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Policies, Practices, and Imaginaries: Urban Regeneration in China - Chengdu as a Case

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of China's very recent urbanisation boom - urbanisation rate has tripled during the last thirty years - as well as the roaring real estate market mirroring its market-oriented reform, Chinese cities have been undergoing rapid and extensive regeneration at the same time. Such ever-growing rebuilding processes are taking place regularly in almost every city, not only large metropolises; in a way, urban regeneration has become a hegemonic project at all levels of public administration. Despite its strong yet debatable explanatory power in late-capitalist societies, the dominant neoliberal approach of using economic logic to explain the city (re)development underestimates the role of the state, overlooks other motivations and mechanisms behind the process of city making, and cannot fully grasp the complex entanglement between the state, the market and society in Chinese urban settings where notably, instead of being downgraded, state power is reinforced by deploying market instruments. This research therefore aims to problematise and contribute to the discourse of the study of urban regeneration by focusing on the social and cultural dimensions of the process. By doing so, this research contextualises the issue of urban regeneration in the broader process of societal transformation and also examines the role of urban regeneration in this broader process.

Combing over one hundred interviews and ethnographic fieldwork, supplemented by policy documents and news reports, this research aims to explore key mechanisms and power relations in making and remaking urban space at the neighbourhood level in small-scale urban renewal projects in Chinese cities, with a focus on the city of Chengdu. If the early two decades of property-led redevelopment were primarily about economic growth, the recent ten years' practice has been a social-cultural project to reconfigure urban governance, re-stabilize the turbulent society in the wake of rapid socio-economic transformation of urban China, re-integrate heterogeneous and fragmented urban population, and rebuild a common cultural identity after the continuous ruptures and growing disparities. The data collected from the two parts of the study – interviews relating selected cases and ethnographic research – form an intertext that tells two dimensions of the same story, namely that the regeneration of the physical space of the city is only scratching the surface of a social engineering project that is transforming people, and the way society as a whole is organised.

Keywords: *urban regeneration, neighbourhood regeneration, community, governance, culture, urban policy, China*

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For Bu.

Abbreviations

CCP: Chinese Communist Party

PRC: People's Republic of China

SOE: State-Owned Enterprise

RC: Residents' Committee

Shequ: Community as a public administration at the neighbourhood level. It under direction of the Street Office (Sub-District government)

Xiaoqu: Gated Community

Danwei: Work Unit, an organization system of urban population and their employment as well as daily life from the 1950s to the 1980s

Hukou: Household Registration. A population management system based on the dualism of the urban and the rural during the planned economy era from the 1950s to the 1980s.

According to which, every individual is registered officially based on her/his birthplace and being categorised into urban or rural hukou.

CHAPTER 1.

Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 China in transition

Chinese society has been undergoing fast, massive and profound transformation in the last few decades; such rapidity and scope are uncommon and the abruptness of this transition (or transitions) is also unusual - for only a few decades, it changes from a pre-modern traditional society to a rigid communist-socialist regime, and then a "neoliberal" state with a market economy. Changes not only happen on the political or socioeconomic level, but also manifest in space and landscape, such as the juxtaposition of different styles of architecture and fragmented urban forms. During the last few decades, urbanisation rate has increased from 19.36% in 1980 to 59.15% in 2018 (World Bank, 2018), and many cities just came to exist yet have already been built and rebuilt. What is established today is constantly becoming obsolete in the pressing future. If we undertake David Harvey (2003)'s conception of 'modernity' that it "*constitutes a radical break with the past. The break is supposedly of such an order as to make it possible to see the world as a tabula rasa, upon which the new can be inscribed without reference to the past*", then Modern China has seemingly been made as a tabula rasa again and again. However, such a 'break' "does not, and cannot, possibly occur". The past and its legacies never cease to exist but accumulate and intertwine with the present and the days yet to come. Such 'accumulative texture of culture' (Suttles, 1984; Molotch, et al., 2000) in a place as well as the conjuncture of *la pluralité du temps* (Braudel, 1958) and generated conflicts are helpful to understand the urban dynamics. In this sense, urban regeneration in Chinese cities raised a much deeper question of how to reconcile these different temporalities during its rapid and constant transition.

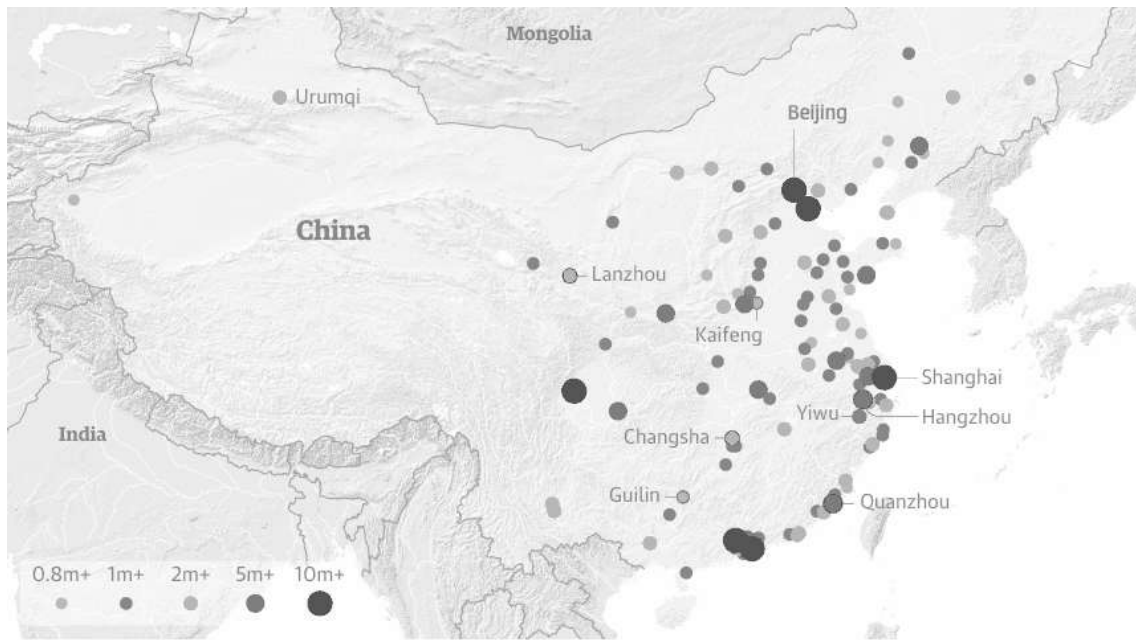


Fig.1-1 More than 100 Chinese cities now above 1 million people. Source: Demographia

