and uncoordinated fields to hundreds of standard strips suitable for collective and mechanised agriculture. According to the account provided by a local gazetteer, the standard or normal size of such a strip was about 0.3 acre, being 30 meters wide and 50 meters wide (Qu 2014, 15). In the 1960s, the standard strip became the basic cultivation unit, equally redistributed to the cooperative farms' members as their daily farm plots. In addition to representing the standardised form that exemplified the socialist egalitarian work relationships, these strips also performed a positive function through emphasising the importance of unified management within the socialist collectivisation. For traditional family farming, the size of the field was determined by farm labour, local social structures, and family wealth. Whereas, for collective agriculture, the size of a strip was calculated according to the scientific and efficient deployment of agricultural machinery under the guidance of the cooperatives (later, the communes), and the number of strips was subject to the quota set by a unified economic plan. Finally, the widespread standard strips were interpreted as an image symbolising the power of socialism and socialist collective labour. In the 1960s, many newspapers and journals published numerous reports on the landscape transformation from a wilderness to the strips in remote villages.⁶⁴ Among them, the strips were praised as a significant victory of the power of collective labour against the harsh natural

⁶⁴ For example, the reclamation of Nanniwan and Dazhai was frequently reported by the *People's Daily* throughout the 1960s.

and economic environment, showing the overwhelming advantage of the socialist regime in making a leap in production and life.

Concomitant with the growing number of standard strips in the landscape, other elements were also reshaped according to the principles of collectivisation and the requirements of agricultural machinery. The age-old boundaries signifying the former fragmented individual farms, such as hedges, rows of trees, and irrigation channels, were removed in the countryside. Instead, new straight roads and channels were built by new socialist cooperatives (Qu 2014, 15). The significance of this transformation was also great. It reflected that the major technical obstacles to the implementation of agricultural machinery and collective labour had been overcome. Based on the Soviet experience of agricultural production, the Chinese socialists argued that the development of collective cooperation and agricultural machinery was the best path for the steady forward development of socialism in China. Therefore, they particularly emphasised the technical significance of the transformation. This transformation also implied that, in people's minds, the traditional ideology focusing on private ownership had shifted to a new socialist one prioritising the collective value. The leading newspapers, like the *People's Daily*, offered many glowing accounts of tractors triumphantly ploughing across age-old boundaries and liberated farmers finally free to tear up old hedgerows and knock over boundary markers under collectivisation (for example, Wen 1959). All these reports explained the external transformation of the landscape boundaries as the outcome of the underlying ideological alternation under the CCP's guidance.

Finally, many traditional settlements were replaced by new concentrated residential and production centres to better promote collective production and life in the countryside. According to the relatively limited information on the local settlement transformation, in the early 1960s, as part of collectivisation, individual families in many communes were required to leave their scattered settlements and live in these newly built residential centres. This was done to promote new collective-oriented everyday practices, such as cooking and dining in communal dining halls, and sleeping in communal apartment-style housing (Whiting et al. 2019, 270). In the local Red Glow Commune in Pi County (a town in the Chengdu Plain), for example, more than 180 houses that originally lay in scattered traditional settlements were demolished, and all families within were relocated to a concentrated residential centre

(Whiting et al. 2019, 270). The exact extent to which traditional settlements were replaced by concentrated residential and production centres during Early Socialism was unknown. Nevertheless, journalist Ji-sheng Yang (2008, 88) suggests that merely for Pi County, there might be as many as 12,000 houses in the former traditional settlements being completely removed. In line with the rapid disappearance of the traditional settlements, many new rural centres were built according to the principles of collectivisation. The socialist architects and planners referred to the layout and spatial form of the *danwei* compound as a blueprint to the design of these new centres. From 1958 to 1960, the leading Chinese architectural journal published many standardised blueprints for the new residential, service, and production centres (see Figure 4.23) (for example, see Pei, Liu, and Shen 1958; L.-s. Wu 1959; Jin 1960). Nearly all of them had a *danwei* style. A socialist axis signifying the socialist order could be clearly identified. The party and administrative office building (i.e., the principal building) was placed at the forefront of the axis. The production zones, including various cooperative-owned factories and livestock farms, were arranged along the axis after the party building. The residential buildings were grouped to form some square or rectangular residential compounds on the periphery of the centre. Through similar spatial strategies and forms, the spatial regime and symbolic significance created by a *danwei* compound were copied into the countryside. Meanwhile, the socialist governments brought the formerly dispersed and weakly organised rural population within the new collective organisational structure of the socialist state.

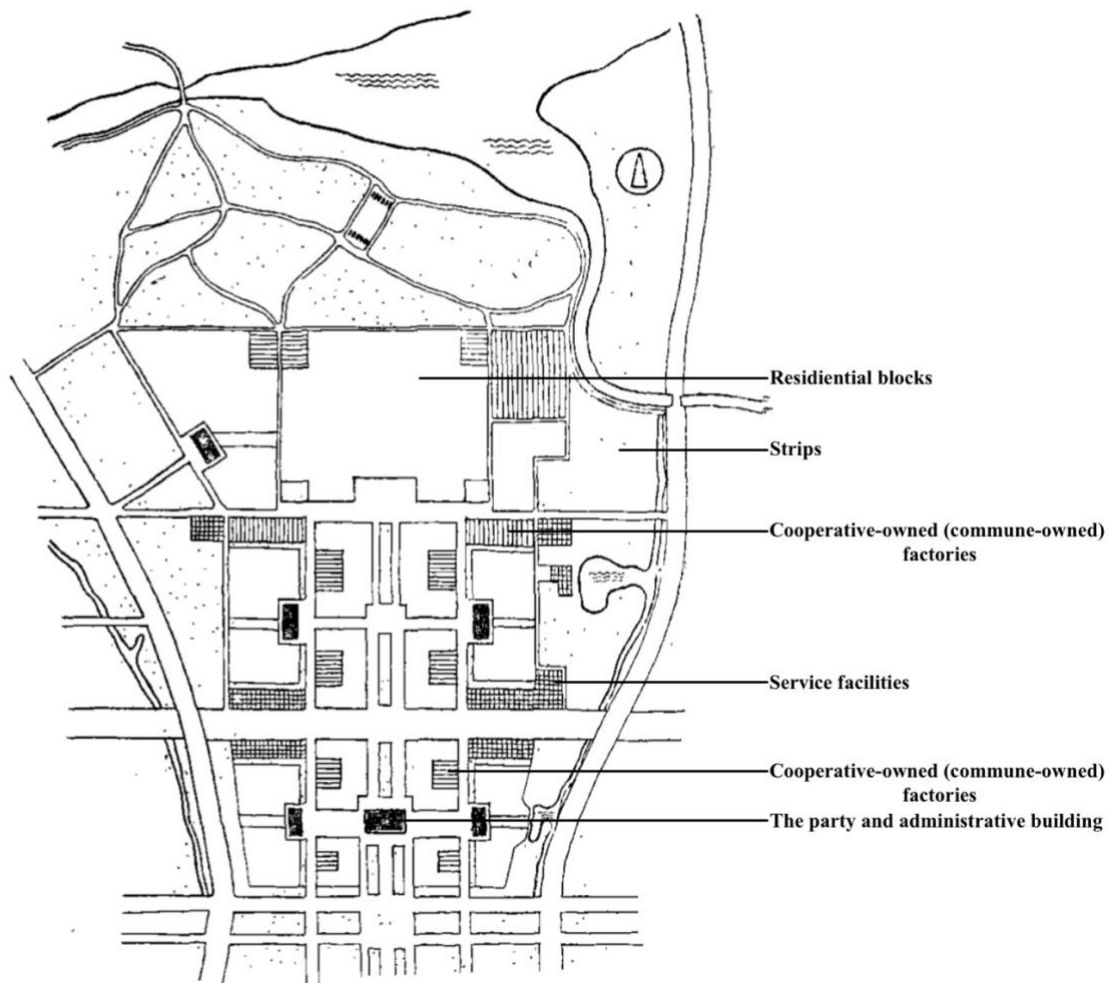


Figure 4.23 A standard blueprint for a new rural centre. Source: Jin (1960, 36).

In summary, the practices of socialist collectivisation in the Chengdu Plain created a new uniform landscape in the countryside. This landscape featured standard strips, straight roads and channels, and extensive similarly planned residential and production centres. Chinese socialists argued that this landscape transformation paved the way for a socialist transformation of daily life in villages. Their practices showed that collectivism was not merely an abstract political ideal but a core principle that applied to a full range of landscape practices within villages. Their ultimate aims were encapsulated in the popular rural slogan of the “Five transformations” - “the socialisation of housework, the collectivisation of daily work, the universalisation of education, the normalisation of hygiene, and the greening of communes.” By contrast, for ordinary farmers, this landscape transformation appeared to have a somewhat different meaning, particularly after the dire economic failures of the Great Leap Forward (1958-1962). It was rumoured that some local farmers felt unsure whether the

socialist collectivisation principle should override the desire for a full stomach in daily production and life because, during the Great Leap Forward, there was in effect less food to eat than that before collectivisation.⁶⁵ It is unclear how many farmers indeed disliked the collectivised landscape arrangement and ways of life and longed for the traditional forms and customs. But after the Great Leap Forward, many radical practices of collectivisation, such as building a huge-size commune covering many towns, gradually ceased. Instead, more localised and moderate measures, including relatively flexible land use and permitting small private plots, were introduced to re-stabilise the rural society and economy. Nevertheless, these changes did not signal the end of the landscape practices of collectivisation in the Chengdu Plain. The Maoist political, economic, and organisational strategies constantly underpinned the underlying principles of rural collectivisation in daily life, farming, and landscape practices until the reform period.

⁶⁵ This is concluded from the author's interviews with local elders in 2019, the accounts of the local rural activities during the 1960s in Jung Chang's (1991) autobiography, and the recently published information on the Great Leap Forward in Ji-sheng Yang's (2008) book.

4.2 The landscape practices of political radicals during the Cultural Revolution

Although the practices of socialist collectivisation had recreated local society in many aspects, in the view of political radicals, a severe crisis that would ultimately undermine the socialist egalitarian aspirations and the political system's legitimacy was looming over China. This crisis was socialist moral degradation. Radicals insisted that when collectivisation led to the centralisation of power, political bureaucrats like cadres would enjoy special privileges and deviate from socialist moral norms (Parish and Whyte 1978, 47, 106). In 1962, class struggle as a way to fight moral corruption was re-emphasised by the highest leader of the CCP. From 1966 to 1976, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (hereafter the Cultural Revolution) was launched to resolve this socialist moral crisis. In this context, political radicals began to play an important role in the local landscape practices. Unlike former mild socialists who reasonably sought to apply the socialist principles to socialist construction, they tended to powerfully reshape the everyday landscape into cult places of political leader Mao Zedong through an extensive poster and painting campaign. They hoped this personality cult could purge people's bad thoughts and create a moral utopia.

4.2.1 The “red ocean”

Over the decade of the Cultural Revolution, political radicals launched an extensive poster and painting campaign throughout China to push a vast array of initiatives, including educating people about socialist moral norms, mobilising people to participate in political campaigns, and promoting the personality cult of Mao Zedong. In practice, this campaign sought to fill everyday spaces with various political posters and paintings to maximise Mao's visibility and symbolic effect. Ordinary people generally used the “red ocean” to describe the new everyday landscape created by this campaign.

The “red ocean” took different forms and assumed special significance in various settings. Firstly, in small-scale spaces like rooms, radicals tended to use the portraits and images of Mao as decorations to adorn the former standardised interior space created by the socialist construction drive. They downplayed the general principles of simplicity and standardisation essential in representing socialist aesthetics. They argued that the oversimplified aesthetics had been unable to inspire people with socialist morality and Mao's great thoughts. Thus,

images of Mao and posters featuring Mao's words as necessary complements were added to give people a pictorial representation and straightforward interpretation of the leader's ideology (and morality and vision) (see Figure 4.24). In addition, considering low literacy, most posters in small-scale spaces had few words and mainly depicted the father figure of Mao. For example, Mao smiling and waving at crowds were the most widespread images in people's bedrooms. These images emphasised the close relationship between the leader and the people and made people feel that the highest socialist leader was coming to them and telling them about the socialist ideology and goals. Meanwhile, the father figure also associated the role of Mao with the traditional patriarchal authority, which reinforced the notion of Mao as a mentor in daily life.⁶⁶ Finally, because traditional culture often interpreted the patriarch as someone possessing supernatural power, images depicting the father figure of Mao were seen as a blessing for people's families, businesses, and day-to-day lives. In some instances, people spontaneously cut Mao's photographs out of newspapers and pasted them everywhere so as to receive the greatest blessings.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ This can also be inferred from the popular slogan in people's houses – "Listen to Chairman Mao".

⁶⁷ For example, in a report in the *People's Daily*, a farmer spontaneously pastes 32 portraits of Mao on the bedroom wall (Chang 1991, 278).



Figure 4.24 The posters and portraits of Mao in a young couple's new house. Source: Z. Li (2003, 151).

Secondly, political radicals decorated the streets with catchy slogans and posters resembling newspaper broadsheets so as to transform every street into a “large newspaper” reporting the leader’s important directives. They argued that when the grandiose neoclassical buildings created a streetscape symbolically showing the political ambition to create a new socialist society, this streetscape failed to effectively mobilise the populace to participate in political campaigns and fast spread the leader’s messages and ideas. Thus, they started to paint mobilisation-theme slogans and paste newspaper-like posters directly on the street façades

of the buildings. In order to make the slogans visible and legible at a distance, their texts were always simple, large, and bold. Posters adopted the broadsheet newspaper layout in which a big, eye-catching headline was at the top, and a textbox below gave some accounts. The general headlines read, for example, “Urgent telegraph messages from Beijing”, “The latest information about the revolution”, and “Mao’s campaign speeches”. Despite the bold slogans and headlines, for most posters, only one or two colours (generally black or black-and-white) were used. Two factors explained this simple colour scheme: ink availability in the 1960s was limited because of a centrally planned economy, and since the content of posters and slogans was required to reflect the latest directives and changing political circumstances like newspapers, adding additional colours led to a long production period and made the posters outdated. In the memoir, Xian-de Zhang (1999, 91-92) notes that street posters had an astonishingly quick turnaround time at the height of the Cultural Revolution. He jokes that people quickly pasted more than ten posters in the same place, and the final multilayered posters resembled a thick winter coat (X.-d. Zhang 1999, 92). Zhang’s observation shows that the turnaround time, rather than the shortage of ink, was more likely to contribute to the popularity of the black-and-white posters. In summary, during the Cultural Revolution focusing on quickly mobilising the masses to participate in various political campaigns, simple and bold street posters and slogans became an ideal medium to meet political radicals’ aims to promote mass political participation. The streetscape during this period thus was reshaped as an everyday political information provider.

Thirdly, radicals treated the portraits of Mao as icons in which secular and spiritual power were fused and added them to various public spaces like dining halls, cooperative shops, and leisure centres. In China, there was a historical tradition of endowing the leader with supernatural and superhuman power. During the Cultural Revolution, Mao’s personality cult’s rise echoed this tradition. Radicals started to teach ordinary people that the correct application of Mao’s thought could lead to miracles in “every human activity and condition, such as curing cancer, healing deaf mutes, and improving labour productivity and human understanding (Melnick 1976, 133)”. In concert with this political instruction, Mao’s portraits were regarded as icons neatly placed in main entrances, meeting rooms, lobbies, and halls (see Figure 4.25). Radicals sought to establish these icons in all public places so that Mao would magically appear and provide help where he was most needed. The representative

icons were painted in a form reminiscent of the saviour sent from heaven. Julia Andrews (1994, 360) describes the key characteristics of the icons.

“Cool colours were to be avoided; Mao’s flesh should be modelled in red and other warm tones ... Mao’s face should be smooth in appearance. The entire composition should be bright and should be illuminated in such a way as to imply that Mao himself was the primary source of (the sun) light. If Mao were in the centre of a group of people, all surfaces that faced him should appear to be illuminated. In this way, slogans such as ‘Mao is the sun in our hearts’ could be made tangible.”

In practice, how Mao could be portrayed was regulated and formalised by a set of approved images of Mao. Therefore, in most public places, icons of Mao were very similar. The sun-light-like composition with the figure of a saviour was the most widespread in the Chengdu Plain and throughout China (see Figure 4.25). This standardised form also proved that Mao’s icons primarily served to match an idealised persona for a personality cult in public spaces rather than to increase the place’s aesthetic value.



Figure 4.25 Mao's icon in a local teahouse. Source: SQ Li (2015).

During the Cultural Revolution, political radicals made an effort to add elements of the “red ocean” to the everyday landscape to inspire ordinary people who were formerly remote from political campaigns and ideological struggle. They believed that the “red ocean” could help people internalise the ideology and morality of the leader as their own and create a moral utopia. However, the examination of the “red ocean” revealed that their practices, in effect, certified Mao’s symbolic role in the socialist Chinese pantheon and promoted a personality cult of Mao among the populace. Notably, it would be improper to attribute the “red ocean” wholly to the radical socialist ideological trend in 1960s and 1970s Maoism. As I have shown, Chinese historical traditions also played an important role in this process. In addition, recent comparative research indicates that similar practices existed in Russia during the Stalin period and in Cuba under Fidel Castro’s regime (for example, see Fagen 1965; Melnick 1976). These findings prove that the “red ocean” was also very likely to be influenced by other socialist countries.

Finally, apart from as an unequivocal blessing, when the push for the “red ocean” intensified at the height of the Cultural Revolution, some people started to see it as a burden. Some farmers complained that because young people devoted so much time to making and reading posters, they rarely worked and became a heavy burden on productive teams (Chan, Madsen, and Unger 2009, 124). There was also growing concern about possible famine and social upheavals among the populace. Nevertheless, the practices of the “red ocean” along with the personality cult of Mao continued until the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976. After that, with the advent of Chinese economic reform, the elements of the “red ocean” that had dominated the everyday landscape for a decade finally reached its use-by date.

4.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I chart the emergence of socialist landscapes and spatial forms in the Chengdu Plain. I show that an important factor that contributed to the formation of the socialist landscape was the design practices and principles adopted by the Soviet architects during the Stalinist period. Standardisation, simplicity, and the industrialisation of the construction process were explicitly identified in the design and planning of socialist-style housing, the *danwei* compounds, and cooperative farms. These Soviet principles not only helped the new socialist governments reduce construction costs. More importantly, they echoed the socialist value and cultural aspirations: egalitarianism, economy, practicality, and efficiency. In addition, the new regional planning was largely influenced by the Soviet symbolism tendency that emphasised the centralised role of the government.

I also illustrate how the traditional Chinese spatial forms interacted with the socialist practices and resulted in the birth of the unique *danwei* compound. The blueprint of the *danwei* compound revealed that, to a certain extent, the layout and spatial arrangement of a *danwei* compound imitated the axial organisation widespread in traditional Chinese-style residential compounds, imperial palaces, and temples. This spatial similarity conjured up people's cultural memory to provide a degree of cultural and psychological familiarity to the new *danwei* compound within entirely different social contexts. On the other hand, the traditional axial layout was largely re-designed according to the socialist value system. Firstly, the Party building was arranged at the forefront to symbolise the privileged position of the Party in socialist production and life. Secondly, important production buildings were placed along the axis behind the Party building to embody the particular significance of collective labour in a socialist society. Finally, residential and service blocks were situated at the end of the axis, suggesting the inferior position of dwelling within the socialist value system. During Early Socialism, the cultural memory from various axial spaces of traditional China, the new socialist value system, along with the special governmental organisation model, closely interacted and together led to the rapidly multiplying *danwei* compounds in the everyday landscape.

Yet the significance of the *danwei* compound was not only to create a socialist-style production place. By examining the underlying spatial regime, I explain how the *danwei*

compound was designed to promote a fundamental transformation from dispersed family life to a collective one among its members. Firstly, as a special spatial strategy, multiple-scale compounds were built to support a collective lifestyle on a large scale. Then, like socialist-style housing, massive communal facilities and shared spaces enabled certain aspects of collective life to be carried out on a small scale. In the 1950s and 1960s, the spatial regime established in the *danwei* compound largely succeeded. For ordinary people, collectivism was no longer an abstract political ideal but the daily life within a *danwei* compound. This spatial regime also gradually influenced other socialist practices in a broader scope. For example, the new rural residential and production centres displayed many characteristics of the *danwei* compound.

At the second part of this chapter, I analyse political radicals' practices - the "red ocean" - during the Cultural Revolution. Unlike the mild socialists in the 1950s, radicals sought to add the images of Mao and political posters to the everyday landscape to inspire people and create a socialist moral utopia. Their practices echoed certain Chinese historical traditions and finally resulted in a personality cult of Mao among the populace.

The socialist landscape patterns were well suited to the political, economic, cultural, and administrative strategies that characterised Maoist China. As a result, even in the remotest villages in the Chengdu Plain, people could see many representative socialist elements and spatial forms. However, with the advent of economic reform, the new socioeconomic principles based on the logic of the market gradually replaced collectivism. In many aspects, these socialist patterns became obstacles to new economic and social activities during the reform age. The following chapter will examine the transformation of the socialist landscape patterns under these new circumstances.

Chapter 5 The landscape in the reform period

The radical Cultural Revolution ceased with the demise of Mao and the downfall of the Gang of Four⁶⁸ in 1976. Later, in 1978, at the important 3rd Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the CCP, Deng Xiaoping⁶⁹ and his allies mustered enough political power to inaugurate new plans to steer China from the rigorous course of Mao to the market-oriented economic reforms and the “open door” of China. Some scholars refer to the period from 1979 to 2000 as the reform period (or late socialism or post-socialism) because of its significant social and cultural distinctiveness (see Solinger 1989; Bandelj and Solinger 2012; D. Wang 2018a). I adopt this definition in this landscape study. In the reform period, a new commercial culture and the market economy principles gradually replaced the former socialist collectivism, resulting in a reconstruction of the everyday landscape.

Specifically, the transformation of the everyday landscape is divided into two phases according to the reform process. The first period is from 1977 to 1991. During this period, the reform process was, as Deng Xiaoping once said, “to cross the river by feeling the stones with your feet” (Y.P. Wang and Murie 1996, 984). The government gradually introduced market-oriented measures into each aspect of social life. Whether these measures were socialist or capitalist did not matter. Ordinary people were encouraged to “smash the iron rice bowl” (i.e., leaving the state-owned work units or enterprises), to forget the socialist job guarantee, and to remake themselves as citizens of an independent nature rather than members of a socialist collective. This reform tendency resulted in the market-driven construction boom that raged throughout the Chengdu Plain and the whole of China. Naturally, this construction process engendered dramatic transformations of the landscape patterns. Many commercial symbols and individualised elements emerged in people’s houses and public spaces. The change in the everyday landscape signified the rise of the private sector and strongly promoted an individualised lifestyle.

⁶⁸ The Gang of Four refers to a Maoist political faction composed of four CCP officials. During the Cultural Revolution, these four CCP officials controlled the power organs of the CCP.

⁶⁹ Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997) is the highest CCP leader (1977-1989) after Mao’s demise in 1976. He initiated the far-reaching market-economy reforms and the “open door” of China after 1978 and is seen as the “Architect of Modern China”.

The second phase was from 1992 to 2000. The escalation in economic restructuring since Deng Xiaoping's famous "Southern Tour" in 1992 further drove the physical reconfiguration of the everyday landscape. In the Chengdu Plain, massive construction of modern factories, increased overseas investment, and the development of the real estate industry led to the rapid marketisation and privatisation of urban space. Meanwhile, in order to address the underlying problem of social management, new community-based governance was introduced into the enclosed residential estates created by real estate developers. In many ways, the transformation of the everyday landscape during this period resonated with Western neoliberal trends⁷⁰.