On the other hand, how is social life affected by such fast-paced development? How do people experience and relate to such multifaceted transitions? Chinese society has become increasingly or even extremely differentiated, stratified, segregated, and fragmented. While cities like Beijing and Shanghai are becoming global cities accommodating the affluent middle class, more than half of the total population is living in absolute poverty. At the same time, millions of migrant workers in cities are deprived of a range of entitlements, primarily due to the Household Registration (i.e., hukou) system that works both as a legal-institutional barrier and social exclusion. On the one hand, many residents are forced to make room for urban regeneration projects and ordinary memories are uprooted and disembedded in the rapidly-shifting urban landscape; on the other hand, society at large pushes for the acceleration of the rebuilding process. Urban regeneration - remaking a living place from something old into something new - puts the relation between past, present, and future on trial, and illustrates and shapes how we see our histories, our futures, and ourselves. Of course, 'we' always constitutes

various, different groups whose values, interests, and imaginaries are always conflicting and competing.

1.1.2 Land and housing reforms

Nevertheless, to understand this escalation of urban regeneration, it is necessary to outline the changing policy regimes concerning housing provision, property ownership, urban land use, as well as the fiscal reform during the last few decades after China started its market-oriented reform. From 1949 to the late 1980s, the housing market was virtually non-existent in China; urban housing provisions were dependent on the public sector (mainly state work-units, i.e., danwei) and a large amount of public housing areas were developed for the urban working class under the socialist public housing system in Chinese cities (Hui, 2013). Since the 1990s, China has been implementing several rounds of experimental policies on housing commodification in selected cities, to solve the heavy fiscal and management burden on government and severe housing shortage, and to diversify housing provision channels (Wang & Murie, 2000). The housing reform boosted large-scale urban renewal in cities that are often in the form of wholesale reconstruction and real estate development.

However, such practice would not be possible without the commodification of land use. In 1990, the State Council issued the “Interim Regulations Concerning the Assignment and Transfer of the Right to the Use of the State-owned Land in the Urban Areas” that officially allowed the transaction of land use rights for a fixed period of time (for 40 to 70 years depending on the land use) through negotiation, tender, and auction, provided that the state retains the ownership of urban land like the pre-reform time (Wu, 2001; Hsing, 2006; Shin, 2010; He, 2007;). The state remains as the landlord and therefore the transfer of land use right now becomes a new revenue source for public finance, specifically for the local state. It is

estimated that land-related revenue accounted for 30-70 percent of the total revenue of various municipal governments in the late 1990s (Hsing, 2006).

The heavy reliance of local government on land-leasing revenue is primarily a result of the fiscal reform. In 1994, China implemented a new fiscal and taxation distribution system between the central and local governments. Although it is a decentralization of political and fiscal administration that empowered the local state in deciding their own economic development, it also increases the financial burden on local government as the central government ceased allocating resources for urban development (Lin & Yi, 2011; Wu, 2002). Under this new system, the revenue generated by leasing land use rights is not subject to the central government, but extra-budgetary funds only resided to the local. The local state therefore is keen on real estate development and profits generated by 'land transaction fees' and taxes on land value appreciation.

1.1.3 China's escalating and multifaceted urban regeneration

Against the backdrop of China's very recent urbanisation boom as well as the roaring real estate market, Chinese cities have been undergoing rapid and extensive regeneration since the 1990s. Rather than a neat story that is often depicted in a state-dominant urban regime, urban regeneration in China still needs to be understood as a variegated process that is happening in different cities, at different times, under different names and characterised by diverse approaches and outcomes.

Location Urban regeneration happens either in the city centre or urban periphery; each has its own mechanisms given that the city centre is usually highly populated and its land is of more economic value while the periphery areas are not.

Types of neighbourhood Different types of neighbourhoods are undergoing regeneration,

including 1) historic areas/heritage that often can be subdivided into monuments and vernacular buildings; 2) dilapidated housing areas, shanty-towns or slums. However, in some cases, these two categories can overlap such as Beijing's historic area, i.e. *hutong* area. Moreover, these neighbourhoods targeted by urban regeneration are often characterised with public housing that is mainly accommodation for socialist workers during the planned economy era.

Approach and outcome Three main types of projects can be found in urban regeneration in Chinese cities: 1) conservation - to preserve urban areas with heritage/cultural value where afterward are often subject to 'museumification' and mass tourism; in different cases, the degree of demolition, reconstruction and displacement (sometimes forced eviction without compensation) varies; 2) real estate redevelopment - to demolish and rebuild dilapidated urban areas with high economic value into residential high-rises or commercial premises; usually with wholesale demolition, reconstruction and complete displacement; 3) modernisation/rehabilitation/revitalisation - to improve the living environment, building quality, the infrastructure of dilapidated urban areas; to restore liveliness of local economy and everyday life; low displacement at the beginning however increasing rent level slowly squeeze out the poor.

Model of implementation Most of the projects are state-driven, top-down, led and implemented by the local government. The recent decade also witnessed a shift from coerced eviction-demolition strategy to a more inclusive and sustainable approach that is often marked with cultural elements. There are also certain types of public-private partnership - projects are carried out by private developers and endorsed by the state - however in many cases developers involved are state-owned enterprises. Another type is the bottom-up practices initialised and practiced by civil society. However, such practices are very rare to exist and hard to sustain in an authoritarian state; known cases can be realised often through taking advantage of policy

loopholes in early stages or benefited from ad hoc preferential policies, and therefore are almost destined to fall or taken over by the government. The creative industry and artists often play an important role in such cases.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

A dominant explanation sees state-led redevelopment in urban China as driven by the political-economic force of capital accumulation via real estate development; whereas social and cultural forces are overlooked or reduced to a secondary issue. This research aims to bring "culture" back into the discussion and calls for a more inclusive analytical model that explores the combination of culture, social structures, economy and politics in Chinese cities. This research aims to contextualise the issue of urban regeneration in the broader process of societal transformation and also examines the role of urban regeneration in this broader process. Specifically, this research aims:

- To understand stakeholders' perceptions of urban regeneration both as a specific practice and a broader process

- To explore in what ways stakeholders are using different forms of culture to foster or hinder urban regeneration

- To analyse the process of urban regeneration at national, municipal, and local levels and compare through case studies in different urban contexts

1.3 Chengdu as A case



Fig. 1-2 Location of Chengdu in China

1.3.1 The City of Chengdu

Chengdu is the capital city of Sichuan Province in southwest of China. It is one of the 15 sub-provincial municipalities – half a level under the provincial level and half a level above the prefecture-level, and one of the fastest growing metropolises in China. Chengdu has been known through history as the “land of Abundance” with great historical importance and cultural richness. The Old City of Chengdu remains as the city centre for more than two thousand years.

The Old City consists of three parts: the Outer City, the Royal City, and the Young City (i.e., the Manchu City, built in the Qing Dynasty). From the 1910s, the old city wall was viewed as a symbol of backwardness and an obstacle for transportation and commerce. The city wall was gradually deteriorating, although the authority marked it as historical heritage during the Republican time. The old city wall was totally demolished during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).

From the 1960s to the 1980s, Chengdu was one of China’s key national industrial centres because of The Third Front Movement – China relocated basic industries to its Third Front hinterland motivated by national defence considerations. Millions of factory workers moved to

the city particularly the eastern district (i.e., Chenghua District, see map). The city's industrial and economic development is further benefited by the Great Western Development Plan since 2000. The urban area of Chengdu has expanded from 190 square kilometres in the 1980s to 2130 square kilometres in 2010. The populated areas outside of the first ring road are gradually built since the 1990s. There are twelve metro lines now compared to only two metro lines in 2017.

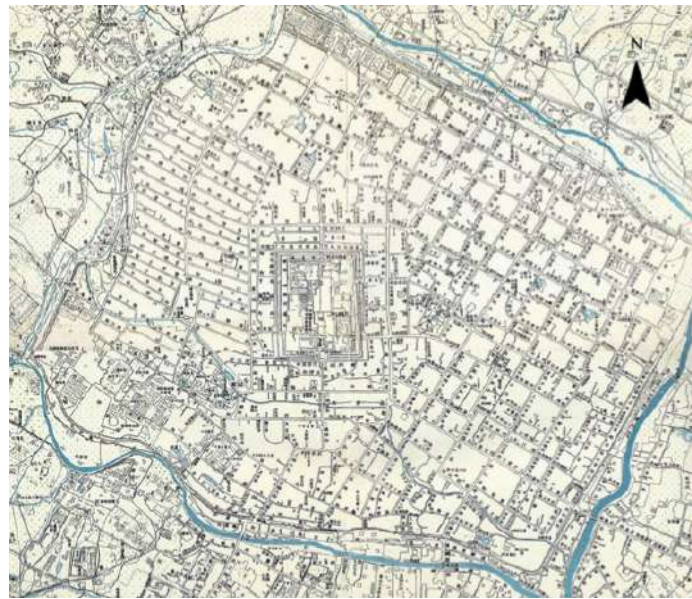


Fig. 1-3 Map of Chengdu 1948

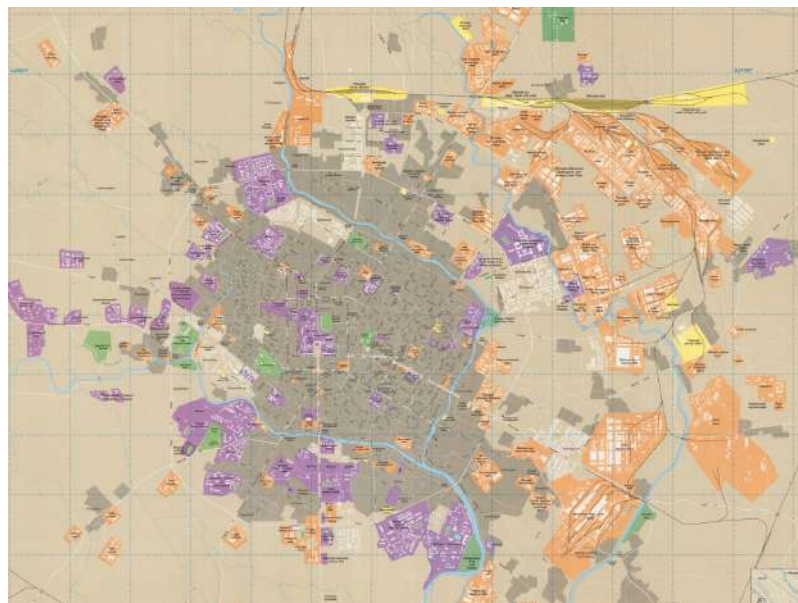


Fig. 1-4 Map of Chengdu 1980 (industrial area - orange)