This chapter examines the transformation of the everyday landscape when the ideological baggage in Early Socialism was discarded by state-level reforms and people gradually became accustomed to the free-market system and a relatively more open social atmosphere. It explores how different groups, such as urban youth, private business operators, and farmers, reshaped the landscape through various practices associated with production, consumption, and entertainment in the 1980s. It suggests that individualism replaced collectivism, becoming the guiding principle and basic logic for everyday landscape practices when the state quickly retreated from daily life during the de-collectivisation period. This chapter also points out that when the escalation of the economic reform resulted in the marketisation and privatisation of urban space after 1992, enclosed residential estates and modern factories were designed as "machines" to produce and reproduce self-managed citizens and self-disciplined workers, respectively.

⁷⁰ The neoliberal trend, or neoliberalism, refers to "the new political, economic, and social arrangement within society that emphasize market relations, re-tasking the role of the state, and individual responsibility (Springer, Birch, and MacLeavy 2016, 2)". Some scholars, such as Gary Sigley (2006) and David Bray (2008), argue that the society and politics of China in the 21st century should be seen as an interaction between socialism and neoliberalism, which is different from typical neoliberalism in the Western context.

5.1 The de-collectivisation practices from 1977 to 1992

After 1978, Xiangyang commune⁷¹ in the northeast Chengdu Plain first initiated economic reform in China after suffering ten years of financial setbacks during the Cultural Revolution. The government terminated the ill-organised and inefficient collective system and instead introduced a new “(household or individual) responsibility system”. This new system allowed ordinary households (and individuals) to plant and work in separate fields and to profit separately from their own crop fields (Chan, Madsen, and Unger 2009, 271). After that, the government implemented more reform measures in day-to-day administration and production. They started to adopt more neutral terms, such as town, village, and group, to replace those socialist-style ones (i.e., commune, brigade, and production team). They also legalised free markets, private transactions, and family enterprises. The social pendulum gradually swung from Mao’s “Politics in Command” to Deng’s “Economics in Command”. As David Bray (2005, 159) observes, the economic and social future seemingly was “no longer to be founded upon the egalitarian commune, but instead upon contractual relationships between rational individuals mediated by the market”. In this context, the region’s built environment was reshaped to augment the transition from a society dominated by the collective to one centred upon the individual and the market. On both the micro (housing and street) and macro (regional) scale, a range of de-collective practices based on the logic of the market and individualised production was identified.

5.1.1 House remodelling

The transformation of the everyday landscape first occurred in ordinary people’s housing. During Early Socialism, because of applying the principles of collectivism and standardisation in housing design and construction, people lived in small residential units that resembled one another both inside and outside, with minor variations in spatial size and form. The socialist architects carefully designed the form of the standard residential unit to promote a socialist collective lifestyle (for details, see chapter 4). In the 1980s, although Deng called for the commodification of housing, initial reforms to the housing sector did not seek to achieve a

⁷¹ The reform of Xiangyang commune is a risky venture in both economy and politics. The secretary of the Guanghan Party committee, Guang-nan Chang, initiated this “dangerous” reform. The recently published materials reveal that Chang’s reform possibly received the support from Premier Zhao Ziyang (1919-2005).

shift from public to private. Instead, they tended to introduce a new system in which the state, the work units (*danwei*), and the individual together bore the financial burden of housing construction (D. Bray 2005, 174). This sharing of the burden, along with rising incomes after the wage system reform, led to a dramatic increase in housing construction and remodelling rate. According to the national statistics, from 1979 to 1992, the total area of urban housing expanded by more than four times, while the amount of living space allotted to each urban resident more than doubled, from 3.6 to 7.3 square meters (Social Statistics Department of the National Bureau of Statistics 1994, 93-97). The significant increase eased the nationwide housing shortage and overcrowding after the rapid population increase during the Maoist period. More importantly, it allowed ordinary people to create new residential environments appropriate to the new individualised social relationship and a more private lifestyle.

The primary means of housing upgrading in the 1980s was housing remodelling. Urban residents generally built two walls to divide their socialist-style standard residential units (sometimes only containing an all-purpose room) into three individual components, including two small bedrooms and a living room. The two bedrooms were often arranged on either side, with the living room in the middle. In most cases, the parents occupied one bedroom, and their grown children took up another one. This transformation of housing layout from a single space to several separate ones solved the practical problems faced by residents of offering more personal space to an expanding family. It also reflected a sociocultural tendency towards individualism in the de-collectivisation context. As Yunxiang Yan (2003, 125; 2009, 112-139) notes, the separate bedrooms symbolised young people's increasing independent awareness, thus particularly favoured by young family members.⁷² In addition, the separate bedrooms also facilitated a private lifestyle in the family sphere. People started to decorate their bedrooms to express their personal cultural tastes and aspirations. They also used their bedrooms to perform their social and leisure activities, such as meeting their peers and appreciating popular music. In addition to the new separate bedrooms, the living room also provided space to meet the growing needs of residents for the recreational activities that were undertaken inside of their households. It, along with the new-style living room furniture and

⁷² Yunxiang Yan (2003, 125; 2009, 112-139) argues that because the Maoist sociocultural practices unexpectedly promoted the awareness of individual rights, the young generation raised entirely in collective circumstances, in effect, had a stronger desire for personal space within the domestic sphere than their parents.

appliances, such as sofas and televisions, created a relaxed, equal, and comfortable environment conducive to developing new indoor recreations like watching television (Y. Yan 2003, 133). Notably, due to poor maintenance of shared kitchens during de-collectivisation, residents sometimes arranged a small kitchen zone within the living room.

There were also many enterprise- and government-led housing upgrading and remodelling projects. Since the reform devolved increased responsibility for housing investment upon enterprises (or *danwei*), many enterprises that performed well within the new market economic system started to upgrade their staff housing. The principal means of enterprise-led housing upgrading were similar to those adopted by ordinary people to remodel their homes. The former communal facilities, such as shared kitchens and bathrooms, were removed. Standard residential units were divided into two components (see Figure 5.1). The large component became the new bedroom, and the small one was used as a personal kitchen and bathroom. In some cases, in order to expand the living area, a door was set in the partition wall to integrate two immediately adjacent residential units into a large unit of two bedrooms, an independent kitchen, and a personal bathroom (see Figure 5.1). The new arrangement of residential space reflected the growing importance of private space in the de-collectivisation context. It also suggested that residents' basic needs started to be met according to the principle of individualism rather than collectivism. The government-led housing upgrading overall followed the same pattern. The only difference was that the governments also focused on transforming the appearance after rearranging the interior space. It was envisioned that after housing upgrading, the new façades could add a free and relaxed ambience to the socialist-style urban landscape featuring a uniform construction standard and form. To achieve this vision, architects attempted various architectural forms in government-led housing remodelling projects. For example, the step-like façade, which provided each unit with an independent patio (or balcony), was one of the most popular architectural forms in the 1980s. This architectural style embodied architects' visions of post-socialist modern lives. More importantly, it allowed for the growing social demand for personal space and indoor activities during the reform age. Many residents treated these patios (or balconies) as their private gardens and planted flowers and greenery to beautify and personalise them. In the 1980s, individualisation of housing space was favoured by both architects and ordinary residents. As a popular advertising slogan said, the principles of housing upgrading and

construction shifted from standardisation and collectivism to the “Five independence” - “the independent entrance, the independent residential unit, the independent kitchen, the independent toilet, and the independent balcony” (The committee of Chengdu Architectural History 1994, 142). The institutional and economic reform called for individualisation in social organisation and economic activities. Housing remodelling based on the principle of individualisation gave a spatial response to this reform aim.

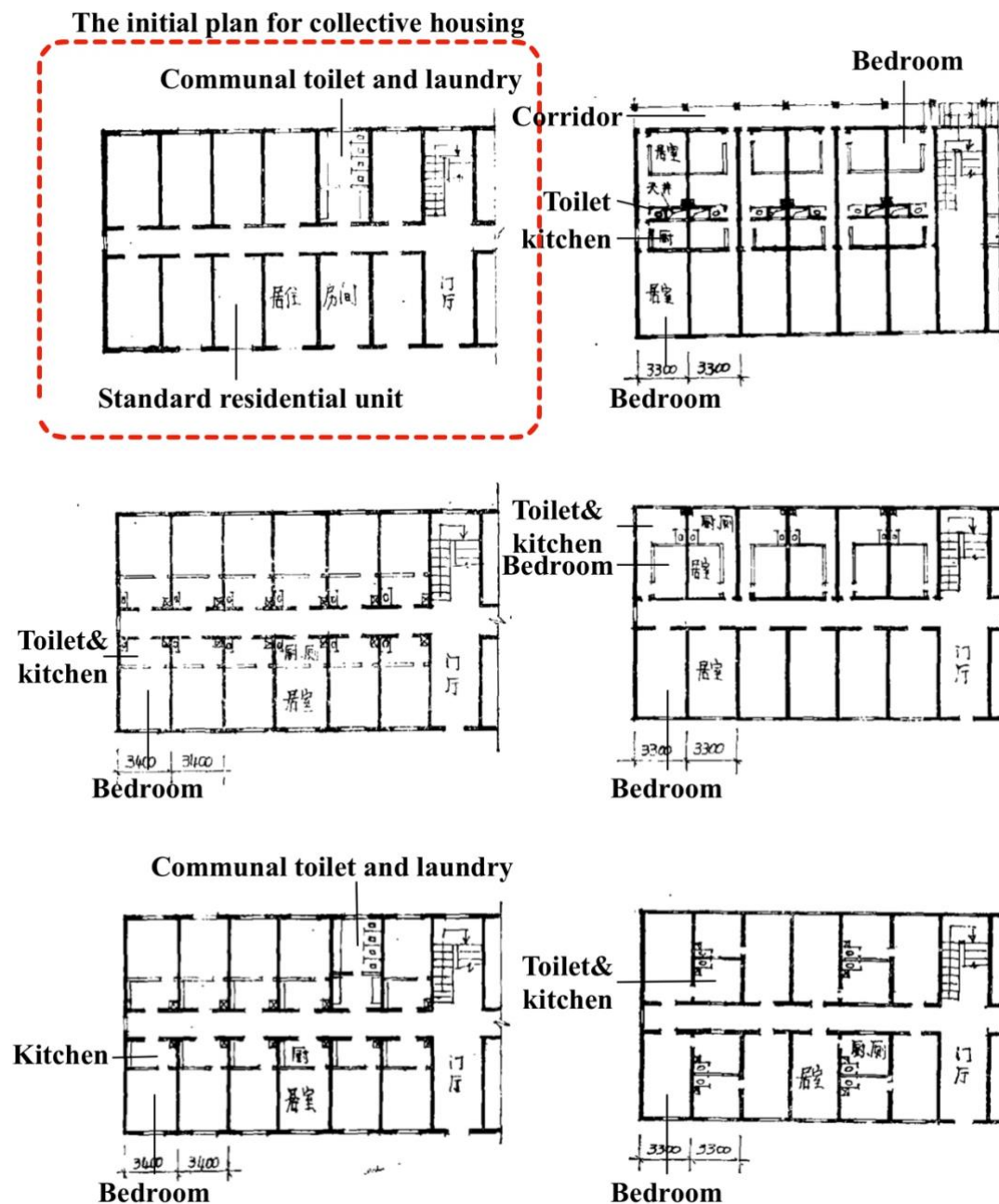


Figure 5.1 Various forms of housing remodelling. Source: Gong (1985, 24-26).

Much like urban housing, rural housing also underwent a remarkable transformation. In the 1980s, rural people who worked at temporary jobs in the cities were influenced by the new urban lifestyle and first started to imitate the urban-style layout to rearrange their housing interior space. A local architect, Zhao Xiao (1983), notes this trend. The plan he draws shows that a representative newly remodelled (or built) two-storey rural house was made up of four bedrooms, a living room, a storeroom, a kitchen, a patio, and a garden (see Figure 5.2). This layout provided each family member with individual space. But unlike traditional Chinese-style residential compounds characterised by a symmetrical layout and the symbolic spatial axis (for the layout of the traditional compounds, see chapter 2; for their spatial axiality, see chapter 4), Confucian hierarchy and morality were no longer able to be identified in the new spatial organisation. A common result of housing remodelling was that the middle-aged couple generally occupied the spacious ground-floor room which was traditionally regarded as the best in a house, and their elderly parents and grown-up children used the relatively small upstairs ones (Y. Yan 2003, 118-120). This spatial arrangement reflected that, during the early reform period, rural people not only developed a notion of private space like their urban counterparts but also lost the traditional Confucian custom of reserving the best space for the elders. A possible factor explaining this phenomenon is that, as anthropologist Yunxiang Yan (2009, 125) avers, the Maoist collective practices, including the state-sponsored ideological mobilisation, youth organisations, collective labour, and formal school education, strongly promoted the awareness of egalitarianism among people and successfully moved young villagers away from the influence of Confucian morality and kinship power in the public and private domain. This process of spatial rearrangement and the new spatial relations within the new residential space also illustrated that during the de-collectivisation period, the new family life started to centre on the middle-aged husband-wife union rather than traditionally revolving around privileged elders. By the end of the 1980s, in the Chengdu Plain, most new houses were built for young couples or those about to marry. Meanwhile, many elders still lived in old wood-structured houses with thatched roofs.

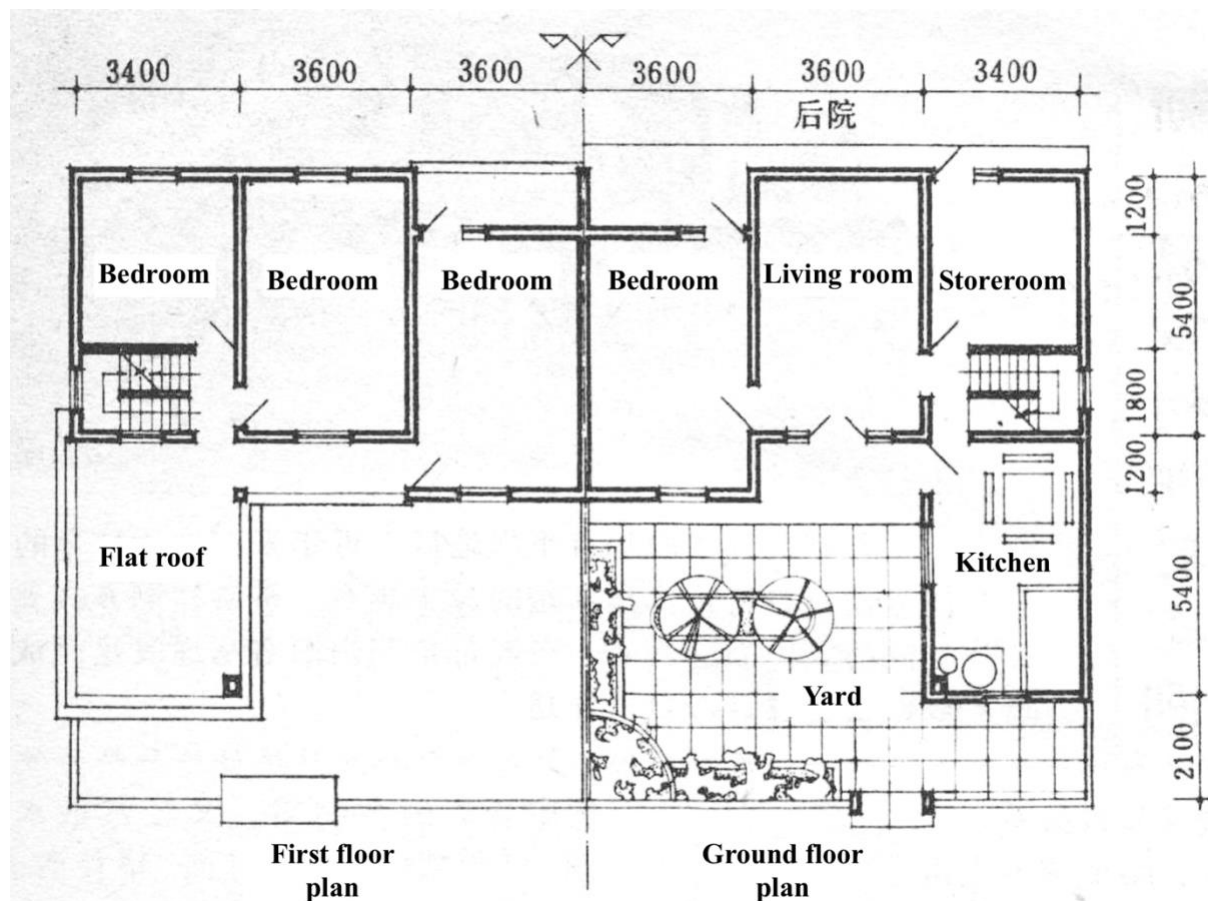


Figure 5.2 The plan for a newly remodelled local rural house. Source: Xiao (1983, 42).

Another interesting transformation of rural housing was that, when the de-collectivisation reform sought to allocate responsibilities and profits to individual producers, rural people started making room for private household production within their residential space. The most popular means was to add a storeroom in the house, as shown in Figure 5.2. This storeroom served many useful functions, such as storing previously collective-owned farm tools sold off to each household after de-collectivisation, storing household grain, and manufacturing agricultural products. In addition to a storeroom, certain workrooms were also arranged in the new layout of rural housing so that villagers could develop their family sidelines within their houses. The governments defined these new storerooms (and workrooms) as a positive change triggered by de-collectivisation in the residential environment (Xu and Zeng 1984). They also praised them as promising signs of the growth of the rural private economy. The emergence of storerooms and workrooms illustrated that a new spatial strategy for housing construction and remodelling was to creatively reconfigure

the once-standardised residential space to make rural housing fulfil additional purposes, such as store and household production. In the early 1980s, the leading Chinese architecture journal published considerable discussion papers about the new spatial configuration of rural housing appropriate to the rapid development of family sidelines (for example, see S.-e. Zhou 1981; Ren 1983; Jin, qi, and Zhu 1986). Later, in 1985, a government-sponsored design competition for model rural housing⁷³ was organised to invite architects to present their detailed visions for rural housing in the reform context. Regardless of various scales and appearances, the final award-winning housing design (see Figure 5.3) aimed to provide maximum private space and promote household production within the domestic sphere.



Figure 5.3 Two award-winning designs in the competition. Source: The Rural Construction Bureau of the Ministry of Construction (1986).

In addition to reconfiguring the interior residential space, many villagers also rearranged the exterior environment - the land where the house sat - to support the development of the household economy. The homestead plot, which was locally called “*yuanba* (a small yard)”, was used to grow vegetable and rice during the Maoist period. Without any enclosing wall and permanent fence, this plot (yard), nevertheless private property nominally, was seen as an open and transparent public space in practice. Villagers freely traversed other households’ plots as a shortcut (Y. Yan 2003, 122). But in the 1980s, many homestead plots were paved with bricks or a working ground and transformed from rice fields into a space for developing family sidelines. The reform of household farming offered plenty of farmland to grow rice.

⁷³ This full name of this competition is the “Nationwide Design Competition for Rural Housing”. The final award-winning designs were published in a 1986 book named “The Collection of Excellent Designs in the Nationwide Design Competition for Rural Housing”.

Thus, farmers no longer needed their small-size homestead plots to provide their daily necessities. Another factor explaining this transformation was that when many former collective assets, such as sows, poultry, and agricultural implements, were parcelled out and distributed to each household (see Chan, Madsen, and Unger 2009, 215), farmers tended to use their homestead plots to run pig and poultry farms. Household chicken farms and small-size grain-processing plants were widespread facilities built in these plots. Notably, many farmers also built brick walls to enclose their plots and houses. In the later 1980s and early 1990s, building a formal entrance with a wooden and iron gate wide enough for a tractor-puller wagon to enter people's yards became fashionable. The height of the enclosing wall was thus gradually increased to match the large gate. Consequently, many houses were hidden behind walls, becoming completely private places. The enclosing wall generated a rigid binary spatial code between the private and public domains. Some reports attributed this clear spatial distinction to the deterioration of public security after the reform untying people from the constraints of the collective administration and socialist norms. But according to Yunxiang Yan's (2003, 123) observation in north China, the fact is that many households, in effect, did not lock their yard gates at night. Yan's findings reveal other possible motivations. For example, the popular notion of private space and new individualised social relationships were also very likely to result in the spatial binary code.

In summary, housing remodelling was popular in cities and villages during the 1980s. The new urban housing layout sought to provide residents with personal space and promote a private lifestyle. The transformation of rural housing was, in many ways, similar to that of the urban one. Villagers also reconfigured their residential space to offer more personal space to family members. The main difference was that many rural people allowed for the possibility of private household production in the de-collectivisation context, thus adding storerooms and workrooms in their newly remodelled houses and reshaping their private homestead plots.

5.1.2 The rise of the shopping street

The de-collectivisation reform led to a thriving, small-scale private enterprise sector geared to the fast-rising consumer demands. The governments defined these newly developed small-

scale enterprises and their operators as private business households (*getihu*)⁷⁴. As a new occupational category in Deng's regime, the growth of private business households was rapid. According to the national statistics bureau (1993, 110), the initial number of private business households was 150,000 in 1978. Then it increased to around 4.5 million in 1985 (National statistics bureau 1993, 110). By the end of 1992, private business households had reached over 8 million, a nearly 55-fold increase over just 15 years (National statistics bureau 1993, 110). The implications of the rise of private business households went far beyond the economy. As a major new social group in the Chengdu Plain, their practices reshaped the local streetscape and significantly transformed ordinary people's daily lives.

The practices of private business households first contributed to the return of various old-fashioned shops along the principal commercial streets and among the lanes and backstreets of residential districts. According to the account of Ole Bruun (1993, 18) who performed his anthropological fieldwork in Chengdu at the end of the 1980s, these old-fashioned shops were one- or two-storey wooden houses that regained their original commercial functions (see Figure 5.4). He gives considerable details about the appearance and the transformation of these old-style street-side housing (shops).

"Shops facing onto the street that some thirty years ago were boarded up and converted into living quarters have now been reopened as restaurants, workshops, and businesses, while their inhabitants have either moved their living quarter back into the recession of the house or upstairs when possible. They are relatively simple structures. With two rows of poles supporting the tiled roof and plastered walls, they give an impression of timelessness. Not much (time) has been devoted to paint or decoration of the old houses, which display a kind of crass materialism in a continuation of their original purpose. The woodwork is painted dark red or green, and the plastered walls are only sparsely adorned with posters and magazine clippings. The facades, which are

⁷⁴ It should be noted that the English translation "private business household" perhaps was not very accurate because in many cases, the private business, in effect, was run by an individual rather than a household in the 1980s. Anthropologist Yunxiang Yan (2009, 281) points out that the official Chinese term "*getihu*" itself was linguistically and socially ambiguous since it juxtaposed two contradictory Chinese words "individual" and "household". In this thesis, to align with this term used in popular English publications, I still adopt private business households to refer to these small-scale private enterprises and their operators during the early reform period.

only ten to fifteen feet on most of the houses, consist of a long row of shutter boards that have been carefully preserved by the inhabitants. They are easily removed and give full access to the shop in the daytime. At night they are slid back into their grooves. Most houses are two rooms deep on the ground level, although a few have three or only one. Some houses contain an additional storey, but the low pitch of the roof necessitated by the loose-laid tiles barely offers standing height.” (Bruun 1993, 18)

In the reform period, because the government started to promote the development of the private sector and free market, many residents living in these street-side properties sought to revitalise these former commercial spaces to run small-scale private businesses. With the reintroduction of the old-fashioned shops, the street-side shopping strips quickly expanded and became core elements of the new streetscape. Concomitant with the development of shopping strips, traditional itinerant vendors and stalls also re-emerged in the street (see Figure 5.5). Itinerant vendors were mainly nearby farmers who came to the newly commodified streets to sell their agricultural and homemade products. They generally put big bamboo baskets filled with various fresh vegetables, eggs, and fruits on the pavements, standing or sitting behind their baskets with large round hats protecting them from sun and rain, hailing passers-by or just silently waiting to service customers (Bruun 1993, 20). Roadside stalls were mainly run by youth who were attracted by the free market and decided to devote themselves to private business. Although street stalls were often built in a temporal and simple form, these young stall operators, along with increased itinerant vendors, took advantage of flexible operation and a large number of consumers, gradually rising to prominence in the new streetscape.



Figure 5.4 Old-fashioned shops in the street. Bill Hocker captured this photo in the Chengdu Plain in 1981. Source: <https://billhocker.com/album.php?id=835>

8



Figure 5.5 Itinerant vendors and stalls in the street. Bill Hocker captured this photo in the Chengdu Plain in 1981. Source: <https://billhocker.com/album.php?id=856>

1

The increased commercial activities resulted in the impressive growth of street advertising. The initial forms of advertising in the early 1980s were mainly handwritten posters and handbills. Since the ideology of the reform no longer regarded advertisements as signs of capitalism, profit-driven private business operators started to paste these commercial posters everywhere, on walls and street poles, without any guidelines. It was hoped that these posters could advertise a range of consumer goods and commercial events, from newly opened stores to seasonal promotions, and train consumers to navigate a gradually commodified world. Consequently, at human height, street mailboxes, blank spaces, abandoned storefronts, and lampposts were thickly covered by layers of posters. Later, more modern and advanced forms of advertising were introduced in the street. Billboards were set along the street and on the

building roofs to display fashion goods and trends, tempting people to shop simply for the pleasure of shopping. Banners also strung across the street, advertising the latest commercial products. These modern advertisements gradually transformed the street into a display window and projected an image of capitalist abundance into the streetscape. Notably, because few state controls were imposed on private business households and commercial practices under Deng's regime, the change in the streetscape simultaneously revealed the inability of the state to manage resources, preserve order, and control discourses. It was commonplace to see reports about "black-hearted" private business operators defrauding customers through street advertising (e.g. Z.-c. Li 1990). These reports suggested that when many people still saw the street as a form of official medium through which the explicit and right messages were conveyed, the force of consumer culture gradually transformed it into a profit-driven and market-oriented medium.

Street-side old-fashioned shops, itinerant vendors and stalls, and street advertisements were outstanding characteristics of the newly commodified streetscape in the 1980s. Yet the transformation of the streetscape should not be understood merely as an outcome of expanding the private sector. It also brought about a fundamental transformation in ordinary people's daily practices. With the rise of the shopping streets, the centre of daily life gradually shifted from the socialist workplace (the *danwei* compound) onto the street (D. Bray 2005, 167). Sociologist Xian-min Shi (1993, 1-2) well describes this transition.

"(During the reform age), the housewife cannot do without the private vegetables stall when she buys vegetables; young people searching out the latest fashion trends cannot do without the private fashion shops; fashionable men and women cannot do without the private hairdressers when they want to get their hair styled; hungry travellers cannot do without the private restaurants; and people who use the bicycle as their means of transportation cannot do without the private repair stalls ... In short, in all locations where services are needed, in all spheres of social life, and everywhere where there is a chance for profit, you can find private business households bustling around their stalls and shops." (quoted from D. Bray 2005, 167)

If we further probe into this shift of daily life's locus, two representative streetscapes can be identified from Shi's description. The first one is that of the backstreet in the residential area and suburban neighbourhood. These backstreets mainly provided services and goods to meet the everyday needs of ordinary residents, such as food and hairdressing. During the Maoist period, socialist architects and planners designed these backstreets based on the principle of functionalism. But now, the practices of private business operators highlighted the commercial potential of these former drab streets and transformed them into the main places where people spent their non-work time. The second form was the streetscape of the principal street, such as the Qingnian (Youth) road in the centre of Chengdu. Due to the convenient geographical locations, massive crowds, including travellers, visitors, and locals, gathered on these principal streets every day. Private business operators took advantage of a large number of people and transformed these principal streets into regional shopping hubs where people experienced the latest fashion trends and consumer culture.

The Chinese architectural theorist, Wen-yi Zhu, argues that the rise of the shopping street in the reform age carried a double cultural meaning. Firstly, it reflects the resurrection of a traditional urban spatial formation and operation means that had developed since at least the tenth century (W.-y. Zhu 2010, 146). Secondly, it represents a monumental characteristic widespread in Western cities (W.-y. Zhu 2010, 146). Zhu's findings are insightful because they reveal an amalgamation of Chinese tradition and the Westernising trend in understanding the transformation of the streetscape. However, his analysis of the streetscape is also somewhat problematic due to this binary analysis. For example, how can the monumental Western streetscape that requires massive capital investment be created by post-socialist small business operators who did not have much capital? In my view, Zhu's analysis too readily conflates the newly emerged private business households in the de-collectivisation context with those ordinary business operators in ancient China and the contemporary Western world. Or in other words, he largely overlooks the distinctiveness of private business households and their practices. In the 1980s, the official definition of private business households as private individuals was constantly challenged by the Maoist socialist collective discourses. Private business operators' practices thus were broadly interpreted as "dangerous" because they reshaped the former socialist collective space according to the principle of privatisation and individualism. In this context, many private business operators

did not seek to create an entirely new space and built environment well suited to the free market. Instead, they tended to gradually and tentatively transform the socialist form of space to make it meet commercial needs. The emergence of the street-side old-fashioned shops clearly illustrated this contradictory tendency among private business households. The rise of small commercial strips in socialist-style work unit (*danwei*) compounds and residential neighbourhoods also reflected that the commercial activities of private business operators were still dependent upon the socialist spatial formation and urban operation means to a large degree. Therefore, it is more proper to understand the newly commodified streets as an outcome of the complex sociocultural negotiations between the Maoist socialist spatial principles and the new private and individual spatial logics, rather than a mimetic return of traditional spatial formation. In addition, in the 1980s, public criticism of the legitimacy of private business activities in everyday speech and mass media resulted in the low social positions of private business operators.⁷⁵ But modern commercial buildings in the principal commercial streets, such as large department stores and shopping malls, indicated the important social role of the private sector, thereby providing identity to private business operators working within and legitimacy to their activities. In this regard, the monumental characteristic noted by Zhu in the 1980s and early 1990s streetscape also reflected that a new social relationship appropriate to the market economy and individualised forms of identity gradually replaced the Maoist one based on collectivism and the egalitarian commune.

5.1.3 The growing diversity of the agricultural landscape

In the countryside, the de-collectivisation of agricultural production resulted in the growing diversity of the agricultural landscape in the 1980s. This change first occurred in the pattern of land use. The standard strips managed by the socialist communes and brigades were now distributed to their members to use according to each member's will. The logic of the market replacing that of collectivism was also widely applied to rural land management and agricultural production. The governments started to grant more discretion to ordinary farmers, allowing them to grow more of what was most profitable (Chan, Madsen, and Unger 2009, 263). By the early 1980s, farmers were merely required to grow a quota of particular

⁷⁵ The evidence of this criticism is presented by anthropologist Biao Xiang (2005) in his study about a migrant village in Beijing.

crops and turn them over to the government partly as agricultural taxes and partly as land rentals (Blecher 1988, 96). The outcome of the individual-oriented land reform and market-oriented production practices was a rapid transition in the land pattern from the standard strips to household-owned field units of different sizes and crops. Big farms were fragmented into small parcels of different shapes. Many private orchards gradually emerged in the socialist-style mono-functional landscape. Farmers planted local fruits, such as peach, apple, and mandarin trees, in these orchards to earn more money. The strong demands of the market promoted the ongoing development of private orchards. The statistical data of a county in the Chengdu Plain showed that in 1985, nearly half of the farms had transformed into cash planting, and many among them finally became various orchards (The compilation committee of the gazetteer of Pi County 1989, 267). At the end of the 1980s, large vineyards and cherry orchards had become one of the most popular land use patterns.

In addition to orchards, other patterns of land use were also identified in the Chengdu Plain. The small-size and low-lying fields incompatible with former socialist large-scale mechanised farming were now rented by farmers with excellent commercial acumen to plant vegetables. Independent dealers in the free market purchased fresh vegetables several times higher than those previously available from the state (Chan, Madsen, and Unger 2009, 273). Likewise, many low-lying fields were transformed into fishponds to meet the increasing demand for fish in the market. Creative farmers also revived the ancient rice-fish pattern⁷⁶ through which fish were farmed with rice to maximise the economic potential of the land (The compilation committee of the gazetteer of Pi County 1989, 3). Overall, institutional de-collectivisation and the free market's rise drove land use diversification in the 1980s. The various patterns of land use reflected farmers' individualised responses to the market's demands and their views of the de-collectivisation reform as the flexible utilisation of land resources. The form of each household-owned field unit was designed according to a twin principle of productivity and profitability.

⁷⁶ The earliest rice-fish system record in the Chengdu Plain dates back to the Wei Dynasty (220-265) (Halwart and Gupta 2004, 3). In the 2000s, it was one of the first to be considered as a "Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System".

Concomitant with various patterns of land use, the newly formed boundaries between the different field units also contributed to the growing diversity of the agricultural landscape. A large number of hedges, rows of trees, and linear shrubs were planted along the field units, clearly marking out the realm of the newly built private farms in villages (see Figure 5.6). In some places, tall fences were erected to display further the independence of the private farms from the surrounding field. In addition to increasing landscape diversity, these boundaries also carried underlying social meaning. They were, in many ways, reminiscent of the appearance of the countryside characterised by independent mutual help blocks in the Late Imperial Era. But this did not signify the return of the traditional rural spatial structure based on Confucian ideology. In the de-collectivisation context, these boundaries mainly represented a defensive image and defined an individual realm. Farmers built these boundaries as a defensive measure to exclude outsiders and guard private property. Some farmers also built pavilion-like guard cabins within their private farms to reinforce the defensive image presented by the landscape boundaries (see K.-q. Zhou 1990). In addition, the boundaries reproduced a social structure within which individual awareness was developed from reduced social intimacy between neighbours. The boundaries made private fields less accessible to the neighbours. Daily chats in the fields during work hours gradually disappeared. Farmers soon found themselves socially independent of each other.

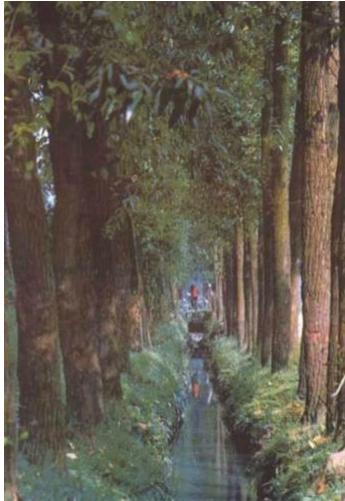


Figure 5.6 Landscape boundaries in the Chengdu Plain. Source: The compilation committee of the gazetteer of Pi County (1989).



Figure 5.7 Country roads in the 1980s Chengdu Plain. Source: The compilation committee of the gazetteer of Wenjiang (2011, 37).

The de-collectivisation reform also led to a dramatic transformation of the rural settlement form. Many households left the former large-scale concentrated rural settlements to live in small-scale residential clusters with their relatives and neighbours. The traditional rural residential image featuring family production and small neighbourhood communities was thereby revived in the rural landscape: two to five houses nestled within groves of trees or bamboo and surrounded by small parcels of intensively farmed fields. By contrast, the socialist-style concentrated settlements were gradually deserted. Two factors drove this settlement transformation. The first was that the post-socialist government no longer invested in the concentrated settlements after the de-collectivisation reform. Consequently, many communal facilities in these concentrated settlements, such as shared kitchens and laundries, were totally abandoned or poorly maintained. Villagers thus had to establish new settlements to live a more individualised lifestyle. The second one was that small-scale residential clusters better supported new individual forms of production than concentrated settlements. Without the restriction of unified spatial management, villagers living in the new

residential clusters could readily reconfigure the residential space according to different production demands. They could also choose a suitable location that allowed them to benefit from easy access to transit or a thriving local market. In the early 1990s, increased residential clusters were built along the main roads. As a vital connection to the outside world, the roads offered people more opportunities to make a fortune in the reform.

Finally, the de-collectivisation reform resulted in a huge infrastructure decay in villages. Many irrigation channels, for example, were in a state of disrepair. The governments sought to devolve the responsibility for daily maintenance upon individual households that used these channels. But in practice, many households still regarded the irrigation channels as public facilities and did not want to take up the maintenance. The outcome was that sand, stones, and household garbage often blocked the water channels. The rural roads were also in poor condition due to a lack of government funding for daily maintenance. Except for several main roads, country roads and lanes were basically non-paved and in a filthy state (see Figure 5.7). Notably, the road network became very complex due to the relatively arbitrary housing construction after the de-collectivisation reform. Secondary roads were randomly linked with the main roads. At the lowest level, many winding and narrow country lanes led to the newly built residential clusters. Some observers (e.g. Chan, Madsen, and Unger 2009, 281) argue that the decayed infrastructure signified the degeneration of public spirit because the private residential environment, in effect, was significantly improved during the de-collectivisation period. This argument is only partially true. In my view, another possible explanation of this phenomenon is that the rural infrastructure built according to the principle of collective production and unified management became incompatible with the individualised production means and social practices. A key characteristic of the Maoist infrastructure was the egalitarian distribution of essential resources. Whereas in the reform context, this distribution system was completely reconstructed according to the principle of the market and individual demands.

In summary, the transformation of the rural landscape indicated two interrelated trends. The first was the widespread market-oriented landscape practices in land use and production management. The second was the individual value overriding the collective one in creating new residential clusters and infrastructure maintenance. The former represented the practical

means through which the market-focused reform was to be enacted, while the latter represented the rise of private awareness and the privileging of individual interests ideologically promoting this reform. Individualism was essential as an ideological prerequisite to the overwhelming social transformation from Maoist collectivism to Deng's marketisation in the 1980s. The rural landscape, such as various land use, clear boundaries, and isolated residential clusters, became a text upon which ordinary people clearly realised the new central role of individual choices and interests in daily life and production. Yet, it is improper to interpret this shift towards individualism as a wholly positive development. The decayed infrastructure and deserted concentrated settlements appear to hint at a potential crisis of individualised practices in post-socialist China.

5.2 New trends of landscape practices after 1992

By the early 1990s, the overall de-collectivisation process had been completed. Its most important outcomes were the low levels of governmental intervention, market-oriented spatial practices, and an individualised lifestyle. In the 1990s, the escalation in economic restructuring further drove the reconfiguration of the everyday landscape. One of the major new trends was an intensified commodification of residential space in parallel with the entrepreneurial redevelopment of urban land. Interestingly, this trend did not finally lead to a contemporary society featuring individuals and markets. Conversely, the commodified residential estates were meticulously designed to support a government-led urban community building campaign and promote a modern urban lifestyle. Another trend was the emergence of massive modern factories with the growing private enterprise sector. These modern factories replaced the socialist work units (*danwei*), becoming many people's new workplaces. The design of the modern factory embodied the principle of "scientific management" and sought to train self-disciplined workers.

5.2.1 Enclosed residential estates

After more than a decade of housing reform, a policy on spurring commodification of housing, the rise of consumerism in cities, and growing household incomes finally led to waves of commercial real estate construction by private contractors in the 1990s. As David Fraser (2000, 26) observes, construction noise always permeated the city, and there was virtually little tranquillity in the metropolis. These new housing estates significantly changed the urban appearance. More importantly, they reconfigured the city's social fabric to organise the urban population into a new community-based management system and created new built environments to promote a modern urban lifestyle.

A prominent feature of the new residential estate was the enclosing walls surrounding it. Like socialist architects, professional real estate developers and post-socialist architects also highlighted the positive role of the wall in creating an everyday residential image. They used the enclosing wall to produce an independent and private spatial realm, giving residents a sense of belonging. The enclosing wall also implied a cultural and emotional connection between the traditional residential pattern and the new commercial form of housing, thereby

evoking strong feelings of neighbourhood and security in a new residential environment. In addition, considering the rise of social stratification in the 1990s, the importance of the enclosing wall in presenting an image of exclusive social status was further reinforced. Increased housing advertisements, particularly for the luxury end like urban villas, described the enclosing wall as necessary for high-quality residential estates. This link between the enclosing wall and the high residential quality led to consumer culture interpreting the enclosing wall as a mark to differentiate housing consumption. Sociologist David Bray (2005, 177) notices the latest development of the enclosing wall: the more affluent the commercial residential estate, the higher the wall. This trend suggests that the enclosing wall per se indicated social differentiation and socio-economic status after the 1990s.

Another feature of the new residential estates was the regularised symmetrical arrangement of architectural elements. The typical layout of a residential estate in Chengdu had 10 to 50 separate apartment buildings. Usually, architects would cluster these separate apartment buildings to form several groups and arrange public space, such as a communal landscaped green, in the centre of each group. Many architects also tended to design a wide boulevard between the main entrances to link together all groups so as to provide quick access to all buildings. The plan for the model “Jincheng Garden (*Jincheng yuan*)” project in north Chengdu clearly illustrates this representative architectural arrangement (see Figure 5.8). It has five large clusters of multi-floor apartment buildings and fifteen small internal clusters. All clusters have their own public space and lanes linking to an axial south-to-north boulevard. The popular arrangement of the 1990s commercial residential estates, in many ways, resembled that of the socialist residential compounds widespread before the reform. Both favoured the symmetrical arrangement of architectural elements and focused particularly on the communal space enclosed by buildings. These remarkable resemblances manifested that the concept of the commercial residential estate in the reform context mainly derived from a reformation of the socialist residential mode rather than a wholesale rejection of that. In fact, the initial commercial residential pattern was the outcome of a series of experimental residential projects sponsored and guided by the Ministry of Construction in the cities of Wuxi, Jinan, and Tianjin (D. Bray 2005, 177). According to Huang’s (1982) review of these experimental projects, the primary aim of the designers was to improve the aesthetic value and diversity of the residential environment. By contrast, the socialist spatial pattern was

broadly embraced by the majority of post-socialist architects and applied to the commercial residential estate design.

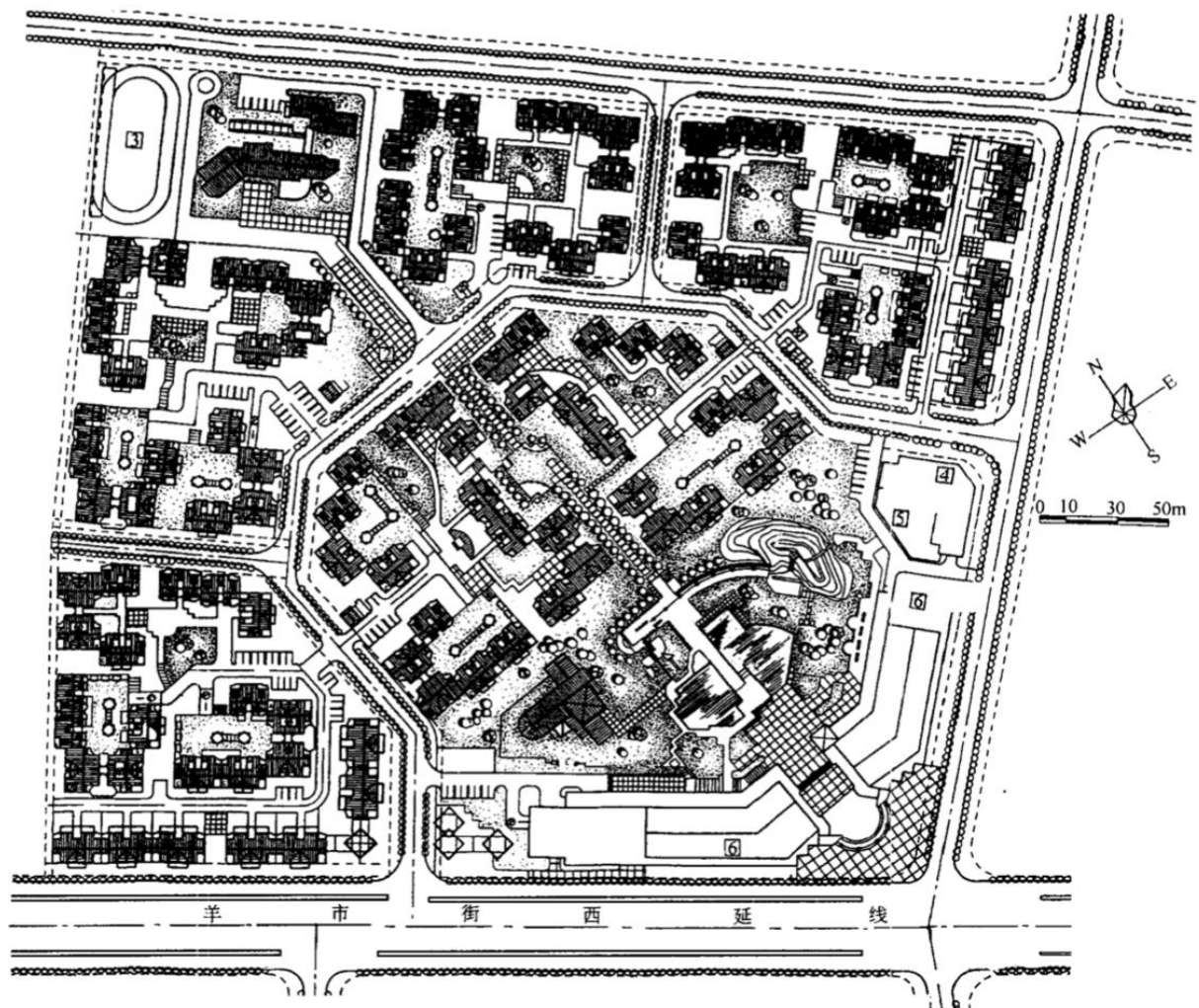


Figure 5.8 The plan for the model “Jincheng Garden” project in Chengdu. Source: J.-j. Zhu (2000, 167).

The latest design trend of the high-rise commercial residential estate is to arrange apartment buildings along the boundary to create a large-scale public space within (see Figure 5.9). This interior landscaped public area, usually more extensive than several football pitches, is described as the core value of the modern residential pattern, highlighted in many real estate advertising campaigns, handbills, and posters (see Figure 5.10). Professional real estate developers and architects arrange beautifully landscaped gardens and manicured lawns in the extensive public area to convey an imaginative vision of the stylised residential environment.

But the value of this large-scale public space is not only to offer a park-like setting. As David Fraser (2000) points out in his survey of commercial housing in Shanghai, the well-designed landscaped public area, along with various styles of apartment buildings in effect gradually transforms ordinary people's understanding of the residential estate from simply a place to live into a purchasable lifestyle and community atmosphere. This cultural connection between residential environments and lifestyles is also presented in the popular names of local commercial residential estates that underscore a Western lifestyle and exotic landscape, such as "American Garden Californian Sunshine (*Meizhou huayuan jiazhou yangguang*)". It is noteworthy that although the socialist residential compounds also feature public space, their public space is designed to promote daily practices of collective life and symbolise the central role of socialist collective value. Large-scale landscaped public areas for leisure and rest only emerged in the compounds where foreign guests and small groups of elites lived as a privilege. In this regard, arranging a large-scale landscaped public area within a residential estate perhaps assumes special cultural significance for post-socialist Chinese people. It symbolises a previously privileged life becoming accessible to ordinary people.



Figure 5.9 The popular layout of a large high-rise residential estates in Chengdu. Source: Jiatu Culture (2011, 53).



Figure 5.10 The landscape of the public area. Source: Jiatu Culture (2011, 57).