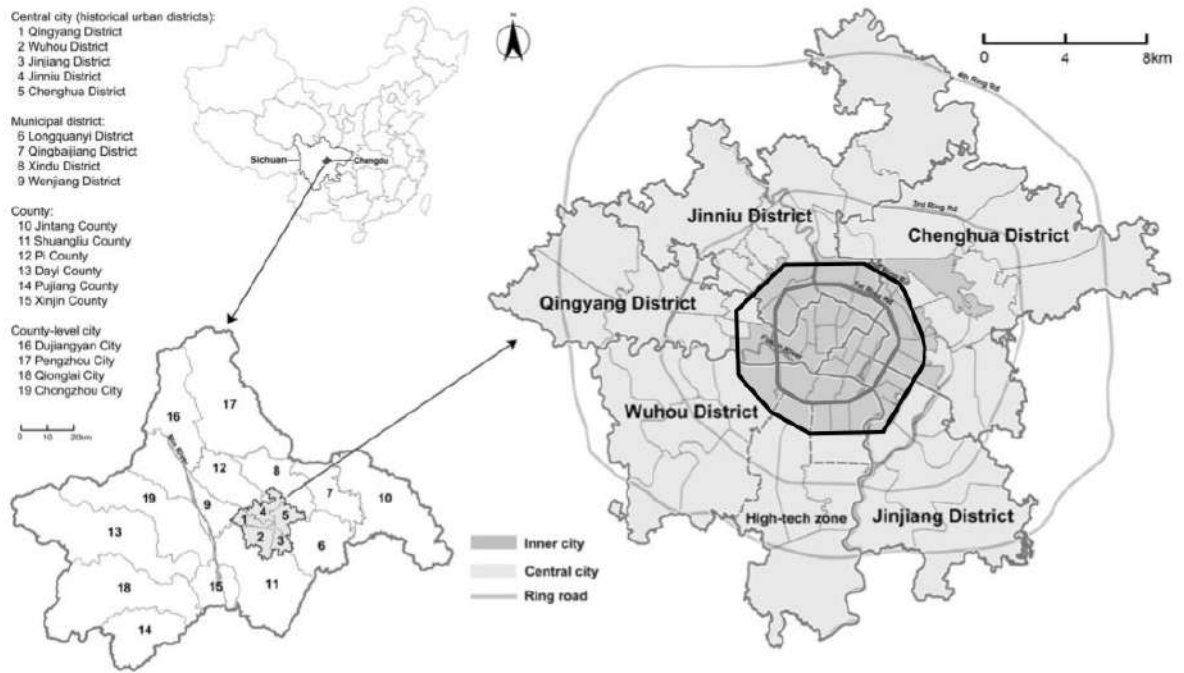


Fig.1-5 Administrative division of Chengdu

Since 2000 Chengdu has been at the forefront of the national strategy of “developing China’s west” and in recent years, Chengdu has become one of the fastest-developing inland cities in China (Yang & Zhou, 2018). During the last two decades, the city of Chengdu has advocated various strategies for urban regeneration. Also, the city has been known for its livable environments, comfortable lifestyle, vigorous local culture, and more recently, its culture of consumption of entertainment and leisure activities. Some recent studies on gentrification have suggested the regeneration process in Chengdu has gained force from affluent middle-class consumers who are driven by the high quality of life, social reputation, consumption preferences (Huang & Yang, 2017; Yang & Zhou, 2018).

The administrative territory of the Chengdu municipality includes five urban districts surrounded by 15 prefectural-level cities and counties (Fig.5). The research scope of this research is the inner city that roughly refers to the historic area within the second ring road.

1.3.2. The Context: Urban Regeneration Dynamics at the City Level

In 2021, “The 14th Five-Year Plan for the National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China and the Outline of the Long-term Goals for 2035” clearly put forward the implementation of urban renewal actions in China. Different patterns of practices emerge from different cities. On the municipal level, Chengdu implements ‘organic’ and ‘micro’ regeneration with emphasis on the revitalization of old and dilapidated residential courtyards and small-scaled community regeneration. The government plays a dominant role in the process with a emphasis on community governance and development.

Particularly from 2018 onwards - with a new (though now departed) mayor in place - new urban policies have been introduced to promote the development and transformation of the city in various aspects, of which urban regeneration is an important part. These policies include, firstly, overall urban planning, i.e. "central optimisation, peripheral advancement or transformation"; and secondly, the creation of the better First Ring Road urban living area, i.e. a series of physical space upgrades around the First Ring Road (i.e. the historic Chengdu city limits up to the 1980s) such as the renovation of building facades along the road, the construction of small-sized parks and green spaces, and the upgrading of the environment and infrastructure of the communities involved, etc.; third, the upgrading of old courtyards and the establishment of trust properties to improve the modernisation of old residential neighbourhoods, both in terms of physical space and management mechanisms; fourth, the enhancement of the image of the city as a tourist city and the establishment of new attractions for tourists, and the proposal of the “eight scenic spots, nine neighbourhoods, ten streets”; fourth, the enhancement of the image of the city as a tourist city and the establishment of new tourist attractions. "Fifthly, urban-rural integration, whereby rural areas and populations are

integrated into the urban planning and governance system, most notably by ceasing to refer to villages as “villages” and uniformly renaming them as “communities”.