Another critical aspect illuminating why this layout is widely adopted in the design of commercial residential estates is that this spatial arrangement successfully promotes the development of new policy initiatives of community building and community-based governance in the urban region. In the 1990s, because of the decline of the state-owned work unit (*danwei*) system and the “flood” of migrant rural workers into the cities, the urban spatial structure previously featuring massive work unit (*danwei*) compounds was no longer suitable for the social setting characterised by the emergence of new socio-economic groups, such as private sector employees and migrant labourers, and new lifestyles entirely independent of the old state system (D. Bray 2005, 396). In this context, at the end of the 1990s, the government started a campaign to build communities based on the spatial markers created by real estate developers as a substitute for the socialist work unit (*danwei*) system to organise and manage urban people. The outcome is that the large-scale housing estate, as an urban spatial unit, becomes a community - a new political unit of urban governance. This combination and overlap between space and power generate new demands for commercial housing estates’ spatial and environmental forms. Architects and planners need to design a pleasant residential environment and simultaneously think about how this setting supports the community-based governance that prioritises the production and reproduction of self-managed and law-abiding citizens. According to David Bray’s (2008) study on two representative residential estate projects in Wuhan, Chinese architects, in many aspects, refer to the classical spatial mode of Bentham’s Panopticon⁷⁷ in the spatial configuration of the residential estate. Bray’s argument can be applied to analysing the popular layout of the residential estates in the Chengdu Plain. The popular large-scale internal public space produces an open space remarkably transparent to the gaze of anyone who cares to notice. Each resident is thus transformed into an unofficial monitor of people’s behaviour. If anyone deviates from the accepted norms, he would be easily spotted by other residents. The ultimate outcome is that ordinary people under this constant surveillance tend to control their own behaviour to avoid potential punishment, thus gradually becoming self-managed citizens. I use the master plan for a recently built residential estate to explain further this spatial

⁷⁷ The Panopticon, initially conceived by Jeremy Bentham in the 18th century, is interpreted as a spatial strategy of contemporary disciplinary power in Michel Foucault’s influential book *Discipline and Punish* (2012, 200-228). The characteristics of the Panopticon is a rotunda in which a high central observation tower is surrounded by many inmates’ cells. The essence of the Panopticon is to keep inmates under constant observation in order to mobilise them to act upon themselves and develop into self-disciplined subjects.

configuration (see Figure 5.11). The high-rise residential buildings along the boundary create the realm of the community and become modern “observation towers” to inspect residents’ behaviour. The central buildings perform a more direct function of “observation” and inspection in this spatial institution because they have a larger view than those peripheral ones. The vast internal public space is the actual area of the community where community-based governance occurs through mutual surveillance, and self-managed and self-reflexive subjects are fostered. The effectiveness of this spatial institution is enhanced when residents stay a long time in the public space. Thus, the residential estate layout characterised by a large enough public space is more appropriate to community-based governance than those with many small-scale public areas.



Figure 5.11 The plan for a high-rise residential estate in Chengdu. Source: Author's photograph.

Today, commercial residential estates have become dominant elements in the everyday urban landscape. Although they show some resemblance to the socialist residential compounds, such as the enclosing wall, they differ in many vital aspects. The close spatial relationship between people's workplaces and residences can no longer be identified in the design of the residential estates. This change means that residents from different workplaces and backgrounds can now buy into their favoured residential environments and enjoy a modern lifestyle. The rise of consumer culture produces new value and significance of commodified

housing and residential environments. The well-designed residential estate, including modern housing and landscaped public area, is seen as a purchasable lifestyle and community atmosphere in the stratified society. In addition, the popular Panopticon-like layout of the residential estate reflects the implications of the government-led community building campaign for configuring the post-socialist residential space. This layout aims to transform an ordinary residential estate into a machine to foster self-managed citizens.

5.2.2 Modern factories

In the 1990s, the implementation of the modern enterprise system in the state sector and the significant increase of foreign investment in the private sector brought about a revolution in factory production and management. The previous socialist work unit (*danwei*) compounds, as products of the socialist production means and management principles, were criticised as low efficiency and outdated. Instead, new modern factories, as symbols of modern production and “scientific management”, were widely built and became the primary workplaces for ordinary workers. In industry-related conferences and academic discussions, many managers, architects, and industrial designers started to focus on spatial strategies for facilitating “scientific management” (e.g. Y.-x. Chen et al. 1996; X.-y. Huang 1998). Influenced by globalisation, they were convinced that effective spatial interventions must play a crucial role in achieving excellent production efficiency and training highly productive workers for the global capital market.

Before examining the appearance and spatial form of the modern factory, it is essential to shed light on how the Western technique of “scientific management” developed in the Chinese context and interacts with production space in order to increase efficiency. According to Lisa Rofel’s (1999, 263) study of the silk industry in Hangzhou, the original concept of “scientific management” emerged in the popular management handbook for managers in state-owned factories in the early 1980s. She points out that the nature of “scientific management” is the theory of “Taylorism” initially formulated in the early 20th century US by Frederick Taylor (1856-1915) with the application of “time and motion” studies to the industrial process (Rofel 1999). The central idea of “scientific management” is the same as that of “Taylorism”: both seek to break down the complex production process into minor

production and spatial units so that each worker only needs to stay permanently in a given spatial unit (workstation) and focus on a specific part of the production; both require an open work environment where managers can effectively deploy, manage, and monitor atomised workers; both aim to turn the worker's body into a regulated instrument without needless movement and thought to achieve the greatest degree of individual production efficiency. The relationship between production space and "scientific management", or "Taylorism", can be outlined as two interrelated strategies: scientifically configuring minor space units to control the production process and manage the organisation of labour power, and creating a disciplinary space to improve labour power and production efficiency.

In the Chengdu Plain, the general appearance of a modern factory reflects the spatial strategies for facilitating "scientific management". For example, the Intel chip factory in the Chengdu high-technology development zone consists of a large-scale manufacturing plant and an attached administrative block (see Figure 5.12). The manufacturing plant is designed as a high-ceiling warehouse-like building with a white façade (see Figure 5.13). This architectural form provides enough space to flexibly and scientifically arrange minor workstations according to the demands of different production processes. There is also no interior column and partition wall in this plant so that managers can readily monitor the production process and impose rigid labour discipline on workers.



Figure 5.12 The appearance of an Intel chip factory. Source: The committee of Chengdu High-tech Development Zone (2016, 145).



Figure 5.13 The plants of the Intel chip factory. Source: The committee of Chengdu High-tech Development Zone (2016, 145).

Compared with the relatively simple form of the Intel chip factory, the model Chipscreen medicine factory, not far from the Intel factory, provides more details for the design of a modern factory under the popular principle of “scientific management” (see Figure 5.14). Firstly, the factory layout (see Figure 5.15) conveys a powerful image of “scientific management” to people. The principal manufacturing building is placed in full view at the forefront of the factory premises, immediately across from the factory’s main entrance. This principal manufacturing building carried a double meaning. Its positioning symbolises the privileged and dominant role of production space under “scientific management”. In addition, its geometrical and modernist façade conveys people a technologically advanced and “scientifically organised” impression. The other essential plants were arranged behind the principal manufacturing building according to the requirement of the production flow. Architects and engineers adopt the perspective of “scientific management” to design the combinational means of these plants. The guiding principle is to save turnover time in order to maximise the efficiency of the production flow and labour power. Behind the plants, an administrative building, a staff dormitory, and some leisure facilities are placed at another end of the factory premises. Like the socialist work units, many modern factories also offer their staff accommodation. But their purpose is not to promote a collective life among the employees but to extend “scientific management” to workers’ daily lives. The dormitory is arranged at a certain distance from the plants. This distance is determined according to a double requirement. It should not be too long for daily commutes so that workers would not

waste too much time and energy before work starts. Meanwhile, it should not be too short. Otherwise, workers would frequently leave their workplaces to rest in their rooms during their rest time. The ideal situation envisioned by architects and managers is to use the exact configuration of different function spaces and zones to manage and organise ordinary workers' daily activities scientifically. The staff canteen, for example, is arranged in the middle of the plants and the dormitory. This position is precisely calculated to allow workers to eat lunch quickly during the stipulated lunch hour. Overall, the factory layout embodies an art of spacing in which both workers' activities and production flows are carefully analysed and measured to enhance "scientific management".



Figure 5.14 The Chipscreen medicine factory. Source: <https://www.gooood.cn/the-first-stage-production-base-of-chengdu-chipscreen-medicine-industry-china-yuanism-architects-cpdi.htm>

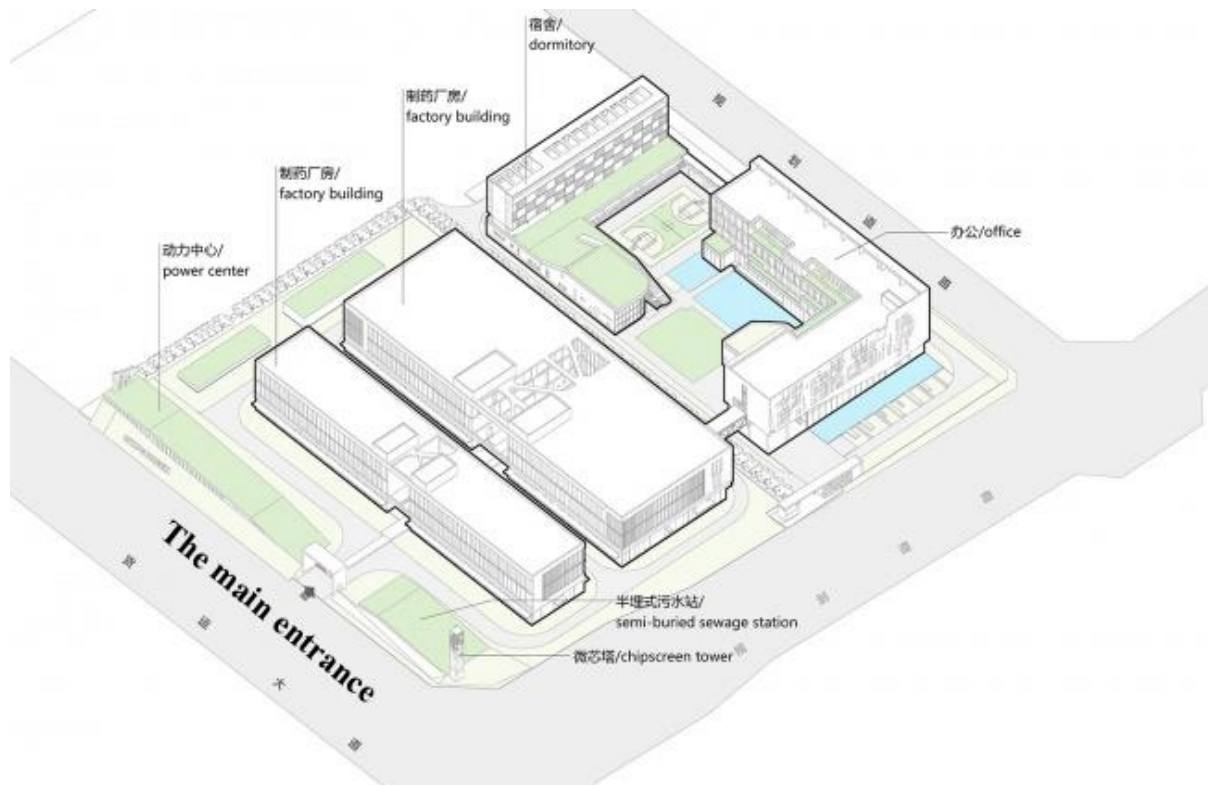


Figure 5.15 The layout of the Chipscreen medicine factory. Source: <https://www.gooood.cn/the-first-stage-production-base-of-chengdu-chipscreen-medicine-industry-china-yuanism-architects-cpdi.htm>

In addition to the overall layout, the interior environment is also designed to improve efficiency and facilitate “scientific management”. The workplace air is controlled twenty-four hours a day by central air conditioning. This is a special requirement for medicine production and, more importantly, a measure to maintain high worker productivity. Long corridors are designed along the main façades of the plants. They cut the direct relationship between the workplace and the outside environment so that workers would not be distracted by the outside world. The expansive column-free architectural structure is applied to the workplace design so managers can easily keep an eye on each production line and worker. CCTV cameras are also installed somewhere to impose invisible and untouchable surveillance everywhere. The workplace environment design, in many ways, embodies the distinguishing attributes of disciplinary space essential to “scientific management”, such as constant observation of people and continuous visibility of people’s behaviour. This workplace environment also echoes some of the ideas that guide the design of the post-socialist residential environment

in the urban setting. Their overriding objectives are identical to a certain extent: the production of self-managed and self-disciplined subjects.

The case of the Chipscreen medicine factory, however, cannot represent all kinds of factories in the Chengdu Plain. For example, some state-owned factories, although adopting a “modern enterprise system”, still operate within their socialist-style work unit (*danwei*) compounds initially built to promote collective labour and socialist ideology. Many scholars, such as David Bray (2005, 164-166), Lisa Rofel (1999, 266-269), and Anita Chan and Zhu Xiaoyang (2003), point out that resisting labour discipline has become the common practice of workers in these state-owned factories. We should not simply attribute this widespread resistance to the conservative attitude of managers within these state-owned work units. As Lisa Rofel (1999, 263) notes, many managers of the state-owned work units, in effect, had the notion of “scientific management” as early as 1979 and were keen to establish a “scientific” labour regime in daily production. Therefore, a significant factor that undermines “scientific management” is the socialist-style production environment and spatial regime incompatible with the modern factory regime. There is often a rigid spatial separation between manager offices and workplaces in socialist-style work units. This separation results in managers not effectively monitoring workers’ behaviour and managing daily production. Meanwhile, the spatial arrangement and symbolism of the socialist-style work unit, such as the privileged position of the Party building and collective facilities, emphasise the key role that political mobilisation plays in improving efficiency. This spatial formation no longer suits the modern factory regime based on “scientific management”. The latest design trend of the state-owned work units is to juxtapose the symbolism of the Party’s leadership and “scientific management” in the factory environment. This juxtaposition implies that the logic of socialist political mobilisation does not entirely give way to Western-style “scientific management” in the context of marketisation and globalisation. In recent years, an increased number of young Chinese workers have preferred to work in state-owned work units because of the extremely high work-related stress caused by the modern factory regime and the “scientific management” strategy. The socialist value system and production environment appear to be rejuvenated after the wide application of the “scientific management” strategy for daily production during the 1990s and 2000s.

In summary, the rapid emergence of modern factories in the 1990s' everyday landscape signified the coming of Western-style "scientific management" into the socialist Chengdu Plain. Examining the appearance and spatial configuration of modern factories reveals that the principle of "scientific management" has been transformed into a set of strategies in modern factory design. The layout of the modern factory follows three interrelated design strategies: the positioning of the principal manufacturing building symbolises the privileged role of production space under "scientific management"; the arrangement of the essential plants under the requirement of the production flow illustrates the modern production system organised by "scientific management"; the configuration of the dormitory and other service facilities establishes a spatial regime to extend "scientific management" to workers' daily lives so as to make individualised bodies work in concert with the operation of the modern factory. In addition, the interior design of the modern factory also creates an environment conducive to "scientific management". Spacious plants without physical separation and ubiquitous CCTV cameras turn the workplace into a disciplinary space in which a disciplinary gaze is enacted to enforce the regime of "scientific management" consistently. In this regard, modern factories, in many ways, like urban enclosed residential estates, are a machine to train self-managed subjects.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter examines some crucial transformations in the everyday landscape in the post-socialist context. During the de-collectivisation period, the rise of individualism provides the key to understanding ordinary people's landscape practices. Housing remodelling was the spatial practice to gain more private space and promote an individualised lifestyle among family members. The newly commodified streetscape signified a shift of people's identities from members of the collective-oriented work units (*danwei*) to individual consumers or private business operators in the street. In the rural area, the growing diversity of the agricultural landscape illustrated that individual farmers had replaced collective organisations, such as production teams, playing a dominant role in daily production. However, it is improper to entirely attribute the landscape practices to the cultural and ideological tendency towards individualism. The popular old-fashioned shops in the streets implied that building an up-to-date shop still concerned many private business operators because individualism was constantly challenged by collectivism in everyday speech. The practices of house remodelling reflected that purchasing a private house from the real estate market was still not accepted by ordinary people who had growing personal awareness in the 1980s.

Nevertheless, in the long run, the tendency towards individualism has led to a reconfiguration of the regional fabric and a transformation of people's daily life. The street-side shopping strips quickly expanded, becoming a common feature of the city. The centre of people's everyday life thus gradually shifted from the workplace onto the shopping street. The construction of scattered rural residential clusters resulted in the decay of many concentrated rural settlements and the decline of social intimacy among villagers. During this period, the cities experienced the establishment of new neighbourhoods based on individual choices. Overall, people's daily life, formerly dominated by collectivised production and consumption, was increasingly re-structured by an ethos of individualised consumption and choices played out in the shopping streets and isolated rural residential clusters.

In the 1990s, the everyday landscape was further reconfigured due to ongoing commercial development and urban reconstruction. New forms of built environments emerged with the rise of new social, cultural, and economic formations. From my study of the widespread

commercial residential estates, I am able to observe that consumer culture and contemporary governance techniques are two critical factors affecting the design of the post-socialist residential space and environment. Architects seek to present a vision of modern urban life within residential estates and simultaneously create an ordered community space that becomes a machine to foster self-managed citizens. The spatial strategies of the Panopticon are also applied to the design of residential estates to facilitate new community-based governance. In the examination of modern factories, I argue that development in factory design is guided by the new disciplinary and authoritarian mode of management. Two design aims inform the spatial form and environment design of a modern factory: the arrangement of the essential plants according to the production flow symbolises the efficient deployment of labour power under “scientific management”; the arrangement of service facilities and interior space creates an environment conducive to the production of a self-disciplined worker-subject.

Chapter 6 Building a New Socialist Countryside

In 2000, the central government initiated the national “Open up the West” campaign to address the socio-economic inequalities between eastern and western regions through significant investments in education, agricultural modernisation, infrastructure, and urbanisation (Goodman 2004). This campaign sparked a new round of urban growth in both economy and spaces. Consequently, in 2002, the boundaries of Chengdu expanded from 382.5 km² of centre urban districts to encompass 12400 km² of rural land and satellite cities (Wilczak 2017, 26). Nearly all towns and villages in the Chengdu Plain were administratively and geographically absorbed into the newly built Chengdu metropolitan region. Many townships (former communes) in the periphery of the core urban area were designated urban districts (*jiedao*) and villages were relabelled as neighbourhood communities (*shequ*) of Chengdu. Increasingly, rural settlements come under the same administrative framework as cities.

In line with this unifying administration, the urban and rural landscapes are now managed under the same framework. This framework was originally named Urban-rural Integration (hereafter URI) by the Chengdu government in 2003 (Wilczak 2017, 3). As a kind of “urbanisation planning” (Abramson and Qi 2011), it extended the urban planning regimes into the rural jurisdictions to modernise and urbanise the rural landscape. Later, in 2006, the central government began a new campaign “Building a New Socialist Countryside” (hereafter BNSC) to merge URI and other relative policies into a more comprehensive framework to tackle the rural problems aroused by the rapid urbanisation and further improve the rural built environments (A. Ahlers 2014, 3). More recently, BNSC is renamed “Rural Revitalisation” without remarkable changes in its approaches and contents. From URI to Rural Revitalisation, despite different names, the governments as the policymakers have enacted an array of policies to systematically re-make the rural landscape.

Apart from the urbanised policy framework, the 8.0 magnitude earthquake (the Wenchuan Earthquake) that happened on 12 May 2008 in Sichuan Province accelerated the change of the rural landscape in the Chengdu Plain.⁷⁸ This natural calamity decimated many villages in

⁷⁸ According to the official statistics, over 87,000 people were dead or missing in the Wenchuan Earthquake and over 13 million rural homes were destroyed (The committee of the Wenchuan earthquake aid and relief 2018).

the northern reaches of the Chengdu Plain. As geographers and sociologists have long argued that “there is no such thing as a natural disaster” (see Hewitt 1983; Wisner et al. 2004), the Chengdu government realised the devastating impact of this natural calamity was the result of pre-existing inequalities that rendered some populations more vulnerable than others (Wilczak 2017, 2). As a result, in the wake of the earthquake, both the central and local governments provided generous earmarked funding (about RMB 41 billion, see Yu 2012) for post-quake rural reconstruction to both destroyed villages and relatively unaffected ones to construct new secure dwellings and improve rural infrastructures. The Chengdu municipal government also sees this post-quake rural reconstruction as a continuation of deepening URI and a good opportunity of implementing BNSC. In 2010, when the major reconstruction was completed, many modern apartments and urban-style settlements had been built in the earthquake ruins.

Finally, the rise of China’s tourist market is an important factor affecting today’s rural landscape. Professional developers have redeveloped many villages in the Chengdu Plain as different forms of tourist resorts based on the twin considerations of local conditions and urban tourists’ aesthetic tastes and consumption habits. The governments also have introduced many environment-related policies to coordinate these profit-oriented investments with the local landscape characteristics. In daily landscape practices, individual farmers are gradually displaced from their once dominant positions in creating the rural landscape as the villages open up their spaces to the logic of the tourist developer and the tourist consumption.

This chapter has examined how the everyday rural landscape is re-made by unprecedented urbanisation and rising rural tourism under the ongoing nationwide campaign of BNSC. It answers the questions “what landscape are the governments trying to make and how does the transformed landscape impact common farmers’ village life in the post-reform age?” It argues that BNSC seeks to create an urbanised landscape in villages so as to foster new rural citizens who are self-managing, communally minded, and environmentally respected. It also demonstrates that although some underlying tensions could be observed in the transformation, BNSC overall leads to a win-win situation between the state, villagers, and local governments.

6.1 The landscape of the new socialist countryside

In the 2000s, after the 22-year reform and “open door” policy of China, rapid urbanisation had taken place in the Chengdu Plain. Rising urban wages, reduced state investment in rural areas, and the cultural devaluation of villages as “backwards” impelled massive numbers of farmers to move to cities. As a result, many villages suffered from a severe shortage of labour and were hollowed out due to the depopulation (see Chenxin Wang, Yao, and Chen 2005; H. Long, Li, and Liu 2009; Xie and Zheng 2017). To break down this urban-rural dichotomy, URI and BNSC were implemented to urbanise villages, revitalise the rural economy, and transform rural residents into “urban” citizens who are commonly seen as relatively “civilised” and self-managed. In practice, both URI and BNSC not only focus on enhancing rural economic efficiency and increasing farmers’ incomes, but also pay attention to building a new rural landscape that is comfortable, harmonious, and civilised. In my fieldwork, nearly all village leaders I interviewed claimed that improving rural environment has been at the top of their policy agendas.⁷⁹

The outcome of BNSC is quite likely to be promising. According to the 14th Five-year Plan of Rural Modernisation⁸⁰ drafted in 2021, all villages' appearances in the Chengdu jurisdiction will be changed to meet the provincial standard of "the new countryside" by the end of 2025. In practice, although it is not directly mentioned, a standardised function-based layout is applied to divide each village into three or four zones: the new residential zone, the public service zone, the rural tourism zone, and the possible agricultural zone. Among these zones, the public service zone which is generally named the civic centre is seen as the social centre of the rural community and the image of the new village. It links all other zones and provides service to both outside tourists and local villagers. The residential zone and the rural tourism zone refer to the mutually independent new rural settlement and rural theme park (or the open-air museum), respectively. Finally, the possible agricultural zone is the fields where ordinary farmers and agribusinesses plant crops and orchards. According to the land investigation of the Chengdu Plain in 2021, the area of the cultivated land has decreased by

⁷⁹ The village leaders include the Party committee secretaries of Zhanqi village and Yufu village, and the government officials of Nongke village, Xianfeng village, and Anlong village.

⁸⁰ The local governmental archive: <http://cddrc.chengdu.gov.cn/cdfgw/c112453/2022-01/04/98f099f083064bd59223460dcf30dc61/files/626277584585478a8668f90a36d09734.pdf>

40 per cent since 2010 (Banyuetan 2022), which means that the agricultural zone as a representative symbol of the traditional rural landscape has, in effect, no longer existed in many villages.

During my fieldwork, I visited 10 distinct villages⁸¹ in the Chengdu Plain. Among these villages, I chose Zhanqi village as my case for studying the landscape of the new settlement, the civic centre, and the rural tourism zone because it is the experimental village for some key policies of BNSC and finally achieves considerable success in the campaign BNSC. In 2018, president Xi Jinping visited Zhanqi village (the hitherto unique village in the Chengdu Plain). After that, Zhanqi village has become the model of "the new countryside". In addition to Zhanqi village, I use Anlong village as another case for studying another representative form of the rural settlements widely adopted in BNSC. Professional planners (e.g. Yao and Yu 2018) see the layout and form of Anlong settlement as an ideal combination of the traditional rural living pattern and the modern lifestyle. The Chengdu municipal government also praises the form of Anlong settlements as a valuable exploration of the localised implementation of BNSC.

6.2 The new concentrated rural settlement – Zhanqi village

Notwithstanding the BNSC aims to comprehensively improve the villages, one of its primary goals is to build new concentrated settlements to replace old, piecemeal ones. After decades of effort, many villages have built their new concentrated settlements according to professional rural planning. In the hot summer of 2019, my fieldwork led me to observe several fairly typical new rural settlements on the Chengdu Plain. One of them is Zhanqi village, a model village in BNSC.

Zhanqi village lies in Pidū district, one of the districts that have been under the jurisdiction of Chengdu since 2017. From the Chengdu urban core, it takes around a one-hour drive to Zhanqi village. Due to the substantial financial support of the post-quake reconstruction, the new settlement construction in Zhanqi village has been quite fast. In 2009, one year after the earthquake, a new settlement had been built and over 90% of the residents had moved into this new settlement. In 2019, when I visited this village, residents told me that except for some

⁸¹ They are Xianfeng village, Nongke village, Anlong village, Zhanqi village, Mazu neighbourhood community, Qitian village, Hongxiong village, Jinlong village, Qinggangshu village, and Yufu village.

new amenities, the built environment and the layout of the settlement were basically the same as in 2009.

At the main entrance of the settlement, there are two small gardens. A wooden traditional pavilion lies in the right garden along with a concrete statue devoted to the traditional rural customs. In the left garden, some brightly coloured outdoor exercise equipment has been installed with a big LED screen playing rural political and cultural videos on the back. Stepping into the settlement, the built environment looks like contemporary middle-class suburbia. Roads have been sealed and maintained very well. Neat rows of trees have been planted along the roadside. Solar-powered streetlights are set at regular intervals. Between the trees and the main roads, there is a narrow water channel. Clear water slowly flows through this channel, which resonates with the traditional irrigation ditches around rural houses. But now, this channel does not have any practical utility but offers a sense of nostalgia. A resident complains to me:

“Notwithstanding they look like the old irrigation ditches, these channels are not useful. In effect, we are not allowed to use these channels to wash clothes or to pour domestic sewage into them. The government says that using these channels will contaminate the water and what we should do is to protect them. A good environment shows that we have good qualities and benefits our health.”⁸²

Along the roads and channels, neat rows of two-storey pitch-roofed villas are set in the landscaped gardens and manicured lawns (see Figure 6.1). These villas feature traditional Chinese architectural symbols such as white walls, grey overhanging roofs, and Chinese-style gables. Besides, they are uniform in appearance and size. Residents tell me that this is because the building of the villas follows the principle of fairness, “No privilege, no special, this has been the precondition for participating in BNSC.” All these villas have personal garages. It is commonplace to see private cars parked inside the garages or in front of them. Some households also change their garages into groceries or small restaurants to serve the increased visitors and tourists when rural tourism fever has gripped middle-class urbanites in recent years. Nonetheless, few commercial decorations such as attractive signboards are

⁸² Quoted from an interview by the author on 19/05/2019.

seen. Like old-fashioned shops in the 1980s (more details about the old-fashioned shops, see chapter 5), these residents only set up several tables and a stove in their garages to run their small businesses.



Figure 6.1 The new concentrated settlement in Zhanqi village. Source: Author's photograph.

In the settlement, although the terrain is very flat, the road curves to divide the settlement into many small clusters of different sizes. Every small cluster has a piece of public green land. Narrow winding lanes paved with small stones link different villas in the cluster. At the entrance of this green land, there is a wooden archway displaying the name of this cluster (see Figure 6.2). Typical names are “*renai fang* (literally, the kind-heartedness mill)”, “*xiaolian fang* (literally, the filial and incorrupt mill)” and so on. It should be noted that both the archways and the names represent past pastoral symbols that implied a Confucian ethos and the primitive rural life in the Late Imperial Era because there has been no such family-owned mill after the socialist revolution. An elderly resident living in a cluster tells me:

“All these archways are decorations. In my memory, I don’t know whether these names were ever used in our village. Perhaps this is true. I don’t receive much education and don’t know this history.”⁸³

By contrast, Mr Gao, the leader of Zhanqi village, believes these archways and the names on them represent a resurrection of the local traditional culture:

“These mills are not fabricated. We consulted some experts, and they designed these traditional archways. I think these archways manifest our rural culture and traditional ethos. In BNSC, the upper planning requires us to revive the rural culture and ethos since they are important for future redevelopment and urbanisation. Therefore, we meld the traditional culture with the new construction. Not only archways but also the architectural style, we seek to make the ‘hidden’ local culture and ‘disappeared’ traditional ethos more visible to both residents and visitors alike. These unique traditional symbols will make our countryside more like the countryside and simultaneously increase people’s culture and ethics. Certainly, they also attract urban tourists.”⁸⁴

While the channels, the traditional architectural style, and the archways link the new settlement to the past pastoral life, the noticeboards and posters set at the road corners reflect the influences of contemporary socialist ideology. The noticeboards in the settlement are in a traditional Chinese style with a wooden or grey-brick body and a small, tiled double-pitch roof above. The contents engraved on the noticeboards are ten village rules beginning with “love the party, love the country, love the new village,” which means the communist party is officially supposed to be most important in people’s daily life. Likewise, there are many posters pasted on the walls of the new villas and the roadside landscaped walls. They are mainly the portraits of President Xi Jinping⁸⁵ and photos of his visit to Zhanqi village in February 2018 (see Figure 6.3). Xi’s sayings during his visit such as “I am a servant of the people” and “rural revitalisation is important” are also printed on the bottom of these images. The noticeboards and posters in many ways resonate with Mao’s words and images painted

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Quoted from an interview by the author on 8/05/2019.

⁸⁵ Xi Jinping is the highest leader of the CCP since 2012.

on the walls during the Cultural Revolution (about the everyday landscape during the Cultural Revolution, see chapter 4). But now, local people do not feel they represent a cult of the highest CCP leader. Conversely, in my interview, nearly all residents argue that these posters offer them a strong sense of pride and an enviable public reputation. A resident proudly and excitedly tells me:

“President Xi Jinping’s visit shows the enormous success of our village under the leadership of the Party. The photos of Xi’s visit should be posted everywhere. All of us are proud of that (Xi’s visit). His visit has made our villages different from nearby villages. Zhanqi (village) now is very famous throughout both Chengdu and the whole province, even the whole nation. Many visitors and governmental officials come to our village to learn about our experience of rural revitalisation. Urban tourists also come to Zhanqi (village) to see the model of the new socialist countryside and experience the new rural life.”⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Quoted from an interview by the author on 9/05/2019.



Figure 6.2 A wooden archway bearing “xiaolian fang (literally, the filial and incorrupt mill)”. Source: Author’s photograph.



Figure 6.3 A ubiquitous roadside landscaped walls with a poster about President Xi’s visit in Feb 2018. Source: Author’s photograph.

Compared with the residents interviewed in other villages, an interesting phenomenon should be noticed here: the political pride embedded in the noticeboards and posters seemingly stimulates the revival of the socialist spirit and values in the Maoist period like “following the command of the Party”. As a result, this revived socialist spirit act as "social glue" holding the village community together and facilitating the connection between the government and common people in making the new settlement and keeping a clear and neat environment. Nearly all residents are willing to support the government-led landscape practices including building a new concentrated settlement, village greening, and demolishing old houses. Complaints about the urban-style environment and the urban mode of daily life which are common in other villages are hardly heard in Zhanqi village. Meanwhile, the daily management of the landscape such as cleaning the roads and tending the greens is done well.

In the settlement, I saw some ordinary, older female residents voluntarily taking part in a civility monitor squad to help the government manage this urban-style environment. Wearing a red armband bearing “The voluntary monitor squad of older female residents (*Zhanqi dama zhiyuanzhe jiandudui*)”, these female residents frequently patrol the new settlement to maintain the environment and supervise residents’ behaviour. Summarily, Xi’s visit and the political pride it brought revive the socialist spirits and values that have gradually disappeared in the reform age and then these values in return legitimate the government-led landscape remaking, even mobilising common villagers to voluntarily participate in the management of the new landscape. As a resident says, “President Xi’s visit proves Zhanqi (village) is the best representation of BNSC; This is very difficult; The village cadres have tried their best to achieve that; We should help them to take care of our environment.”⁸⁷

Apart from reviving spirits, Xi’s visit also becomes a collective memory closely linked with certain landscapes. From village leaders to common villagers, nearly all interviewees agreed that Xi’s visit has become the most memorable moment in village history. As a result, the places Xi visited in 2018 have been seen as having heritage value and are well preserved. For example, the wooden pavilion (see Figure 6.4) at the entrance of the new settlement is the place where President Xi distributed handwritten new year couplets and “*Fu* (fortune)” posters to villagers. On the day I visited, this pavilion was surrounded by fresh flowers and landscaped greens and conserved perfectly. The same as when President Xi visited, every day, four brightly red lanterns are hung in the four corners of the roof and a big board bearing the Chinese character “*Fu* (fortune)” is erected on the back. In the Chinese folk custom, both red lanterns and the character “*Fu* (fortune)” are the unique symbols of the lunar new year. But now, they evidently no longer represent the lunar new year celebration in Zhanqi village and turn into a local heritage showing residents’ collective memory of Xi’s visit.

⁸⁷ Quoted from an interview by the author on 9/05/2019.



Figure 6.4 The pavilion where President Xi Jinping distributed handwritten new year couplets and “Fu (fortune)” posters to villagers in Feb 2018. As a sort of heritage, the lanterns and the “Fu (fortune)” board were set throughout the year. Source: Author’s photograph.

6.3 A “small-scale, group-type, micro-garden, and ecological” settlement

In the official discourses, the new concentrated settlement in Zhanqi village is defined as the model of BNSC and Rural Revitalisation. Nevertheless, it only assumes one form of new residential landscape in Chengdu Plain under BNSC. My 2019 fieldwork also took me to other villages. One of them is Anlong village. Like Zhanqi village, it also lies in Pidu district. After the implementation of URI and BNSC, significant landscape changes have been made in Anlong village. In contrast to Zhanqi village, many professional planners and scholars (e.g. X.-l. Huang 2017; Yao and Yu 2018; L. Yang 2019) see the BNSC practice of Anlong village as a more flexible, more localised, more economic, and more aesthetic way of making a new rural settlement and its environment. The characteristics of the new settlement in Anlong village are generally identified as “small-scale, group-type, micro-garden, and ecological” (Yao and Yu 2018).

When I came to the new settlement of Anlong village, the first impression was the relatively small size of its new settlements. Unlike Zhanqi village which is built as an extensive, unified settlement, there are ten small-scale new settlements lying in different parts of the village (see Figure 6.5 and 6.6). The largest one accommodated about 150 households, which is merely about one tenth of those of Zhanqi village. The smallest one only has 11 households, looking like a traditional single-family residential yard in size. Notably, the concept of small scale is also identified in landscape planning. At the entrance of the new settlement named “Mengzi Yard”, a small traditional family-style ornamental gate is erected. The width of this gate is about two meters, which is too narrow for car access. In the settlement, there are only walking paths linking newly built apartments and houses. Many small-scale gardens and micro-squares line the walking paths.



Figure 6.5 The design blueprint for the small-scale new settlement in Anlong village. Source: Author's photograph.



Figure 6.6 The planning model of the small-scale new settlements in Anlong village. Source: Author's photograph.

The reason for building these small-scale settlements is outlined as respecting traditional rural customs and preserving the long-term residential characteristics in the related academic discussion and official documents. From 2000 onwards, professionals in the field of urban planning and architecture have proposed that the small-scale rural settlement pattern (in Chinese, *Linpan*) which has existed in the Chengdu Plain for hundreds of years is the core feature of the local vernacular landscape (see Fang and Li 2011; X.-y. Cai 2009). Later, when increasing urban planning and architectural principles were carried into rural construction under the impetus of URI, the government commenced adopting this small-scale rural settlement pattern as a planning solution to preserve rural traditions and local characteristics in BNSC (The office of Chengdu Municipal Government 2017).

Nevertheless, Anlong villagers seemingly hold different opinions on the implementation of the small-scale settlement pattern in BNSC. One of their concerns is the sudden decrease of the

residential area when they move into the new settlements. An old couple in Anlong village give vent to their feelings about living in new settlements:

“(the new) Mengzi Yard (a newly built small-scale settlement) is built in the area of an old same-lineage settlement that only had several households. But now, over 100 households are living here. Everything is very crowded. Roads are paved well but narrower than our old, unsealed roads. In the past, we had a big private yard and a public basketball-court-size square. But now, there is only a very small outdoor exercise area. The house also becomes small. According to governmental regulation⁸⁸, we are allotted a 70 m² two-storey apartment unit. If you need a large one, you must pay an extra RMB 100,000. Certainly, the new houses and the (external) environment look very modern and urban style. By contrast, our old house is bad. But you could see some people, in effect, did not move to these new settlements. This is because their old houses are built well or renovated in recent years, and they do not want to live in these crowded new settlements.”⁸⁹

The view expressed by this couple shows that they are basically satisfied with the newly built small-scale settlement and its environment. But interestingly, they claim that this settlement represents a sort of urban style, which is the opposite of the traditional rural style settlement envisioned by professional planners and the governments. In my interviews carried out in nearby settlements, this identification of an urban style is also frequently expressed by ordinary residents. An old man tells me in a rather noncommittal tone, “now we are the same as urbanites, living in a very small apartment without a courtyard, watching tv, using cooking gas and tap water.”⁹⁰ This urban feeling can be explained by the fact that the urban-style spatial configuration of the small-scale concentrated settlement, in effect, is incompatible with many rural daily activities and forces villagers to live an urban lifestyle. Specifically, notwithstanding the overall size of the new settlement is similar to the traditional one, the increased number of households results in a dramatic decrease in the actual area of each household. Most households now do not have a large yard, a storeroom, or a workroom within

⁸⁸ The standard of allotting new houses in BNSC is 35m² per person in Chengdu Plain (Wilczak 2017, 59).

⁸⁹ Quoted from an interview by the author on 31/07/2019.

⁹⁰ Quoted from an interview by the author on 3/08/2019.

their new housing. The disappearance of the traditional yard and the production spaces makes villagers give up many traditional rural activities, such as raising poultry and planting vegetables in yards, and passively engage in urban activities like watching TV.

Another concern over building many small-scale settlements is the potential inequality caused by their different locations, various building times, and distinct investments. In Anlong village, Mengzi Yard located near the entrance of the village is seen as the village “image-building” project that receives the most attention and funding from the government. The greening and micro-gardens in Mengzi Yard are carefully planned and periodically maintained by hired professional workers at the government’s expense. By contrast, in other small-scale settlements, roads are relatively dirty, and micro-gardens lack essential management. Some residents plant vegetables in these landscaped gardens. Residents pour out the same complaint to me, “Although our settlement and Mengzi Yard were built at the same time, the greening and environment in Mengzi Yard are much better than those in our settlement; the village (government) only focuses on the Mengzi Yard because it is the “image-building” project in the eyes of the cadres.”⁹¹ Additionally, there is inequity in the costs that residents have to pay for settlement construction. The early built settlements only cost RMB 800 per m², but newly built ones needed more than RMB 1000 per m² due to the rise in labour price and materials.⁹²

Despite some complaints such as the urban lifestyle and inequality, my fieldwork reveals that the smooth implementation of the small-scale settlement pattern is, in effect, underpinned by the resurrection of loyalty to the Maoist rural organisations (i.e., the brigades and the production teams) which had been increasingly weak after the disbandment of the people’s commune in the 1980s. In Anlong village, the original relocation was very difficult since many villagers were not willing to move into new neighbourhoods. After lengthy negotiations, the government officials gradually realised that a feasible and relatively easy way to persuade villagers to relocate was to continue the Maoist brigade (or production team) neighbourhoods in a new location. In the final planning, ten new small-scale settlements were planned

⁹¹ Quoted from an interviews by the author on 3/08/2019.

⁹² The cost here is not the real expenditure of building new settlements, but the gap households need to pay after the deduction of the compensation of demolishing old houses.

according to the former brigade and production team neighbourhoods. Mr Gao, a local official who fully participates in BNSC, explains the specific process of this relocation:

“We originally planned to build a big, concentrated settlement like Zhanqi (village). But the process of verifying land and property rights cannot be finished at the same time. In law, different brigades rather than the village still own the rights of land and property in its jurisdiction.”⁹³ Therefore, we had to have meetings with residents belonging to a brigade and asked the former brigade leaders to persuade their former members. In this context, we remade our BNSC plan, changing from a single settlement to ten small settlements. Every settlement accommodated a brigade or a production team. This change made the relocation smooth. Nearly all members of each brigade tended to group their new houses together.”⁹⁴

From Gao’s narrative, it is easy to see that the small-scale settlement pattern revives the brigade-level (or production-team-level) loyalty established from the collective life and production in Mao’s China (for details, see chapter 4), rather than the traditional lineage or clan loyalty created by family farming over many years (the contemporary professional planners envision this, see Fang and Li 2011; Fang and Zhou 2011; X.-y. Cai 2009). Moreover, it is also noteworthy that, like the socialist spirit found in Zhanqi village, the loyalty to the Maoist brigades (or production teams) has the potential to strengthen the connection between the government and common people in making new settlements, particularly these small-scale ones.

In addition to the small-scale settlement pattern, other characteristics of the new settlements in Anlong village are high-density trees and shrub planting, roadside traditional farm tools, and various architectural forms of new houses. The new settlements include large mature trees and also new, small trees along the roads as well as in micro-gardens. Ornamental shrubs and manicured lawns can be seen around every building (see Figure 6.7). In some corners and

⁹³ The land tenure system implemented today is a continuation of that in Early Socialism, which still features public ownership and the separation of urban and rural land (Kan 2021). Specifically, land in urban areas is owned by the state and that in rural areas is owned by rural collectives, such as production teams, brigades, and people’s communes (Kan 2021).

⁹⁴ Quoted from an interview by the author on 31/07/2019.

micro-gardens, traditional farm tools such as millstones and threshing drums lie on the ground or leant against the wall (see Figure 6.8 and 6.9). Since many households no longer engage in farming, their farm tools are collected by the village government and then displayed in the newly built settlements as a way of reflecting the time honoured “pastoral” scene of the settlement. Finally, unlike the single form of the new villa in Zhanqi village, the new houses here are built in multiple forms (see Figure 6.7). In Anlong village, there are at least five distinct forms of residential buildings. Some buildings are three-storey gable-roofed grey-white apartments with or without a patio on the first floor. Others are two-storey red-white apartments. Duplexes and triplexes constitute most of the houses while independent villas also exist in a certain area.



Figure 6.7 The dense greening and various apartments in a newly built settlement in Anlong village. Source: Author’s photograph.



Figure 6.8 The threshing tool are displayed in a newly built settlement in Anlong village. Source: Author's photograph.



Figure 6.9 The millstone are displayed in a newly built settlement in Anlong village. Source: Author's photograph.

In the official BNSC introduction, dense trees and shrubs are regarded as crucial ecological symbols signifying the improvement of the rural environment, the conservation of the traditional rural characteristics, and the growing environmental consciousness among villagers. “(It is essential) to preserve old trees and bamboos, to use local plants to make public greening, and to amalgamate the natural environment with new buildings in order to raise villagers’ environmental consciousness and protect the rural ecosystem and rural culture (The office of Chengdu Municipal Government 2017).” However, the residents seemingly view these trees and shrubs simply as a way of beautifying the settlements. “These trees and greening make our settlement more beautiful, like a small park”⁹⁵, in my interviews, “beauty” is the most mentioned word about the new built environment. In addition, many residents also argue that dense greening around the new houses is not the same as the plants surrounding their old houses in the past. The main difference articulated by them is that the trees and greening in the new settlements are, in effect, no use except for beauty whereas the trees and bamboos planted surrounding old houses could bring practical benefits such as saleable fruits and building materials. Evidently, it is not so much the ecological and cultural content that matter to the villagers, but the visual beauty that has been imposed on what has previously been a “utilitarian” and “inaesthetic” rural landscape. In order to make villagers easily understand, then willingly accept, and finally maintain the new planned greening,

⁹⁵ Quoted from an interview by the author on 3/08/2019.

professional planners and landscape architects seemingly transfer the pattern of park planning to the new rural settlement greening planning. As a result, notwithstanding they make efforts to preserve the rural characteristics in planning, the final environment assumes a quasi-vernacular and quasi-park appearance, which, in fact, makes new settlements in Anlong village look pretty much like many other new settlements in Chengdu Plain and throughout much of China.

As with the trees and shrubs, roadside traditional farm tools are also set to evoke a rural life image. The government and the planners see them as a sort of palpable heritage showing the quickly disappearing old rural lifestyle under urbanisation. Mr Gao, the local official, excitedly claims,

“We (the government) collected all these farm tools from farmers’ houses. Many of them have been no longer used and were left in the corners. Farmers do not know their value. But we know. Many urbanites never see these tools in cities. They are the unique symbols of rural farming. We now displayed them in our new settlements as a continuation of the memory and the rural farm culture.”⁹⁶

The governments have realised the cultural value of heritage in the large-scale relocation. They attempt to use heritage to project a feeling of the rural distinctiveness and subconsciously focus on the tangible. However, both the international charters in the 20th century (such as the Burra Charter⁹⁷ and the Nara Document on Authenticity⁹⁸) and the heritage scholars (e.g. Taylor 2004; Munjeri 2004) have clearly claimed that the significance of heritage needs to be understood from the point of view of human values, integrity and authenticity of the tangible aspects and intangible associations. In Anlong village, although the governments collect these farm tools, they overlook the intangible traditions and rural settings close related to these tools. As a result, the roadside farm tools gradually become abstract visual symbols. Many residents I interview just view these farm tools as a sort of decoration like those popular Chinese-style landscaped walls in their settlements, which

⁹⁶ Quoted from an interview by the author on 31/07/2019.

⁹⁷ <https://australia.icomos.org/>

⁹⁸ <https://www.icomos.org/charters/nara-e.pdf>

shows that the government's pursuit of preserving the rural farm culture through the conservation of farm tools has not been entirely successful.

Finally, the multiple architectural forms of houses are seen as both providing great flexibility in the resettlement and representing diversifying styles in the settlement appearance. For the former, Mr Gao, the village official, proudly claims, "Every household, no matter rich or poor, can readily find a suitable house in our new settlements."⁹⁹ For the latter, the diversity of houses is regarded as a positive approach to consciously avoiding the oppressive sameness throughout the Chengdu Plain of "a thousand villages with one face"¹⁰⁰ in BNSC. However, throughout the 20th century, in everyday landscape, common rural houses in the Chengdu Plain were basically similar in appearance and materials because of the strict restriction of population mobility (particularly before the 1990s due to the effective implementation of the household registration system) and the long-term lack of the free market (before the 1980s, when the socialist planned economy was implemented). Therefore, to a certain degree, the diversity of houses only consigns residents to an imaginary past envisioned by planners rather than the real one.