Various patterns of regeneration projects that are happening in the city in recent years. Each administrative district, as well as individual neighborhoods, is guided by municipal policies to explore urban renewal models that are appropriate for their area. For example, there are clear differences between former industrial areas and historic and cultural neighborhoods. In the city of Chengdu, the industrial area was established in the 1950s in the eastern part of the city, in what is now the Chenghua district. These former heavy industrial factory work-units contained both production space and living space, even schools and hospitals, and therefore covered a huge area. After market-oriented reforms, many factories closed down, releasing a large amount of urban land, and with the land and housing reforms, these land use rights could be used for transfer or auctions for primary land development, which is a major source of government finance. Even with the slowdown in shantytown redevelopment program on the national level, Chenghua District still owns a large amount of land, so that the district government prefers Public-Private-Partnership model collaborating with private real estate developers under the current urban regeneration mechanism. For example, in the regeneration of a former waterfront industrial neighborhood in Mengzhuiwan (Case D), Vanke, the private developer, is investing in and managing the project and to produce a popular trending street, while the government has given them priority in handing over land use rights for part of the outskirts of the city. Similar patterns have been seen and borrowed by other districts such as Wuhou district in the south. But similar models cannot be replicated successfully in all places. In the Huaxiba (Case E) regeneration project with the Wuhou District Government, Vanke, also as a developer, tried to replicate what they did in Chenghua District, but it didn't work out well, and then the Wuhou District Government ended its co-operation with them. But on the other hand, some similar practices have similar effects in different regions. For example, a system of

community planners is built in Chenghua district - a group of over 100 experts including urban planners, architects, artists, scholars etc are assembled to advice on small-scaled neighborhood revitalization development. Such practice can also be found in Wuhou District.

On the neighborhood level, as the mainstay of small-scale urban regeneration projects, different communities have tried to make use of and mobilize local resources to carry out a wide range of regeneration actions with the support of higher levels of administration. For example, in the Yulin area (Case A) creative industry and cultural events play a major role in various communities including Yudong community, Nijiaqiao community, Beilei community. Many artists, architects, cultural experts are involved in community regeneration projects. This phenomenon is actually related to the fact that the area became home to many artists, musicians, poets and writers since the 1980s and 1990s. In 2017, because of a nationally televised entertainment show, a pop song called “Chengdu” has become familiar to everyone. With the lyrics of a romantic story set in the area, and many of the locations mentioned, including streets and bars, have attracted many young visitors to the area up until the present day. Furthermore, more and more communities are encouraging participatory neighborhood committees to mobilise more local residents to participate in the process, as this not only encourage people to take responsibility and even make financial contributions, but also reduces resistance, maintains social stability and increases the legitimacy of project implementation. For example, in Caojiaxiang community in Chengdu district, the local government started the regeneration project with a ‘collaborative governance’ model and the local community was directly engaged – an “Self-governance Regeneration Commission " was elected as the public agent to negotiate with the government. The regeneration project was completed in 2017 - the whole area was demolished and rebuilt into high-rise residential buildings. This project attracted good coverage in both local and national media and is widely regarded as a successful project. Similar patterns

of participatory governance can be observed in many neighbourhood renewal cases, but the complexities and conflicts involved are more worthy of in-depth analysis.

1.4 Research Questions and Research Design

1.4.1 Research Questions

With an emphasis on the cultural dimension of regeneration, this research recognises and analyses the growing importance of culture within to promote or mobilize the regeneration process in Chinese cities. The main research questions are: why and how does the state strongly promote urban renewal? what are the underlying values and ideas behind urban regeneration? What is the role of culture in promoting the rapidity and pervasiveness of urban regeneration in Chinese cities? By doing so, this research contextualises the issue of urban regeneration in the broader process of societal transformation and also examines the role of urban regeneration in this broader process. More specifically, I will explore: How does each stakeholder (i.e., the state, developers, experts, residents) use culture, in the forms of narratives, knowledge, ideology, heritage, identity, imaginary and memory, etc., as a source to legitimise their ideas and actions in the process of urban regeneration. More specific questions are asked:

- How does each stakeholder perceive specific urban regeneration projects as well as the overall situation of the city rebuilding process?

- What are the reasons for their agreement or disagreement towards certain urban regeneration projects?

- How do stakeholders envision the neighbourhood's as well as the city's future?

- How to understand the decision-making process - conceptualisation, implementation, and evaluation - of certain regeneration projects?

1.4.2 Main Hypotheses

Hypothesis one: There is an overall conformity among different stakeholders on the legitimacy - necessity and reasonableness - of urban regeneration.

Such conformity among the society, first, is rooted in the commonly accepted value of “modernity” or “modernisation” and “nationalism” ideologically articulated by the state; and second, corresponds to the broader process or status of “changing” and “becoming” both as a social reality and a mindset.

Hypothesis two: Notwithstanding the overall consensus that urban regeneration as imperative, different stakeholders (as well as the various groups within) have different values, interests, and incentives to promote urban regeneration, which are indicated in their expressions of culture such as narratives, identities, imaginaries.

For the state, urban regeneration is an instrument of restructuring both physical and social landscape in Chinese cities; in other words, it is a way to change urban space and structure, and more importantly, the way society is organized and the way of living. In addition to financial gains and economic development, urban regeneration is used by the state as a tool to tackle socialist legacies - on institutional, spatial, and social levels - and to rebuild socialist cities, and consequently strengthens its control over urban land, transforming the former socialist workers into property owners in a market society, and maintain state power at the neighbourhood level. State power is reinforced by mobilising rhetorics on development, modernity, and nationalism.

On the other hand, urban regeneration is not (only) a state project but also is fostered by other motivations and incentives from market and society as an enlarged ‘coalition’ between the state, developers, experts, as well as many groups of urban dwellers such as affluent middle class, property owners, local business owners, etc. Urban property owners and many former socialist

workers (who are tenants in public housing) used urban regeneration as a tool of upward social mobility and a better quality of life. However, residents' ideas and desires are constructed not only by the state rhetoric of modernity but also by media and consumer culture as demonstrated by, for example, an image of an ideal home and certain type of modern or western aesthetics.

Hypothesis three: Urban regeneration works as a process of inclusion and exclusion to select to whom the neighbourhood or the city belongs.