In summary, although the governments and professional planners see the "small-scale, group-type, micro-garden, and ecological" settlements as a kind of both scientific and pastoral pattern to guide rural residential environment design, the ultimate outcome in Anlong village is not satisfactory. My fieldwork points out that residents perceive these new settlements as urban residential areas because of their urbanised spatial regimes and the park-like environments. Additionally, although modern landscape management, such as ecological planting and heritage conservation, has been provided in the process of building the new settlements, it is top-down and focused on the tangible fabric, thereby potentially excluding ordinary people and overlooking rural traditions and settings, resulting in unsustainability and inequality in practice. Finally, what underpinned the building of new small-scale settlements is identified as the Maoist brigade-level (or production-team-level) loyalty rather than the traditional lineages or clans envisioned by the professional planners and the governments.

⁹⁹ Quoted from an interview by the author on 31/07/2019.

¹⁰⁰ A slogan often appears in the criticisms of BNSC.

Compared with Zhanqi village, some extra new findings are revealed. Firstly, both village governments regard the new settlements and the well-planned environments as important ways to raise villagers' citizen consciousness such as respecting the environment. In fact, as a fundamental task of BNSC, village governments are normally required to promote the idea of new citizenship through new residential landscape. Secondly, the single concentrated settlement appears to be able to avoid the inequality and reinforce the village-level identity, which is important for the government-led rural redevelopment. Thirdly, both cases illustrate that the socialist organisations and spirit of the Maoist period play an important role in persuading villagers to accept and participate in government-led landscape practices and management. By contrast, different settlement planning patterns are not seen as a key driver in the implementation of BNSC in the eyes of ordinary villagers. Finally, although the independent villas in Zhanqi village are relatively visually monotonous compared with the more diverse apartments in Anlong village, they provide significantly larger spaces to run some family businesses such as small restaurants or retailing. These family businesses as a continuation of popular rural daily activities in the 1980s and 1990s help residents gradually grow accustomed to the new urbanised rural built environment under rural planning.

6.4 The village's civic centre – Zhanqi village

In addition to new settlements, BNSC also includes the enhancement of rural public facilities and services in the Chengdu Plain, which is reflected in the physical building of the village's civic centre. In the summer of 2019, the newly built civic centre that abuts directly onto the new Zhanqi concentrated settlement was observed and noted in the author's fieldwork.

This civic centre, like other civic centres in the Chengdu Plain, features a modernist Chinese-style garden and an adjacent small square at the centre along with an array of functional buildings surrounding them. The garden is planned for everyday leisure activities and creating the village visual label to attract tourists and visitors. It is decorated with fresh flowers and shady trees and themed with the traditional Chinese natural aesthetic symbols such as a rest veranda and a rock fountain (see Figure 6.10). Along the eastern edge of the garden, a small square is built. Equipped with a stage and a huge screen at one end, this square is planned for cultural performances and village meetings (see Figure 6.11). On the day I visited, a publicity

film was repetitively played on the screen while many tourists gathered in front of the stage to listen to the introduction of their guides. This implies that the square is also used as a facility for rural tourism. On the other part of the square, there is a buffalo statue devoted to the traditional rural lifestyle and a row of notice boards for disseminating information to the public. A wide range of information is provided by these notice boards, including the latest village planning and policies, reports on village meetings and finances, the party members in the village, and notices on upcoming cultural events.



Figure 6.10 The Chinese-style garden in the Zhanqi civic centre. Source: Author's photograph.



Figure 6.11 The stage and the visitors gathered in front of it. Source: Author's photograph.

There are many functional buildings around the centre square. On the north is the Zhanqi village government headquarters. In this two-storey Chinese-style compound, the village government mainly uses the first floor and shares the ground floor with a health clinic and a bank branch (see Figure 6.12). Notably, the long title of this building shows that it is also the headquarters of the village-run shareholding company. On the east, a new school named “The Zhanqi Rural Revitalisation Training College” has been built. Looking much like an American college, this school is set on a lovely campus of shaded lawns and landscaped greening. There are two big auditoriums in the centre and several two- or three-storey dormitories on the periphery. According to Mr Gao, the leader of Zhanqi village, this school mainly services the increased outside rural cadres who come to learn the valuable experience of Zhanqi village in BNSC and Rural Revitalisation.

The other key functional buildings are arranged in close proximity to the square. Located opposite the square, on the other side of the main road, a cluster of gable-roofed three-storey

buildings houses the newly built rural tourist service centre and tourist shops (see Figure 6.13). On the day I visited, except for the tourist service centre and a retail chain branch, most tourist shops were padlocked and still waiting for their potential investors. Beyond the eastern edge of the square and next to the new school, a small commercial strip can be found. It is titled “The Zhanqi featured shopping street (Zhanqi *tese shangye jie*)” but looks similar to other neo-Chinese style street in the Chengdu Plain. Several general stores, a hardware store, and five restaurants operate along the street.



Figure 6.12 The Zhanqi village government headquarter. Source: Author’s photograph.



Figure 6.13 The newly built tourist centre in Zhanqi village. Source: Author’s photograph.

In the Chengdu Plain, building a civic centre is regarded as an essential step in constructing a new countryside. Notwithstanding various appearances, their spatial configurations are similar. A landscaped garden and a small square constitute its centre and an administrative headquarter opens onto the square. Some other public and tourist facilities are arranged around the square and the garden. The main purposes of the civic centre are to bring more urban public services to villages and simultaneously provide essential services to tourists. In practice, these purposes are achieved through a systematic and logical spatial order based on the underlying planning principle of functional zoning (D. Bray 2013). A typical civic centre as the public service zone is always established at the entrance of the village and closely linked to the residential zone (new settlements) and the tourist zone (rural tourist spots, like leisure agricultural fields, see the fourth section of this chapter).

Most of the residents I interviewed express a positive attitude toward the civic centres in their villages. “Now it is very convenient to see a doctor and withdraw some cash in the civic centre; I feel like living in an urban residential estate”¹⁰¹, a resident in Zhanqi village proudly says. “It is the place where I have a walk or take some exercise like square-dancing every day; it is beautiful and clean and sometimes there will be some free performances”¹⁰², an elderly woman also happily claims. Evidently, the civic centre has played an important role in rural people’s daily life. From the Maoist period to the reform age, the welfare services and communal facilities provided by the state (in the rural context, communes and brigades) gradually shifted to private enterprises. But after BNSC, some welfare services and communal facilities such as rural clinics and public exercise equipment have been re-established in widespread rural civic centres by the state through the implementation of new national initiatives like the rural cooperative health insurance and the rural minimum living allowance. As a result, the memory about the government economic and social guarantee in the Maoist period has been aroused in the civic centres with the return of the government welfare and services. In a village very close to Zhanqi village, the village government even builds a socialist style “public canteen” in its new civic centre to offer meals to villagers at a very low cost as a sort of social welfare. Meanwhile, the civic centre also has absorbed some experience of urban enclosed residential estate planning. Well-designed gardens and greening, such as the popular landscape in the urban residential estates, implies that the urban residents’ lifestyle has been translocated to the rural context. In this regard, the civic centre resonates with one of the key pursuits of BNSC: promoting urban (civilised) public life in rural areas.

There are still some complaints about the civic centre. One of them is that the stores around the civic centre mainly service tourists rather than residents. A resident regretfully told me, “Except for the Red Flag supermarket (a local retail chain), other stores are set up for tourists; the goods are expensive local specialities like Pi County douban (a famous local bean sauce) and Tangchang fabric shoes; I never buy them.”¹⁰³ In the Chengdu Plain, most of the rural civic centres have been planned in conjunction with new rural tourist facilities such as tourist service centres and speciality stores. This complaint shows that there is an underlying conflict

¹⁰¹ Quoted from an interview by the author on 19/05/2019.

¹⁰² Quoted from an interview by the author on 24/05/2019.

¹⁰³ Quoted from an interview by the author on 9/05/2019.

between residents and tourists in the commercial part planning of the civic centre due to their distinct consumer preferences. Urban tourists prefer specialities whereas local people favour affordable groceries and cheap entertainment such as teahouses and mah-jong houses. In my observation of the stores surrounding many new village civic centres, the governments and planners seemingly place much more weight on tourists than on residents, which results in many stores only opening during the peak tourism seasons and closing at other times (see Figure 6.14). In Zhanqi village, I casually ask a resident, “When will the speciality store open?” She replies with a shrug, “Not sure, perhaps in the upcoming festivals.”

Another complaint is associated with the enormous investment in building a civic centre. In Zhanqi village, a resident in his early 60s, criticises the nicely decorated school on the east of the civic centre, “Nobody knows how much the village leaders paid for that luxury ‘hotel’; I saw many young females entering there to serve the officials; it is decorated beautifully, but ordinary villagers were not allowed to enter.”¹⁰⁴ Evidently, this resident mistakes “the Rural Revitalisation Training College” as a luxury hotel due to its noble appearance and ornate decoration (see Figure 6.15) and thereby arguing that the governments have paid too much money for this “less useful” building cluster. Besides, his complaint also reflects the possible different images of the civic centre envisioned by villagers and rural officials. Some villagers, particularly the elders, insist that the civic centre should serve ordinary villagers and daily production and simultaneously preserve an austere appearance like those socialist-style buildings in the Maoist period. By contrast, the rural officials argue that the civic centre is the visual label of the village and should follow the latest trend in urban Chengdu so that middle-class urbanites and potential entrepreneurs will come to villages to invest, work, or at least have fun (Qu 2014, 63-64). This divergence articulates that when the governments are trying to convey an (urban) elite-focused image to outsiders, some residents insist that the image should be farmer-focused and austere.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted from an interview by the author on 9/05/2019.



Figure 6.14 The closed speciality shops.
Source: Author's photograph.



Figure 6.15 The Zhanqi Rural Revitalisation Training College. Source: Author's photograph.

Summarily, the widespread new civic centres in the Chengdu Plain clearly illustrate the vast expansion of rural communal facilities and welfare services in the post-reform age. Further, the government has sought to exert more influence over both villagers and potential visitors through the systematic spatial planning of the civic centres. Urban-style gardens and squares are built to transpose modes of urban leisure and civilised public onto the life of villagers, and additionally, tourist shops and “luxury” schools are introduced to service urban visitors and attract prospective investors. Nevertheless, my fieldwork identifies a potential tension between residents and visitors in the implementation of the planning due to their different cultural and consumer preferences. Specifically, residents favour vernacular style architecture and affordable groceries, whereas urban visitors, particularly wealthy investors, prefer a luxury style and specialities.

6.5 Leisure agriculture - Mama farmstead

An important aim of BNSC is modernising villages through advanced methods of rural production. In the Chengdu Plain, developing rural tourism is widely regarded as the best way to meet this aim (Wilczak 2017, 104). As a result, many distinct rural tourist projects have been built one after another under BNSC, resulting in the remaking of the rural agricultural landscape. My fieldwork led me to a representative tourist project named the Mama farmstead in Zhanqi village.

Mama farmstead is a leisure agricultural complex built through the active cooperation between the village-run shareholding company and an outside professional tourism operators (The group of New Urban and Rural Areas Journal 2013). Its original draft was drawn up in 2010, and two years later, this project was accomplished and opened to the public. In the area (about 43 hectares) between the Baitiao river and the new concentrated settlement, a well-planned farmstead has been established. The tourism operators and planners set up an array of functional zones in this farmstead so that it could attract different groups and meet the growing demands of visitors including outdoor weddings and outward-bound training. In 2019, Mama farmstead was recognised as a 4A grade tourist attraction and has become a popular leisure retreat of Chengdu.

The landscape of Mama farmstead features a juxtaposition of Dutch-style fields, the Chengdu Plain country scenes, and modern facilities. Near the entrance, there are several fields of lavender and three geometrical flower gardens along the road to attract tourists (see Figure 6.16). A modernist steel-frame archway along with a ticket office forms the formal entrance. Here, tourists pay a 20-yuan entry fee for a whole day tour. When you step into Mama farmstead, many leisure zones are arranged along a picturesque lane. The first one is a vast Dutch-style field with windmills, hot air balloon models, and love-theme flower gardens (see Figure 6.17). On the day I visited, this zone was the most popular spot where many tourists took photos and strolled around. “I like this European scenery; it is the same as that in foreign movies; I feel like walking in a European farmstead”, a middle-aged tourist expressed her happiness to her friends. The next zone is a nostalgic-theme garden. Notwithstanding the Western geometrical planting pattern, Chinese-style pavilions, religious shrines, and traditional houses displaying the collected everyday objects of village agricultural and ritual life are set in this zone to arouse people’s nostalgia for traditional rural life (see Figure 6.18). Then, the main lane leads to an ornamental pond named “moon lake” and a modern-style rural hotel complex consisting of several low-rise independent buildings opening onto the pond. Tourists can access all modern hotel services here including luxurious accommodation, authentic local food, advanced meeting facilities, and wedding banquets. At the end of the lane, there is a strip of planted forest stretching for several hundred meters along the Baitiao river. Many rural teahouses are available in the forest for people who favour traditional entertainment such as playing mah-jong.



Figure 6.16 The geometrical flower gardens along the main road. Source: Author's photograph.

In addition to these large zones, there are several small leisure zones around the hotel complex. Some rice paddies are sited on the south edge of the hotel for sightseeing, experiential farming, and fishing in summer. There is a picnic and outdoor wedding area under a large white canopy on the eastern edge. Near the pond, an outward-bound training area can be found. A red banner bearing “Retracing the Long March” flies in its middle, implying that this modern training has a spiritual relationship with the CCP-led military expedition in the socialist revolution. Finally, several rustic grey brick houses have been built in groves of bamboos not far away from the training area as holiday guesthouses for urbanites who intend to escape an urban fast-paced life.



Figure 6.17 The Dutch-style windmills in Mama farmstead. Source: Author's photograph.



Figure 6.18 The traditional houses with a Chinese millstone inside in Mama farmstead. Source: Author's photograph.

Mama farmstead is regarded as a successful initiative in the rural redevelopment under BNSC because it transforms rural daily production from low-profit farming to relatively high-profit leisure agriculture and simultaneously improves the rural environment through outside investment and professional management. In many official reports (e.g. The group of New Urban and Rural Areas Journal 2013), the significant landscape change created by the development of leisure agriculture is highlighted and associated with the ideal figure of the new countryside. “Provence¹⁰⁵ in Chengdu”, as a widely used nickname of the Mama farmstead, implies that the new landscape conveys a translocal imagination to people. The Dutch-style fields, windmills, lavender, and geometrical gardens together assume the mimetic pictures of European rural life. In official discourses, this landscape and the translocal imagination it stirs are seen as an important attractive point of Mama farmstead. “It is very worthy because tourists pay little money but admire both exotic and traditional rural scenery”, as the manager of Mama farmstead explains in giving reasons why tourists come to Mama farmstead. He also muses that “many ordinary salaried workers have few opportunities to travel abroad and only see foreign scenery in the movies; and the landscape in Mama farmstead responds to their need which is the curiosity about exotic landscapes.”

¹⁰⁵ Provence is a region in the south-eastern France. It is famous for its lavender fields.

But my observation in Mama farmstead negates this oversimplified explanation for the landscape value underlining curiosity. My fieldwork points out that tourists do not passively accept the exotic landscapes in Mama farmstead as a replica of foreign scenery but actively appropriate them according to their distinct needs. Young lovers and teenagers see the Dutch-style gardens as romantic places like the Roman scenes depicted in the film *"Roman Holiday"*. They do not care whether these gardens are Dutch-style or Roman-style but are particularly fond of the free atmosphere created by the colourful buildings and large lawns because this atmosphere is traditionally absent in the seemingly highly disciplined Chinese school of garden design. Middle-aged women tend to spend a long time in both Dutch-style and nostalgic gardens since they have appropriated these gardens as aesthetic and artistic idyllic scenes that have disappeared in the rapid urbanisation and can only be found in art galleries and photo studios. In the advertisement brochure of Mama farmstead, "open-air photo studios" are printed in an eye-catching place, echoing this appropriation. By contrast, unaccompanied middle-aged men rarely linger in these gardens. A male tourist tells me that this is because the landscape here is too natural and has no social place like the teahouse. Finally, retirees have appropriated these gardens as health resorts in which they can breathe clean air and take regular exercise. In the early morning and late afternoon, walking in these gardens has become their daily routines. "There are so many trees here; the air is always fresh and clean; walking or just sitting under a tree is very good for my health; you know that the city has gotten heavily polluted with traffic fumes", an old man tells me about his view on the landscape. The appropriation of the landscape reveals that the curiosity about exotic landscapes is in effect not so important in attracting tourists. By contrast, the certain social needs in today's context - free atmosphere, aesthetic idyllic scenes, and a healthy environment - drive diverse tourist groups to visit Mama farmstead and admire the landscape here.

Compared with tourists, to the villagers Mama farmstead and its landscape carry more profound meanings. Firstly, the transformation of the rural landscape from rice paddies to leisure agricultural fields reveals a shift in villagers' daily work from farming to providing services for tourism. "Most of the employees here are local villagers; we (Mama farmstead) give villagers decent jobs; they now have good salaries like ordinary urbanites, enjoying an

urban life with weekends and holidays; (it is) much better than farming”¹⁰⁶, the manager of Mama farmstead proudly tells me the positive influences the tourism development has made on villagers. Moreover, residents tell me that many migrant workers who left the village in the 1990s and the early 2000s have returned Zhanqi village to find jobs. As a result, traditional farmers have nearly disappeared from the village.

Secondly, the neat and well-designed landscape can be viewed as a kind of “laboratory of conduct”¹⁰⁷ in which residents can improve their morality and regulate their behaviour, or in short, become “civilised”. In Zhanqi village, the well-planned and well-maintained landscape represents the space of civilised social order, which makes it easy to expose people’s bad habits such as littering, picking ornamental flowers, and quarrelling on the street. In addition, in order to enhance the ability to govern bad conduct, the government also organises an official monitor squad along with several small “police” cars to patrol the village day and night, and simultaneously sets up some “police” boxes where one or two uniformed men sit in to supervise people. Mr Yang, who has opened a tourist shop in Zhanqi village, articulates his feeling about this management of conduct enhanced by the clean and neat environments,

*“I have realised the importance of civilised conduct after BNSC and the development of rural tourism; Different from the past, now, the environment is clean, neat, and beautiful; Nobody dares litter or spit since it will be found by the monitor squad and criticised by the village leaders; Besides, civilised behaviour could make the environment more beautiful, which attracts more tourists and simultaneously brings good benefits.”*¹⁰⁸

This local shopkeeper’s saying shows that the tourist-oriented transformation of the landscape and daily supervision has successfully turned him into a “civilised” villager who has been self-disciplinary and law-abiding. This outcome is also what the government tries to

¹⁰⁶ Quoted from an interview by the author on 19/05/2019.

¹⁰⁷ For this concept in the Western context, see Osborne and Rose (1999); For its use in the Chinese context, see Oakes (2019).

¹⁰⁸ Quoted from an interview by the author on 9/05/2019.

achieve through BNSC: promoting a transformation from peasants to citizens through effective governance.

Thirdly, the leisure agricultural landscape signifies that outside investors and land developers have replaced farmers to dominate how land can be represented and landscape can be made. When the contracted land is rented to the outside developers via the governments, the Zhanqi villagers as the original holders of the land in effect lose their power over their land. The relationship between the two parties resembles more closely those between workers and employers than landlords and tenants. This is evident in the language used to talk about Mama farmstead: villagers always refer to the outside developers as “bosses” rather than tenants. “I don’t know what the village and Mama farmstead will become next month and next year; Those bosses will consider that; I listen to them”, a villager who has rented his land to the developers tells me. “Do they seek your opinion or is there a meeting to discuss?” I ask him. “No, they only ask the village leaders’ opinion”, he replies affirmatively. This dialogue carries two layers of meaning. Firstly, villagers have no say in the making of the new landscape as well as the future development of the village. Secondly, the government appears to play the role of landlords and participates in the discussion of the landscape and rural development. According to my interviews and observation in other villagers, this rural development mode is widespread in BNSC throughout the Chengdu Plain. Outside developers negotiate their schemes and sign agreements with village governments while ordinary villagers are excluded from this process. In this regard, it can be argued that notwithstanding investors and developers dominate the representation of rural space, the tourist-oriented landscape practices cannot be simply seen as a result of pure market force. They are also the outcome of negotiations between the state and the market since the government still actively intervenes in the process.

Finally, although in the context of the market economy, my fieldwork identifies that many villagers see the leisure agricultural landscape as a resurrection of communal values and a return to egalitarianism. In Qinggangshu village where all fields have been turned into rural tourist areas, Ms Yan, a female villager in her 40s, tells me her feelings about the transformation of the agricultural landscape,

“In the past (the 1980s and 1990s), villagers planted different crops and orchards in their individual contracted fields. Some talented and painstaking ones became rich, but many were still hand-to-mouth. Looking at the fields, well-tended and poor-tended ones visually represented the difference in income. By contrast, now everyone rented their fields to the outside developers via the government and then received the same rental and dividend from the government; Everyone’s income becomes decent and egalitarian. The government even handed out certain special village subsidies to elderly villagers every month.”¹⁰⁹

Ms Yan’s opinion is widespread in the villages that have devoted their fields to rural tourism. It, to a certain degree, negates some Chinese liberal scholars’ understanding of seeing BNSC as a result of neoliberalism or neoliberal governmentalities.¹¹⁰ In fact, when the individual contracted fields are collected by the government as collectively held land for large-scale tourist (or other commercial) development, the resultant landscape, nevertheless created by outside “bosses (developers)”, reflects a sort of communal value of the village in the eyes of villagers. In the subsequent running, the fair distribution of rental and dividends further inspire this feeling of communal value and in many ways resonate with the pursuit of collectivisation and egalitarianism in the Maoist period. Consequently, when the radical landscape changes to some extent destroy the village identity, the communal value underlying the newly formed landscape, the egalitarian distribution of rental and tourist revenue, and the memory of collectivism in Maoist China seek to hold the village together. It is difficult to distinguish which power is more powerful, but it at least illustrates that the socialist ideology such as egalitarianism and communal values should not be overlooked in the highly profit-driven leisure agricultural landscape.

Certainly, leisure agriculture is not a unique form of the new landscape created by BNSC in the Chengdu Plain. In practice, although the Chengdu municipal government has drawn up a macro blueprint of rural tourism for all villages in its jurisdiction, every village still has its discretionary space and leeway in the implementation according to its local conditions and

¹⁰⁹ Quoted from an interview by the author on 1/07/2019.

¹¹⁰ For example, Qi-ren Zhou, a well-known economist in Peking University, highlights the implications of the neoliberalism in his report about the rural reformation after the earthquake in the Chengdu Plain (Beijing Daxue Guojia Fazhan Yanjiuyuan Zonghe Ketizu 2010).

needs.¹¹¹ As a consequence, during my fieldwork, many distinct forms of agricultural landscapes have been made under the same macro planning. For example, Qinggangshu village, located in the water conservation area of Chengdu, turns the whole village into an eco-tourism park featuring wetlands, recreational farming, and sightseeing tours. Similarly, Quli neighbourhood communities (village) where many peasant poets were born, builds a folk poem theme park in its rice paddies. Large poem-related pictures are drawn by different colour rice shoots on the vast fields and elevated wooden walkways are built for tourists to stroll around. In Xianfeng village, an open-air farmer memory museum is created by full restoration of the old public buildings and the collectivised farming scenes during the Maoist period. A “public canteen” and a socialist style “supply and marketing cooperative” are set up in the new civic centre and many “revolution” banners and flags wave in the fields.

Notwithstanding various forms, the findings revealed in the analysis of Mama farmstead also applies to other forms of landscapes created by BNSC. The reason for this is that the new rural landscape is essentially a result of the same “three-level-game”: Firstly, it is controlled by the fundamental aims (such as advanced production, “civilised” lifestyles, and effective governance) set by the upper governments; Secondly, it is shaped through the close cooperation between local governments, outside investors, and professional planners; Thirdly, it is legitimised by the resurrection of socialist values in the Maoist period (such as communal values and egalitarianism) in the minds of the ordinary villagers.

In the end, how will the new rural landscape influence villagers in the future? The observation of BNSC in Tibet by Robin (2009, 64) gives a pessimistic outlook: “It runs the risk of becoming a source of ‘violent and brutal disturbance’”. However, my viewpoint of that in the context of the Chengdu Plain is the opposite. Notwithstanding some issues, my study affirms that the new landscape leads to win-win situations between the state, local bureaucracies, and the populace because on the one hand it positively responds to the aims set by the state, on the other hand, it pays close heed to the local conditions and the wishes of people involved. As a farmer confidently says, “In the future, we will not be the same as urbanites, but better than

¹¹¹ This phenomenon is also observed by A. Ahlers (2014, 15-16) in other part of China.

them; Beautiful environments, good infrastructure, big houses; They will be envious of rural life.”¹¹²

¹¹² Quoted from an interview by the author on 24/05/2019.

6.6 Conclusion

The first two decades of the 21st century can be understood as a new period of rural landscape making due to unprecedented urbanisation, increased rural investment, and new rural governance. BNSC as “an intentionally vague but holistic policy framework” (A.L. Ahlers and Schubert 2009, 57) unquestionably plays an important role in this process. It brings urban planning regimes, outside capital, and new governmental modes to the rural jurisdictions while leaving discretionary space and leeway in the local implementation. The aims of BNSC are broad and ambitious, including advanced production, a comfortable living standard, a civilised lifestyle, clear and tidy villages, and effective governance (B. Wu and Liu 2020).

The outcome of BNSC is astonishing. My fieldwork shows that a new urban-style landscape has been shaped through active cooperation between local governments, outside investors, and professional planners in the policy framework. Specifically, firstly, the scattered settlements were demolished, and villagers were relocated to the new concentrated settlements featuring modern villas or apartments, sealed roads, manicured gardens, landscaped public greening, and some visual symbols of traditional rural life. Secondly, new urban-style civic centres have been built to provide both public services to residents and tourist services to tourists. Finally, villagers’ contracted fields are collected by the local governments and then rented to outside investors as a collective asset to develop rural tourism. Consequently, many leisure agricultural complexes, theme parks, and rural museums are built in different villages according to their distinct local conditions and needs.

The visual change in the landscape reveals an underlying image the governments are trying to create in rural areas. Firstly, small apartments, park-like greening, and the disappearance of private yards illustrate that the government’s attempt to bring urban living spatial regimes to villages to encourage villagers to give up their traditional family activities (such as raising hogs) relied on large-size houses and yards and to facilitate them to become environmentally respected, hygiene valued, and ethically grounded citizens. Secondly, civic centres are built to copy the environmental/spatial configuration of urban residential estates in villages so that the governments are able to effectively provide increased social welfare and public services, regularly have village meetings, and distribute village information. In the meantime, the

governments also seek to train self-conscious, communally minded citizens through this environmental/spatial configuration. Finally, the transformation from private fields to large-scale leisure agricultural complexes or theme parks creates a “laboratory of conduct” in which the governments can take regular supervision, thereby turning villagers into self-disciplinary, law-abiding citizens.

However, when “citizens” have become a key concept on the government’s side, it is incapable of legitimating this top-down transformation of the landscape on the ordinary people’s side. As a result, the socialist values of the Maoist period that nearly disappeared in the reform age are revived to justify this landscape making. Communal values, egalitarianism, and brigade-level loyalty are frequently mentioned by common villagers as the meanings embedded in the government-led landscape practices. Local officials’ interviews also show that the socialist values, in effect, underpin the implementation of BNSC.

In the end, the ultimate outcome of BNSC demonstrates that the rural landscape in the Chengdu Plain represents an overlap of socialist values and neoliberal forms¹¹³. My study further points out that this distinct landscape possibly leads to acceptable resolutions and land use decisions between the state, local bureaucracies, and common villagers. The visual neoliberal forms positively respond to the state-level goals of BNSC such as “transforming peasants into an organised citizenry”, “rural revitalisation”, and “improving rural living standards”. In addition, the underlying socialist values accord with the local bureaucracies’ needs and villagers’ wishes such as “legitimating the top-down planning”, “holding village communities together”, and “reducing post-reform inequalities”.

¹¹³ This echoes Gary Sigley’s argument of understanding China as practising a “hybrid socialist-neoliberal form of political rationality” (Sigley 2006, 504).

Chapter 7 The everyday landscape, ordinary people, and subjectivities

7.1 A story about ordinary Chengdu people

I use Tim Ingold's (1993, 152) compelling narrative - "the landscape tells - or rather - is a story" - to open my final chapter. During the period from the Late Imperial Era to the 21st century, the everyday landscape of the Chengdu Plain, like that of other Chinese regions, experienced remarkable transformations due to reforms, wars, political campaigns, and finally economic development. Examining the everyday landscape shows that various landscape formations have captured nearly all significant information about social customs, popular culture, and state politics. Thus, this study first presents a true and fascinating story about ordinary Chengdu people through the lens of daily landscape practices.

The story begins in the 1880s and 1890s, during what is known as the Late Imperial Era. During this period, local people still lived a largely self-sufficient life. The feudal government seldom intervened in people's daily life, and the alien cultures were unpopular. In this context, the everyday landscape was created as a shuttle to weave individual lives into a typical Confucian social pattern in which people were governed through a Confucian hierarchical and moral system. The enclosed family compounds in wealthy households featuring an axial progression of major spatial elements - the most senior branches (or rooms) at the northern end and the more junior branches (or rooms) at the southern end - mirrored the Confucian hierarchy of family members. People could thereby readily understand and internalise this hierarchical order through the symbolism of their daily residential environments. The streetscape was also an idealised reproduction of Confucian social order and cosmological space. The broad and straight principal street was designed to symbolise the heavens' regularity and splendour and the emperor's unchallenged supremacy. This monumental form transformed day-to-day street life into a ritual and "religious" practice to reinforce the image of social order. In addition to promoting a Confucian social life, the everyday landscape also reflected some modern transformations in daily life. The rise of street-side shops illustrated commercial activities had become an essential part of daily life at the end of the 19th century. Many neighbourhood patron deity temples were built in the fields as social centres in parallel with the development of local autonomous communities. They implied that community activities

and public ceremonies were increasingly popular among ordinary people. The widespread city-god temples indicated that many people started to use religious rituals, particularly those providing a sense of social justice, to indirectly address social problems caused by incompetent officials and the corrupt government.

In the first decade of the 20th century, this typical Chinese lifestyle was first changed by local social reformists who sought to introduce Western techniques of creating a modern state into this ancient region. These reformists focused on the modern transformation of the everyday landscape and integrated a range of modern spatial and environmental practices with their comprehensive social reform framework. They sought to create a modern-style streetscape characterised by clean roads lined by streetlights to promote the interaction between a neat public space and a civil lifestyle. They also appropriated traditional temples as modern schools and workhouses to improve people's moral and productive capacities. Notwithstanding a lot of effort, the social reformists were overly optimistic about the extent to which people accepted their Westernised landscape practices and the modern lifestyle. Ordinary people fiercely resisted the changes through adherence to traditional beliefs. For example, religious worship was still prevalent in the temples near Chengdu.

This reform aiming to create a modern state ultimately failed with the collapse of the Qing Empire in 1912. But Chengdu people were no longer able to return to the previous social setting created by Confucian moral philosophy. The Chengdu Plain was subject to an ongoing war between different warlords. The social order and law rapidly deteriorated due to a lack of unified management at the level of government. In this context, local guilds and gangs started reconfiguring the region's social fabric to organise the local population into a guild/gang management system. They also reshaped the built environments based on the norms of the guilds/gangs to build a new form of communal corporate life. Trade guilds organised their members to relocate their street-side shops a specified distance apart to reduce mutual competition, thereby helping members survive tough times. Consequently, the appearance of the street was reshaped according to the logic of cooperation. Local gangs absorbed independent farmers into their branch-based farming organisations to take control of the rural labour market that fell outside the scope of the guild system. These farming organisations built many large-scale poppy farms in the Chengdu Plain to provide their

members with incomes. In addition to simply yielding material benefits, in practice, these poppy farms also functioned as traditional small-size family farms, providing solidarity and identity for gang members. Finally, in order to meet increasing guild/gang administrative needs, guild/gang members significantly transformed the forms of teahouses according to the layouts of the meeting room and office. The new appearance of teahouses presented an image of the modern civic centre. Ordinary people could gain information, enjoy entertainment, and settle disputes in a teahouse. Overall, the cooperation-focused practices of the gangs and guilds created an environment well-suited to a unique communal corporate life and gangs'/guilds' daily operations.

In 1937, after three decades of tumultuous warlord rule, the Chinese Nationalist central government finally controlled the Chengdu Plain. Chinese Nationalists started to reshape the everyday landscape based on state Confucianism to reconstruct the national identity and strengthen social mobilisation for the Second Sino-Japanese War and the civil war with Chinese socialists. The primary means adopted by Chinese Nationalists can be outlined as two strategies: the government called for people to replace popular Confucian symbols with official state ones so as to appropriate traditional Confucian morality and values as a sort of nationalism; on the other hand, the government initiated a "New Life Movement" to promote state-sponsored environment practices among residents. The outcome of implementing these strategies was the rapidly multiplying state symbols and patriotic slogans dominating the everyday landscape. The cityscape of Chengdu thus became a text upon which the primacy of the state was writ large. In addition, when the government mobilised many urban people to clean their houses and nearby streets regularly, a clean and neat residential environment appeared in the central area of the Chengdu Plain.

The reign of the Chinese Nationalists lasted only twelve years. On December 27, 1949, the army of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) marched into Chengdu, and later, the CCP established its socialist regime in the Chengdu Plain. Strongly influenced by the Soviet architectural and environmental practices and with direct support from the Soviet Union, the aims of the landscape practices of the Chinese socialists were much more ambitious than those of the Nationalists. The socialist architects and planners sought to systematically reshape the everyday landscape as a positive spatial and cultural intervention to promote

collective production and life, raise proletarian consciousness, and build a socialist-style lifestyle among ordinary people. Firstly, the traditional residential environment, embodying the Confucian concept of family, was rapidly replaced by a highly industrialised, socialist-style residential environment. The appearance of socialist-style housing was very austere so as to express the Chinese socialists' aesthetic preference for simplicity in residential architecture and environment. Their internal layouts were characterised by standardised residential units and various communal spaces, such as shared kitchens and bathrooms, and public leisure areas. Through designing a compact residential space only for bed rest and intentionally arranging traditional family activities, such as cooking, in public space, architects tended to establish a spatial regime to reconfigure people's family life: ordinary people were to sleep in dormitories or apartments, cook in shared kitchens, socialise in collective-sponsored clubs, and enjoy entertainment in communal leisure areas.

Secondly, influenced by Stalinist monumentalism, the socialist architects designed and constructed many neoclassical public buildings in Chengdu's showcase areas and started a comprehensive reworking of the existing buildings' exteriors according to the principle of neoclassicism. These landscape practices aimed to give public buildings a no-nonsense and powerful look that mirrored the forceful outlook of the socialists and thereby inspired onlookers. Like architects, socialist planners devised the regional planning scheme to promote a total socialist transformation of public space. The 1950s regional planning scheme was the outcome of a long series of planning meetings and discussions between local planners and the Soviet urban planning team in China. The primary radial road network and concentric-ring layout, in many ways, imitated the pattern of Moscow planning, highlighting the newly built socialist political centre in the geographical core and implying the leading role of the socialist government in the new socialist regional administration. The land-use zoning of the planning scheme followed the socialist national policies that emphasised industry and overlooked commerce in the 1950s. Many traditional markets, entertainment venues, and business centres were removed or turned into new state-owned factories and public enterprises. The reduced consumption space and increased industrial zones resulted in a shift of daily life from consumption to production.

Thirdly, following the production-oriented regional planning approach, many state-owned work unit (*danwei*) compounds became the new basic spatial and social units in the everyday landscape. The appearance of a typical work unit (*danwei*) compound, in many aspects, resembled a large version of the conventional residential compound. Both featured the high enclosing wall and axial arrangement of the important architectural elements. Their key difference was the opposite symbolic meanings conveyed by their similar axial arrangements. The socialist axis identified from the blueprint of the typical work unit (*danwei*) compound represented the axial regression of elements in the socialist value system: the most important value element (i.e., the Party administrative building mirroring the Party leadership) was placed in the forefront while the least important ones (i.e., the residential and entertainment facilities signifying private life) were arranged at the end. By contrast, the traditional axis marked out the axial progression of elements in the Confucian social hierarchy - the least important elements (e.g., the junior branches) were in the forefront, while the most important ones (e.g., the senior branches) were at the end. In everyday speech, the built environment of the work unit (*danwei*) compound was often interpreted as an amalgamation of socialist symbolism and traditional Chinese-style architectural forms. Particularly for ordinary people, notwithstanding different symbolism, the physical similarity between the socialist compounds and the Confucian space always subconsciously invoked their cultural memories of the traditional family life before the socialist revolution. This is why, in popular culture, people described the socialist work unit compounds as “(little) public family” compounds, sounding like a reappearance of the Confucian family image.

Fourthly, following the Soviet example, socialists applied the principles of collective labour and life to a full range of landscape practices within villages. They consolidated the former largely piecemeal, uneven, and uncoordinated fields to hundreds of standard strips well-suited to collective and mechanised agriculture. They also built many standard concentrated residential and production centres according to the pattern of urban work unit (*danwei*) compounds to replace the traditional scattered settlements. These practices created a uniform rural environment within which individual farmers were properly organised into various collective groups and their labour force was effectively and equally deployed under the government’s guidance.

Although the practices of the Chinese socialists had successfully created a socialist-style everyday landscape to promote a socialist collective lifestyle among ordinary people, many political radicals were still deeply concerned about the future of socialist China. In their view, a severe socialist moral crisis caused by the centralisation of power after collectivisation was looming over China. In 1966, radicals launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (the Cultural Revolution) as a way to resolve this crisis. During the Cultural Revolution, they sought to powerfully reshape the everyday landscape into cult places of political leader Mao Zedong. They hoped that the personality cult could purge people's bad thoughts and create a moral utopia. The landscape practices of radicals, generally known as the "red ocean", mainly included using the portraits and images of Mao as decorations to adorn residential space, displaying street political posters and slogans to transform the street into a large newspaper reporting the leader's directives, and establishing the portraits of Mao as icons in public places. The outcome of the "red ocean" practices was that, when images and discourses of Mao dominated the everyday landscape, a radical social atmosphere involved many people who were formerly remote from political campaigns in a personality cult of Mao and ongoing ideological struggle.

In 1976, with the demise of Mao, the "red ocean" style landscape finally reached its use-by date. Deng Xiaoping and his allies started to steer China from the rigorous course of Mao to the market-oriented de-collectivisation reforms and China's "open door". In the Chengdu Plain, like other parts of China, the implications of these reforms extended far beyond the economy. New everyday landscapes were also reshaped on various levels to support a complete transition from a society dominated by the collective to one centred upon the individual and the market. Specifically, on the micro level, the socialist standard residential unit, which typically only contained an all-purpose room, was remodelled by urban people into two separate bedrooms, a family living room containing a small kitchen zone, and a bathroom. This new layout provided more personal space to family members, thereby facilitating a more private lifestyle in the family sphere. Meanwhile, it also suggested that residents' basic needs, such as cooking, started to be met according to the principle of individualism in the de-collectivisation context. On the street level, the rapid emergence of old-fashioned shops and street-side stalls, along with the growth of street advertising, resulted in the rise of the shopping street. This newly commodified streetscape indicated the

significant expansion of the private sector and implied that the centre of daily life had gradually shifted from the former socialist workplace onto the street. On the macro level, the de-collectivisation of agricultural production led to the growing diversity of the rural landscape. Various land use patterns, including private orchards, fishponds, and vegetable plots, along with many newly formed landscape boundaries, replaced the former standard strips, dominating the rural landscape. This flexible utilisation of land resources implied that market demands rather than unified management had become the deciding factor affecting ordinary farmers' production practices. The new landscape boundaries symbolised farmers' newly gained ownership of the farms and their increasing private awareness. Notably, many concentrated rural settlements built during the Maoist period were also gradually deserted due to a lack of government investment and incompatibility with new individual forms of production. Instead, traditional rural settlements featuring the small residential neighbourhood of two to five households re-emerged in the rural landscape.

By the early 1990s, although the overall de-collectivisation process had been completed, the pace of reform did not slow. Indeed, the escalation in economic restructuring further drove the reconfiguration of the everyday landscape. In the urban area, waves of commercial real estate construction by private contractors resulted in an intensified commodification of the residential space and environment. Well-designed enclosed residential estates rapidly became the dominant elements in the everyday landscape and new basic spatial units in the urban fabric. The design of the 1990s residential estates bore many resemblances to that of the Maoist socialist residential compounds. Both highlighted the positive role of the enclosing wall in displaying an everyday residential image. Both favoured regularised symmetrical arrangement of architectural elements. Both focused particularly on the communal space enclosed by buildings. Nevertheless, the post-socialist increasing social stratification and the rise of consumer culture had reinterpreted the meanings of some spatial and environmental forms. For example, the high enclosing wall was widely advertised by commercial developers as a mark to differentiate housing consumption between the working class and the "new riches". Different from the design features of the 1990s residential estates, the latest design trend of the high-rise commercial residential estate is arranged apartment buildings along the boundary to create a large-scale public space within. Two key factors result in the formation of this new residential environment pattern. The first is that consumer culture packages the

extensive landscaped public area within a residential estate as the core values of the modern residential pattern. Through advertising the linkage between a particular form of lifestyle and a specific landscape style, commercial developers have convinced housing consumers that buying into a modern residential estate with a large-scale, highly stylised residential environment is, in effect, to buy into a lifestyle and community atmosphere rather than simply a place to live. Based on this logic, the pattern with a large-scale landscaped public area that perfectly conveys the vision of a new lifestyle is widely seen as the best option to promote housing consumption. The second is that the government takes advantage of this spatial configuration featuring an extensive interior public area to facilitate the implementation of its new community-based governance strategy. Since the 1990s, due to the work unit (*danwei*) system's dysfunction in the post-socialist urban settings, the Chinese government initiated a campaign to build communities based on the new spatial units created by real estate developers to organise and manage the urban population. Contemporary architects referred to the classical mode of Bentham's Panopticon to turn the abstract community-based governance into a physical spatial and environmental layout. The high-rise residential buildings along the boundary are intended to create the realm of the community and become modern "observation towers" where residents can readily inspect other residents' behaviour. The vast internal public space is the actual area where community-based governance spontaneously and constantly occurs through mutual surveillance. Although the layout with many small-size public areas, to a certain degree, also embodies the spatial principle of community-based governance, the layout with a large-scale interior public space can prolong residents' stay in the community, undoubtedly best serving this new governance strategy. Overall, today's residential environment signals a shift in people's residential mode from the collective to the neoliberal. Consumerism and the implementation of community-based governance strategy drive this shift. Money can now buy a larger apartment and a safer, more relaxed community life.

In addition to widespread high-rise residential estates, modern factories are also prominent elements in today's everyday landscape. Unlike the socialist-style work unit (*danwei*) compounds designed to promote collective production and life, the appearance of the typical modern factory illustrates how the Western "scientific management" theory has been applied to reorganise daily production. The layout of a modern factory follows the logic of "scientific

management". The principal manufacturing plant is generally placed in full view at the forefront of the factory premises to symbolise the privileged role of production in the regime of "scientific management". The configuration of other essential plants mirrors the modern production flow designed by "scientific management". The distance between the living area and production plants is carefully calculated to extend "scientific management" to workers' daily lives so as to make individualised bodies work in concert with the operation of the modern factory. In addition to the general layout, the internal design of the modern factory also creates an environment conducive to "scientific management". The expansive column-free architectural structure is widely applied to workplace design. Many CCTV cameras are also installed in the workplace. These practices aim to turn the workplace into a disciplinary space in which the manager's disciplinary gaze is enacted to constantly enforce the regime of "scientific management". In summary, the emergence of modern factories in the everyday landscape indicates that Western-style regimes of production efficiency and labour discipline have replaced Maoist socialist ideological mobilisation, restructuring daily production. Ordinary workers are no longer seen as the working class with a strong proletarian awareness and a collective spirit. Instead, they become a "perfectly ordered, spatially disciplined and therefore productive workforce" (Rofel 1999, 260).

After 2000, the government started gradually introducing many urban landscape practices into villages through a campaign called "Building a New Socialist Countryside". In the Chengdu Plain, the main goal of this campaign is to create an urbanised built environment in villages to promote the urban mode of rural life and develop a tourist-oriented rural economy. In practice, nearly all villages follow a standardised construction pattern. A large, concentrated settlement (or several small-scale concentrated settlements) featuring neo-Chinese style villas and landscaped public areas is built near the main road. Villagers are encouraged to leave their former piecemeal rural residential clusters to live in this new urban-style settlement. The park-like residential environment and new subsidised housing indicate a significant improvement in rural residential conditions. Meanwhile, the urban style layout of new housing establishes a spatial regime to force villagers to live an urban lifestyle. Adjacent to the new rural settlement, a civic centre is built according to the forms of urban community centres to reorganise the rural public life according to the urban community pattern. In a typical civic centre, some notice boards are placed in the central area to inform villagers of the latest

village information so as to facilitate community participation. A small square is also built within the civic centre to meet the needs of the increased community activities. Finally, the former uncoordinated and piecemeal private farms are re-collected by the government and rented to outside investors as a collective asset to develop rural tourism. The outcome of this rural tourism development is the seamless integration between the tourist industry and the rural landscape. Many theme parks, eco-tourism parks, and open-air museums have been built in the countryside based on the twin considerations of local conditions and urban tourists' aesthetic tastes and consumption habits. Professional tourism operators have successfully packaged today's rural landscape as an amalgamation of idyllic scenes, exotic sights, and ecological values for tourist consumption. The meaning and significance of rural landscape in villagers' eyes also have changed. The rural landscape no longer reflects the interaction between land and daily agricultural production. It is now seen as the carrier of the shared value and communal interest between ordinary villagers, the government, and outside developers. This value change also implies the transition of the villager's identity. Many villagers now see themselves as stakeholders rather than independent farmers.

The long story about ordinary Chengdu people and the everyday landscape culminates in the new socialist countryside. In this story, the landscape is a noun, representing people's daily life, popular cultures, and dominant ideologies throughout the 20th century. It is also a verb that promotes a particular lifestyle, provides a specific social identity, and supports different governance strategies. I seldom mention the aesthetics of landscape in this story because, in the eyes of ordinary people, aesthetic judgement always gives way to a more fundamental social reality, such as daily production and administrative management. Notably, in addition to telling a story, the everyday landscape also offers other analytical potential. I deal specifically with the other facets of the everyday landscape - continuity/change, spatiality/subjectivity - below.