Urban regeneration projects foster the formation of local collective identity and reinforce their agency to contest alternative narratives from other stakeholders, especially the will of the state. However, it is also a process of boundary-making at the neighbourhood level to decide who are members of the group and the norms to be followed. For example, the opinions and actions taken against the “nail house” (holdout households) as well as the non-property owners residents - tenants and migrants - in the neighbourhood.

1.4.3 Research Design

To understand the mechanism behind urban regeneration especially the cultural dimension, this research focuses on the city of Chengdu combining case study through interviewing stakeholders in urban regeneration projects from May 2021 to April 2022 as well as ethnographic data collected from August 2021 to June 2023. Five neighbourhoods are gradually selected based on policy documents, media coverage, and empirical research in order to analyse various patterns of regeneration that are happening in the city in recent years. In addition,

Four cases are selected within the second ring road in Chengdu (Fig.6) as follows: Yulin (Case A), Shaocheng (Case B), Fuqin (Case C), and Mengzhuiwan (Case D). These areas are all old dilapidated neighbourhoods and have been subject to regeneration in recent years.

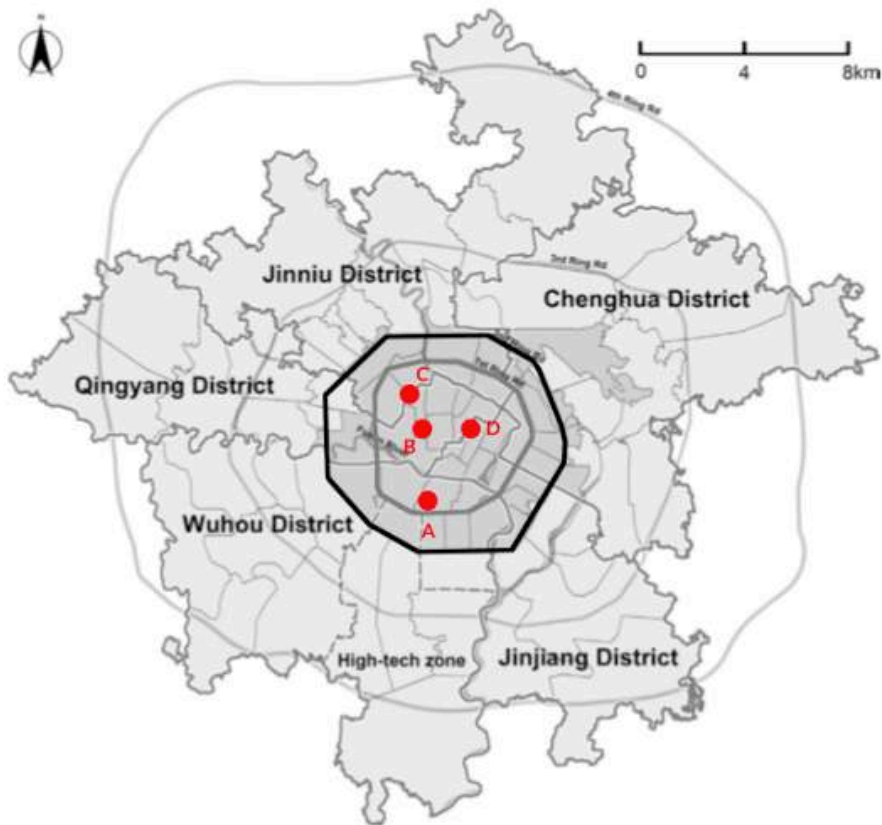


Fig.1-6: selected cases in Chengdu inner city

Interviews have been conducted through snowball sampling, with actors who are either directly involved in regeneration projects or knowledgeable about them. In addition, there are other ways of getting in touch with interviewees. For example, the author participated in one small-scaled regeneration project workshop organized by local authorities. Most of the interviews are with bureaucrats, architects, and urban planners who are playing active and dominant roles in the process of regeneration. Nonetheless other stakeholders including residents and NGOs' opinions also matter. Most of the interviews are semi-structured in-depth interviews from one to two hours; the others are informal conversations especially with residents.

The ethnographic study was made possible because of the connections and social network gradually established through the author's interviews and participation done in the first phase of data collection. The author was directly involved in a community regeneration project as a part-

time member assuming the role of academic expert in the project, i.e., Community Art Creative Project (CACP) that was led by an architectural design company in collaboration with the Communication Department of the Municipality office as well as the local Community. The project started from June 2022 to June 2023 for a duration of one year.

CHAPTER 2.

The Cultural Turn:

Rethinking Urban Regeneration in China

2.1 Debate on the Concept of “Urban Regeneration”

2.1.1 Conceptualising urban regeneration

Cities are constantly changing over time and always adjusting to new circumstances; urban changes reflect the changing socio-political and economic values and structures of society. Urban regeneration, although it is one type of urban change, is a modern concept and initially (and still) marked with government policy interventions to produce certain urban changes - improving built environment as well as socioeconomic situation in order to solve urban problems in a specific urban area. Therefore, urban regeneration is widely understood as a field of public policy (De Magalhães, 2015; Couch, et al. 2003). However, in a broader sense, urban regeneration as top-down interventions aiming at urban restructuring have its origins in the early time, for example, Haussmann’s project of Paris in the 19th century. By tracing back the history, Roberts (2000) argue that the emergence of the modern-day practice of urban regeneration in Britain in the 1970s comes from the recognition and policy response to the poor conditions of the industrial city (inner city areas in particular) where is associated with poor living environment, poor quality of housing, poor infrastructure, lack of basic services, overcrowding, prone to epidemics and crime, vulnerable to natural disaster, etc. Similarly in Europe, old dilapidated industrial areas are in decline and in need of amelioration; and therefore urban regeneration responds to solve existing problems and restore their socioeconomic status (Couch, et al. 2003). Practices of urban regeneration include not only improving physical living conditions but also economic growth and social goals. Drawing from these practices, urban regeneration can be defined as:

“comprehensive and integrated vision and action which leads to the resolution of urban problems and which seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area that has been subject to change.” (Roberts, 2000)

However, this notion of urban regeneration mostly in public policy is based on the assumptions that, first, urban problems are associated with a particular locality; and second, such deterioration cannot be resolved in a ‘normal’ pace of change but require state interventions (De Magalhães, 2015; Lang, 2005;).