7.2 Continuity and layers of change through time

Examining the remarkable transformation of the everyday landscape during the past century, the temporal relationship between different landscape practices is a crucial question I consider. It is not easy to answer this question in several sentences. First, some landscape

forms continuously emerge in the Chengdu Plain. Among them, the most outstanding one is the enclosing wall. During the Imperial Era, people had built an enclosing wall as a popular means to mark out the spatial and social realm of the Confucian family. The enclosing wall as a symbol of family space was repeatedly adopted by ordinary people, socialist architects, and contemporary architects in designing residential environments. Consequently, both the socialist residential compounds during the Maoist period and the newly built commercial residential estates feature high enclosing walls surrounding them. Evidently, the enclosing wall has become a powerful landscape form displaying an everyday residential image. In addition to the enclosing wall, the symmetrical and axial arrangement of landscape and architectural elements is another spatial form permeating all historical eras. Confucian residential compounds, socialist work unit (*danwei*) compounds, the 1950s planning scheme of Chengdu, neoclassical public buildings, and commercial residential estates all, to a large degree, embody the continuity of the symmetrical and axial principle in the everyday landscape practices.

It is noteworthy that the continuity of certain material forms does not point to a reappearance of the same cultural value and social memory among ordinary people. My study reveals that the authorities and popular culture have constantly reappropriated these ancient forms and infused various meanings into them. For example, the enclosing wall in Confucian society was built to create a particular realm of familial authority and Confucian order in daily life. Under the Maoist socialist regime, architects appropriated this enclosing wall as a socialist spatial strategy to mark out the territory within which the socialist rules and norms were privileged. During the reform age, with the rise of consumer culture, real estate developers reappropriated the enclosing wall as a consumer marker to differentiate housing quality between the working class and the “new riches”. Like the enclosing wall, spatial axiality also conveys a distinct meaning in a different context. Confucianism interpreted axiality as the symbolism marking out the rising rank of the Confucian social hierarchy. Socialists applied the strategy of spatial axiality to the design of the work unit (*danwei*) compounds to represent the primacy of the Party and the privileged role of collective labour. The different interpretations of the same landscape forms offer another more plausible explanation for the everyday landscape continuity within an extended temporal framework. It is a mimetic effect in people’s memory supporting this superficial continuity. The dramatic transformations of

ideology, identity, and daily life during the 20th century had fuelled a deep desire for a psychological and physical familiarity among the populace. Chengdu people, thus, are particularly keen to preserve some traditional symbols and forms in daily practices. In addition, we cannot overlook historical contingencies resulting in this landscape continuity. For example, most past campaigns aiming to fundamentally reshape the everyday landscape failed to gain enough government funding and support. Yet when the Chinese socialists had the ability to use the state's power to create a new socialist world, Mao's "mass line" forced them to coordinate their ambitious efforts with ordinary people's traditional landscape practices.

Change in the everyday landscape through time is also significant because it illustrates how different interventions come to be accepted as popular practices to reshape the landscape. In the early 20th century, social reformists used the feudal empire's national crisis and modern civilisation's vision to justify their landscape practices as essential measures to save the nation. Consequently, a modern-style landscape was created in the Chengdu Plain. After the interventions of social reformists, in the first half of the 20th century, the everyday landscape continued to be altered by other social groups and the authorities. In the 1920s and 1930s, in the name of overcoming economic hardship, local guilds, for example, employed a cooperation-oriented spatial management strategy to rearrange street-side shops entirely. In the 1940s, the Chinese Nationalist authorities adopted state-Confucian morality to legitimate their interventions in daily landscape practices. In the Maoist period, with the establishment of the powerful socialist administrative system, the CCP and its socialist governments could control most daily landscape practices. They used the state's power to create a socialist-style built environment to promote state-sponsored collective life and production. They also used mass mobilisation and ideological propaganda to create a socialist culture to justify their landscape practices. During the post-socialist age, changes in the fundamental nature of economic life led to the rise of individualism and consumer culture in daily life. Market-oriented and personalised landscape practices thus soon replaced socialist ones, resulting in a commodification of the everyday landscape. The analysis of the landscape changes demonstrates that many different arguments, such as saving the nation, promoting a particular form of daily life, and developing the economy, have been used to justify new forms of landscape practices. In addition, because many arguments are closely related to the state,

this analysis also illustrates the crucial role of the state in effecting many dramatic transformations. Notably, this crucial role of the state does not point to a state-centred explanation for the landscape changes because certain landscape transformations, such as the guilds' cooperation-centred landscape construction and the post-socialist commodified landscape, result from day-to-day economic considerations rather than from serving the interests of the state.

Finally, the genealogical method that focuses on the interconnection between spatial practices and knowledge can be applied to examining the landscape temporality. The genealogical theory generally argues that it is a field of knowledge and related discourses, rendering certain landscape forms' visibility (Wylie 2007, 111). Based on this prerequisite, genealogical historiography conceptualises landscape forms as the result of different knowledge systems. In the case of the Chengdu Plain landscape, the application of the genealogical method can offer a unique knowledge- (or discourse-) based perspective to understand the present landscape and its relationship with the past. For instance, the 21st-century rural landscape appears to be the outcome of the landscape practices guided by the policy framework of "Building a New Socialist Countryside". But considering the fundamental principles of knowledge, this rural landscape is, in effect, the result of the complex layering of different knowledge systems. The discursive linkage between the well-maintained landscape and a modern lifestyle can be traced to the concept of the modern state initially proposed by social reformists during the first decade of the 20th century. The idea of building a rural civic centre to disseminate information and provide daily entertainment and administration support was generated in the 1920s when local gang members reconfigured the popular teahouses as social centres. The technology of mobilising ordinary people through juxtaposing the traditional landscape (or architectural) symbols and contemporary political slogans derives from the Chinese Nationalists' state Confucianism in the 1940s. The strategy of the standardised design was initially developed by the first generation of Chinese socialist architects who were strongly influenced by radical Soviet architectural ideas and early socialist spatial modes. The genealogical analysis shows another facet of the temporality of landscape. The emergence of a new form of the everyday landscape reflects the practices in a specific social context and the juxtaposition of a broad range of knowledge derived from very different historical contexts.

In summary, the temporal relationship between different landscape practices can be explained from three different perspectives. The first is the traditional material and visual perspective focusing on the continuity of the physical landscape form. In the Chengdu Plain, the enclosing wall and the spatial axiality reflect this physical continuity because they can be identified in nearly all historical periods. As the physical embodiments of the past culture and customs, they provide people with a cultural and psychological familiarity within the context of dramatic social change. The second is the interventionist perspective, which emphasises the crucial role of intervention in changing the landscape. Based on the premise that scientific interventions can produce a magical interaction between the environment and society, many social groups and various government bodies actively reshape the landscape in ways favourable to economic development, ideological education, and mass mobilisation. This interventionist analysis is likely to skew toward a state-centred narrative and attributes the changes in the landscape as the outcome of the top-down interventions. But my study reveals that certain interventions are made by grassroots groups like guilds and serve some day-to-day needs, such as surviving economic hardship. The third is the genealogical perspective highlighting the importance of uncovering the interconnection between landscape practices and certain fields of knowledge. This genealogical viewpoint argues that when a physical landscape form fades away, the knowledge supporting this form does not inevitably disappear but very likely persists in new landscape forms. The comparative analysis between the inner logic behind today's rural landscape practices and the past landscape rationales and spatial technologies illustrates that the genealogy of today's landscape lies in the convergence of a variety of somewhat unrelated knowledge.

7.3 Subjectivities and the everyday Landscape

The interaction between subjectivities and the everyday landscape is a main thread weaving through all the primary analyses within this study. I argue that the everyday landscape is a realm in which certain spatial regimes are established to enforce certain codes of conduct and foster certain forms of subjectivity. Based on this premise, the earliest subjectivity identified from the everyday landscape is the Confucian form of subjectivity that makes Chengdu people respect seniors. In the Late Imperial Era, the popular Confucian-style housing layout featuring an axial progression of major spatial elements symbolised the Confucian social order that

prioritised the authority of seniors. This layout also conspired with ritualised daily behaviour to produce a rigid social differentiation between different family members within the family realm so as to superimpose a Confucian social regime upon people.

In the 1900s, the modern transformation of the everyday landscape occurred in parallel with the emergence of a self-made, principled, enlightened subject. Reformists created a “civilised” landscape characterised by the clean and neat streets, Western-style police stations, and modern schools in the Chengdu Plain. They sought to use this “civilised” setting as a spatial regime to introduce the norms of modern civil society into people’s daily life and promote citizen awareness among Chengdu people.

After that, the landscape practices of local guilds and gangs contributed to the production of a collective form of subjectivity. Gangs used their unique marks to tag their members’ houses so as to confer upon their members a collective mode of identity. Trade guilds rearranged the street-side shops to establish a cooperation-oriented spatial regime to promote a set of collective practices and raise collective subjectivities. Notably, this collective form of subject differed from the egalitarianism-based socialist collective subject. Due to the family-like organisational structures of the gangs and guilds, this collective subject, in effect, implied unequal social status and power.

In the 1940s, when the Nationalist central government controlled the Chengdu Plain, a nationalist form of Confucian subjectivity became the foundation upon which the principles of new landscape practices were formulated. The Chinese Nationalist authorities initiated the “New Life Movement”, which aimed to integrate daily environmental practices into a set of patriotic training programs. Through regular supervision of people’s residential environments, they sought to convert residential spaces into a disciplinary realm where people’s daily behaviour was remoulded according to the state-sponsored norm. The authorities also encouraged people to use the state symbols to reconfigure the traditional Confucian spaces as a way of establishing a state-Confucian moral regime in daily life.

After 1949, due to the unprecedented integration of the government apparatus, a new collective-oriented interaction pattern between ordinary people and the everyday landscape was created according to the principle of socialism to foster proletarian subjectivities.

Socialist-style standardised housing was designed as a spatial regime to restructure people's family life based on the mode of collective life so as to raise collective awareness among residents. The state-owned work unit (*danwei*) compounds replaced private factories, becoming the new workplace for ordinary workers. Through a combination of advanced industrial technologies, collective organisation means, and socialist symbolism, the daily production within these new socialist work unit (*danwei*) compounds provided ideological training to promote a cognitive transformation of workers from the bourgeoisie to the proletariat. The neoclassical public buildings and monumental squares were built in the showcase area of Chengdu at the expense of traditional markets and business centres to create an environment that inspired urban people to assimilate a new proletarian culture. The standard strips and socialist-style rural centres unified an egalitarian land pattern and collectivised labour process to facilitate the formation of proletarian awareness in farmers' minds. Compared with the Nationalists' piecemeal landscape practices, Chinese socialists' efforts to create a socialist world were very ambitious and relatively successful. As the founder of socialist China, Mao Zedong (1961, 374), claims, Chinese socialists are adept at destroying the old world and building the new.

Nevertheless, this quest for integrating the socialist-style everyday landscape and proletarian subjectivities lost government support with the demise of Mao in 1976 and China's transition from the planned economy to the market one in 1978. In the 1980s, the market-centred and individual-oriented landscape practices soon fostered an individualised subject in the Chengdu Plain. People remodelled their standardised residential units into several private rooms to break with the socialist collective-oriented residential pattern of the Maoist period and embrace more autonomous, individualistic forms of subjectivities. Individual business operators reshaped the socialist-style monumental streets into modern commercial spaces. These new shopping streets released people from their previous collective life and conferred on them an individualised identity through increasingly individuated consumption. Private farms and isolated rural residential clusters also re-emerged in the countryside with the rural de-collectivisation reform. They reduced social intimacy between rural neighbours and raised an individualised farmer/subject.

More recently, the highly commodified everyday landscape has been integrated with neoliberal governmental strategies to produce a self-managed subject. The Panopticon-like enclosing residential estates are widely built as a spatial regime of surveillance to reproduce a communally minded and self-managed resident/subject. Modern factories' layout and environmental configuration establish a regime of "scientific management" in daily production to train a self-disciplinary worker/subject. The well-maintained rural landscape creates a "laboratory of conduct" in which the government constantly monitors villagers' behaviour, thereby fostering a self-made and law-abiding villager/subject.

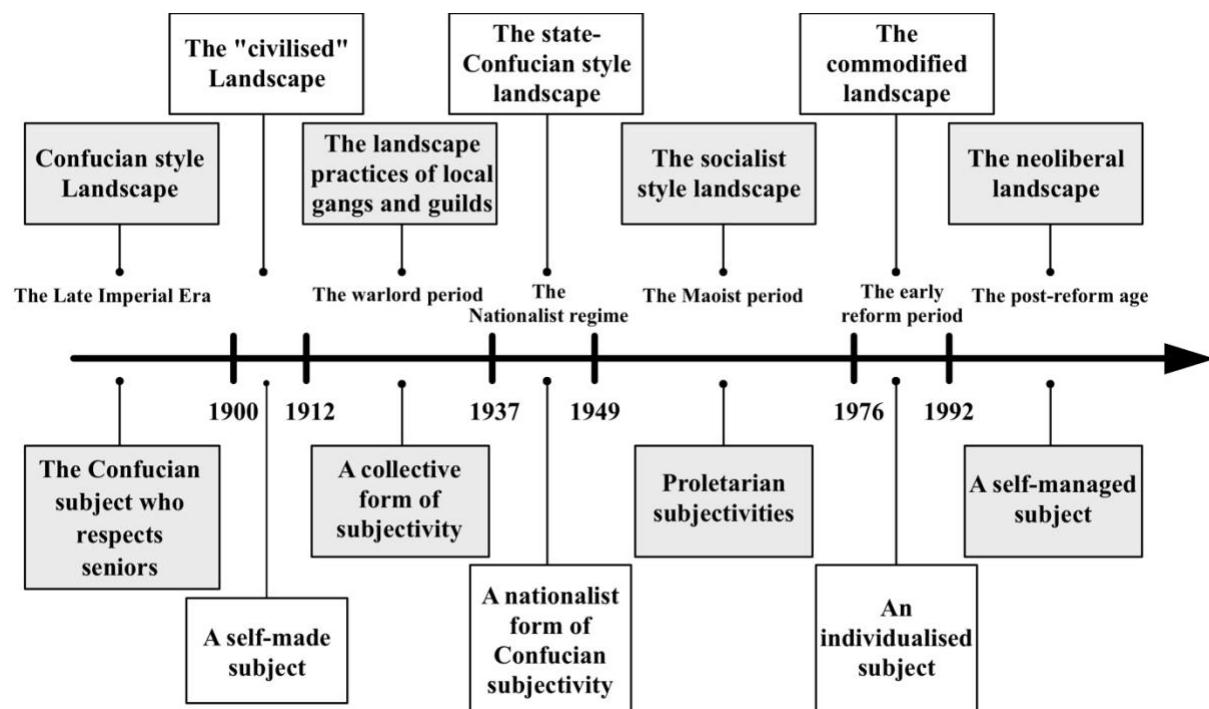


Figure 7.1 The relationship between the everyday landscapes and subjectivities. Source: The author.

The timeline graph in Figure 7.1 indicates the relationship between different subjectivities and different forms of the everyday landscapes. Evidently, the everyday landscape is not simply a backdrop of sociocultural changes but works as a machine to produce certain forms of subjectivity. In addition to this main conclusion, the direct interaction between landscape transformations and the process of subjectification also shows that creating a new form of landscape is, in effect, to create a new form of people. Following this logic, landscape practices

are not only matters of reshaping the physical environment surrounding us. They are also exercises by us on ourselves.

In addition, when a form of subjectivity is created, it is not easy to altogether remove it from people's minds by transforming the everyday landscape. My observation and interviews with post-socialist villagers in 2019 suggest that although the rural landscape has been entirely remade for more than forty years, collective subjectivities, along with socialist values, still make sense and hover over the Chengdu Plain like a spectre.

7.4 The future?

Some findings in this study seem to echo today. The enclosing wall and axial arrangement are still the basic characteristics of the residential environment in every Chinese city in the 21st century. The popular design of the Party/government building still follows the neoclassical style. In October 2022, the Ministry of Construction issued a notice about carrying out comprehensive community construction pilot projects in central cities. According to this notice, the government will provide a range of community services and welfare facilities, including clinics, canteens (dining halls), childcare centres, kindergartens, and older people care centres within the pilot communities. Such a community building pattern represents a similar organisational structure and operation method that I have analysed in the Maoist work unit (*danwei*) and residential compounds.

Nevertheless, the preceding discussion prompts a question: is it an unreasonable proposition to predict the future of the Chengdu Plain? My study demonstrates that each transformation of the Chengdu Plain is complex and contingent upon many social and cultural factors. Thus, what I can do at the end of this thesis is to propose several suggestions for future landscape practices and research based on my study of the past. Firstly, although some appropriate interventions can rapidly produce significant effects, the authorities should avoid overestimating the spatial and environmental intervention's value to the extent that top-down intervention turns repressive. Environmental interventions have proved highly contentious among various stakeholders, including the government, ordinary people, and other groups. The collective farms during the Maoist period, for example, were viewed by socialists as a positive shift from traditional family farming to modern collective production.

But in the eyes of many farmers, they were seen as a way of expropriating their private land. In addition, even if the environmental interventions are successfully realised, people and communities can still reappropriate these new environmental forms in ways different from those initially envisioned by the government. In the Chengdu Plain, for example, many villagers have appropriated the newly built landscaped gardens near their houses as private vegetable plots.

Secondly, as the legacy of socialist landscape practices, the effectiveness of the standardisation strategy should be reassessed in the post-socialist context. Today, although market-oriented practices have led to a growing diversity of the landscape in many aspects, standardisation still performs a crucial function by dominating key positions in landscape planning and design. There are a set of design standards and specifications covering and guiding all kinds of planning and design. The spatial configuration of commercial housing, for example, needs to meet detailed local housing design specifications. The planning for a village also must follow the standard patterns stipulated in the rural planning standards. The advantage of standardisation is that it offers an efficient, equal, and controllable means of rapidly deploying limited technical resources to many different places. This advantage became evident during Early Socialism when there was a severe shortage of professional designers and engineers. The disadvantage of standardisation is that it results in a similar spatial layout beneath different appearances. This disadvantage has aroused increasing cultural and identity anxiety among contemporary intellectuals who are concerned about losing the rich local histories. In addition, because many key positions, such as layouts and sizes, have been stipulated, implementing the standardisation strategy, to a certain degree, has reduced the spatial and environment design to an appearance and image design. Exaggerated symbolism and abstract cultural decoration thereby dominate the landscape of many Chinese cities and villages. In my view, the standardisation strategy, as a unique product of Maoist economic and administrative conditions, is no longer appropriate to the post-socialist context and perhaps should give way to more flexible and localised planning and design management methods.

Thirdly, the interaction between spatiality and subjectivity, or in short, the spatial regime, should be an important direction in everyday landscape studies. My study has demonstrated that the everyday landscape of the Chengdu Plain not only conveys rich cultural and

ideological meanings but is a realm in which certain power strategies are implemented to train certain forms of subjects. I have also uncovered some crucial design principles formulated by Late Imperial reformists, socialist architects, and post-socialist factory managers to artfully manipulate ordinary people's bodies and emotions within well-planned residential and production environments. Undoubtedly, in the future, the everyday landscape will continue to be designed as a machine for producing certain subjectivities and social relations. Thus, it is necessary for landscape researchers to analyse possible spatial regimes and the underlying political logic and power technologies in other similar studies.

Finally, as a methodological framework, genealogy is well suited to analyse complex spatial and environmental issues. Compared with traditional historical and sociocultural approaches, my study has shown that the genealogical method has some unique advantages in landscape study. These advantages include exploring the emergence of certain landscape formations by layering various disparate practices, simultaneously considering contingent factors and ongoing historical processes, and putting the changing subjectivities and power technologies at the heart of landscape and environment design. Unfortunately, notwithstanding Foucault and a few other scholars have done ground-breaking work, genealogical methods have remained at the margins of scholarly debates in landscape and spatial fields. I suggest that landscape and environmental researchers use genealogy to inquire into the deep and somewhat "ambiguous" rationale lying at the root of surface appearances. For example, what roles do the "illegal" landscape practices play in sustaining traditional culture and lifestyles?

In the end, I possess an optimistic vision for the future of the Chengdu Plain landscape. Although there are some defects, the latest policy framework of "Building a New Socialist Countryside" allows for both the government's interests and the potential needs of developers and villagers, signifying a positive effort on the governmental level. We can also see some localised landscape designs coexisting with standardised landscape forms in the countryside, which means that planners and architects have started to reconsider the necessity of standardisation in their practices. In addition, interviews with local officials and villagers reveal that the landscape has been understood as a spatial regime promoting a "civilised" lifestyle and mechanism that provides people with a feeling of economic, political, and cultural well-being. This dual interpretation of the landscape is evidence that a new well-

being-oriented (somewhat neoliberal) modality of governance has been combined with the landscape practices. Notwithstanding that the future of the landscape is still very uncertain, I am hopeful that these positive changes will continue to guide new landscape changes in the Chengdu Plain and China.

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Appendix I: List of semi-structured interview questions for residents

Questionnaire

Code:

Location:

Time:

Preamble:

Hello, my name is Hao Zheng, and I am a Ph.D. student from the Australian National University. I am conducting research about the local landscape change under the policy “Building a New Socialist Countryside”. Would you be prepared to do an anonymous interview with me? It should take about 30 minutes.

Gender: Male/Female

Age: 18-24; 25-34; 35-44; 45-54; 55-64; >65

Occupation:

NOTE: I now wish to ask you some open-ended questions, would it be ok to turn on my recorder? This is an anonymous survey, and the recording is only to help me take notes. I can also take written notes if you prefer. In addition, if you authorise, I can use your family name and gender information as an identifier in my study.

Question:

1. Personally, what is your impression of the rural landscape?
2. In your experience, what are the main changes in the local landscape and residential environments?
3. How do you involve in landscape practices?
4. How do you see BNSC and its implications for rural built environments?
5. Do you participate in landscape planning and management? If yes, by what approach?
6. Do you think the landscape (re)construction under BNSC affects your lives? If yes, to what extent and how?
7. What value do local landscapes and built environments offer you, in the past and present?
8. Do you agree that landscape is a kind of heritage?
9. How does the rising rural tourism reshape the local landscape?
10. What is the ideal rural landscape and residential environment in your mind?

11. Do you have some anecdotes or interesting experiences about the local landscape?

Whether you authorise me use your family name and gender information as an identifier in my study?

Thank you for your time.

Appendix II: List of semi-structured interview questions for officials and experts

Questionnaire

Code:

Location:

Time:

Preamble:

Hello, my name is Hao Zheng, and I am a Ph.D. student from the Australian National University. I am conducting research about the local landscape change under the policy “Building a New Socialist Countryside”. Would you be prepared to do an anonymous interview with me? It should take about 30 minutes.

Gender: Male/Female

Age: 18-24; 25-34; 35-44; 45-54; 55-64; >65

Occupation:

NOTE: I now wish to ask you some open-ended questions, would it be ok to turn on my recorder? This is an anonymous survey, and the recording is only to help me take notes. I can also take written notes if you prefer. In addition, if you authorise, I can use your family name and gender information as an identifier in my study.

Question:

1. Personally, what is your impression of the rural landscape?
2. In your opinion, what values and meanings are embedded in the rural landscape?
3. How are the rural landscapes changed over time?
4. Based on your experience, what are the main characteristics of the rural landscape?
5. How do the BNSC policies change the traditional landscape and residential environments?
6. What role do residents, communities, outside investors, tourists, and governments play in the landscape (re)construction and management?
7. Do you agree that landscape is a kind of heritage?
8. How do you understand the concept of cultural landscape?
9. What is the influence of BNSC on current landscape design and rural spatial arrangement?

10. What is the interaction between the rural built environments and rural governance in the post-socialist context?
11. How do you see the rising rural tourist industry and its implications for built environments?
12. What is the ideal landscape formation in your mind?
13. Do you have some anecdotes or interesting experiences about landscape design and management?

Whether you authorise me use your family name and gender information as an identifier in my study?

Thank you for your time.