The question of “whose urban regeneration?” need to be raised - who performs urban regeneration and who benefits from it? Urban regeneration is an outcome of the interplay between many sources of influence and a response or action being performed by a range of actors not only the state. Bottom-up practices done by social organizations and civic networks are also relevant mechanisms in urban regeneration (Rabbiosi, 2016; Allegretti & Cellamare, 2009; etc.)

In a narrow linguistic sense, the word “regeneration” is generally understood as ‘to grow (new tissue) after loss or damage of a living organism’, and derived from which, ‘to bring new and to revive a vigorous life to (an area, industry, institution, etc.). The positive connotations with the word ‘regeneration’ is in parallel with the negative image of the targeted urban areas and local residents, which in return legitimate corrective measures i.e. urban regeneration. Despite its positive connotations, regeneration in cities is always problematic and in many cases results in devastating effects such as massive demolition and displacement. In an era when urban space is increasingly commodified, ‘regeneration’ is often compromised to its ‘economic’ terms. However the economic benefits generated by urban regeneration is almost never equally shared. As Porter and Shaw (2013) suggests, ‘regeneration – or gentrification as it can often become – produces winners and losers’.

Although the term of urban regeneration has been widely adopted by scholars across different disciplines, other roughly synonymous terms such as ‘urban renewal’, ‘urban revitalization’, ‘urban renaissance’, and ‘urban redevelopment’ can also be found in many studies. The choice

of word varies according to, for example, the subject of study. regeneration in heritage areas is often termed as ‘urban renaissance’ or ‘conservation’ - the latter also entails modifications aiming at restoring the ‘authenticity’ that often at the cost of demolishing non-authentic buildings (Kong & Yeoh, 2003). Also, it is often related to different policy mandates or cultural contexts. Within the relevant academic literature, scholars’ analytical standpoint also matters. For example, studies emphasizing the ‘neoliberal’ nature of the city tend to use ‘redevelopment’ to emphasize reinvestment in fixed capital in urban renewal projects. It is important to note that the term “urban regeneration” is contextual, temporal, and relative.

2.1.2 How ‘urban regeneration’ is framed in China

Among the studies in Chinese context, terms such as ‘urban regeneration’, ‘urban revitalization’, ‘urban renewal’, and ‘urban redevelopment’ are almost used exchangeably, although there are subtle semantic differences between them. By chiefly reviewing relevant policy documents and news articles in Chinese, one can find terms referring ‘urban regeneration’ includes but not limited to old town reformation (jiucheng gaizao), neighbourhood renewal (jiequ gengxin), dilapidated housing upgrading (weifang shengji), heritage preservation (yichan baohu), shanty-town upgrading and reformation (penghuqu shengji gaizao), etc.

The academic work on China’s urban regeneration, however, indicates a strong preference on the term ‘urban redevelopment’ (see works by Wu, 2016; He & Wu, 2005, 2009; Shin, 2009; Zhang, et al., 2014; etc.). This is primarily because, within the targeted areas in Chinese cities, urban regeneration practices are often dominated by property-led redevelopment (Zhai & Ng, 2013); nevertheless, such practice is widely evident in many regeneration projects in European and North American cities (Carmon, 1997; Healey, 1991).

Aside from academic inquiry, the choice of word in public discourse is worth analysis. As

mentioned above, the choice of words or the framing of a problem is important. Gilbert (2007) points out, in his study of ‘slum’ initiatives in cities, language matters and the problematic definition of ‘slum’ and its stigmatized connotations has contributed to the clearance measures against slums and their dwellers in many countries; and because of the ambiguity of the term, it also leads to a variety of actions on local level, e.g., clearance, formalisation, upgrading, redevelopment, or intentional omission, etc. Similarly, ‘shanty-town’, roughly equivalent to slum in Chinese context and has been subject to urban regeneration in recent years, although it is loosely-defined. This word originally appears in 2005 when the current Prime Minister Li Keqiang, who was the Party Secretary of Liaoning province, initiated ‘shantytown redevelopment’ in Liaoning and it particularly targeted the dilapidated residential settlements of the (former) socialist workers of state-owned heavy industries; and these buildings were mainly built during the socialist period. From 2005 to 2009, more than 29 million square metres of these shanty-towns were demolished and rebuilt. However, now, the word “shantytown” is rather overarching and generally refers to all substandard housing in dilapidated neighbourhoods occupied by the urban poor (State Council of PRC, 2014; 2015). For example, some designated historic districts (or, *hutong* areas) in Beijing are also under the list of shantytown renovation in 2010s (Beijing Municipality, 2016;2017;2018).

The ambiguity of the term gives a great freedom for the local state to interpret the policy and formulate varying instruments acting on their local circumstances. Yet, stigmatized terms with strong negative connotations may lead to dangerous solutions such as forcible eviction endorsed by the local government. In China, a number of massive evictions and demolition are carried out under the name of ‘upgrading shantytown’. The stigmatization of the slum dwellers is also manifested in the Chinese cities when the municipality government labelled the people who live in shantytowns, in most cases domestic migrants from rural area, as ‘low-end population’ who are generally associated with poverty, ignorance, low-skill, low-education,

crime, danger, etc. The discredited image of the urban poor has been internalized or advocated by the middle class who live in gated communities, and are supportive of demolition and the sanitation of space. Such phenomenon is also mentioned in Nijman's paper on slum rehabilitation in Mumbai (2008).

Moreover, the terms refer to the areas targeted by urban regeneration are city-specific and locally-based and must be interpreted referring to the local context. For example, "old city", in Beijing, it refers to the century-old city centre within the second-ring road, with traditional one-storey courtyards and paralleling streets i.e. *hutong*; however, in a small or middle-sized city, the old city can be a decades-old small area with low-rise - six or seven storey - row-house buildings mainly constructed in the socialist era. In many cases, these everyday socialist housing become an eyesore for local governments and deemed to be regenerated.

2.2 An overview of theoretical approaches

To explain the "why" and "how" urban regeneration happens, there are three main theoretical approaches engaging with the issue of urban regeneration: first, a general Marxist political economy perspective that views economic structures as the fundamental determining force and the analysis of capitalism as the gist to understand city dynamics. Second, from a political sociology pointview, focuses on the role of the state and the power relations between the state and civil society. Third, with an emphasis on the cultural dimension of regeneration and recognise the growing importance of culture to promote or mobilize the regeneration process - the third approach will be closely discussed in the next chapter. It is important to point out that these approaches are not mutually exclusive, rather, each may put more attention on certain dimensions or elements yet overlap with one another on some aspects, given the fact that scholars research on the subject in discussion - the city and urban regeneration in cities are across different disciplines including but not limited to sociology, geography, political economy,

cultural studies, and semiotics, and the boundaries in between are never clearly defined.

2.2.1 Capitalism, Financialisation, and Gentrification

In the field of urban research, the Marxist political economy has been very influential. Within this tradition, economic structures is the determining force and therefore the analysis of capitalism gives ‘the matrix to understand society and the political dimension if often subordinated to the economic logic’ (Le Galès, 1999).

The key question here is how to understand the nature of urban space. This theoretical approach generally focuses on its economic nature i.e. urban space as a market commodity. Although, in history, city and its built environment always ‘represent a massive source of wealth’ (Roberts, 2000), in today’s neoliberal global capitalism, urban space has been increasingly commodified, city has increasingly become both site and object of capital accumulation (Fields, 2015). In cities, land is a market commodity providing wealth and power; the desire for growth provides a common interest that unites local elites (politicians, developers, landowners, and media, etc.) to work together on land development (and redevelopment) and make the ‘city as a growth machine’ (Molotch, 1976; Logan & Molotch, 1987). In the view of this growth coalition, the urban space that people live and work in is not a human necessity (use value) but a commodity that can generate profits (exchange value).

More recently, the term ‘financialization’ has gained its importance in the study of urban regeneration (or, in their language, urban redevelopment). This new trend primarily comes from the recognition of the rising significance of global financial capital and its relations with non-financial activities including housing, real estate and urban redevelopment (Rutland, 2010; Aalbers, 2019; Weber, 2010). In the last few decades, financial institutions and financial activities play an increasingly important role in contemporary capitalism; the changing provision of real estate finance on both debt and equity has significantly channelled more

capital into real estate developments and markets. As a pioneer of analyzing a new ‘finance form of capitalism’ from the 1970s, David Harvey (1978) has developed an important analytical framework for the later scholars who study the effects of financial capital on urban redevelopment, especially his idea of capital switching via financial institutions into the built environment and the secondary circuit of capital accumulation related to it.

In this financialization process of the city, the state plays an active role to promote this strategy (Aalbers, 2019). Wealth and power are tied together in urban development; urban development can be seen as ‘an interplay of local democratic development, market environments and intergovernmental networks’ (Kantor, et al., 1997) The local growth coalitions coined by Molotch and Logan decades ago gained more strength in the rise of financialized capitalism (Farmer & Poulos, 2019; Cox, 2017). This financialization of urban governance is particularly relevant in the case of Chinese urban regeneration.

This ‘financialization’ literature is closely linked to another group of works under the concept of ‘gentrification’ (Smith, 1979; Clark, 2005; ; Atkinson & Bridge, 2005; Lees, Shin, & López-Morales, 2016; etc.). The conceptualization of gentrification has departed from a typical residential-based class displacement i.e. working class neighbourhood invaded by middle class through residential rehabilitation (Glass, 1964), a more emancipatory definition of gentrification generally refers to a process of upscaling change in demographic, material, socioeconomic dimensions - “a change in the population of land-users such that the new users are of a higher socio-economic status than the previous users, together with an associated change in the built environment through a reinvestment in fixed capital” (Clark, 2005). The basic characteristics of gentrification such as eviction, displacement, economic upscaling, spatial restructuring, transformation of built environment, aesthetic change, change of social character can be found in many low-income neighbourhoods targeted by urban regeneration in

many Chinese cities (He, 2007; He & Wu, 2005; Shin, 2009,2014).

The political economy approach has been very dominant in the studies on China's urban regeneration mechanism in which property-led redevelopment as a dominant model. Many studies have highlighted that local states became entrepreneurial and profit-driven in real estate development, enabled by a series of institutional changes in the post-reform era, particularly the commodification of land and housing, fiscal and administrative decentralisation, and new financial institutions and instruments. All these changes have paved its way to extensive urban land development and redevelopment. The local state is keen in real estate development and operates like private enterprises in pursuing profits generated by 'land transaction fees' and taxes on land value appreciation; some have referred to this change as the rise of 'the entrepreneurial local state' (Shin, 2009).

In many urban regeneration projects, the local government and its state-owned enterprises (developers) formed a growth coalition to make a profit at the expense of housing rights of local residents, for example, in Beijing (Zhang & Fang, 2003). Moreover, in recent years, urban governance has become increasingly financialized (Luan & Li, 2020), for example in the recent shantytown redevelopment (see fig.2) The central government has been advocating this redevelopment in urban dilapidated neighbourhoods, aided by hundreds of billions from the National Development Bank. With the cash compensation and mortgage subsidies, the displaced residents (homeowners) can purchase houses from the market and keep the housing market booming.

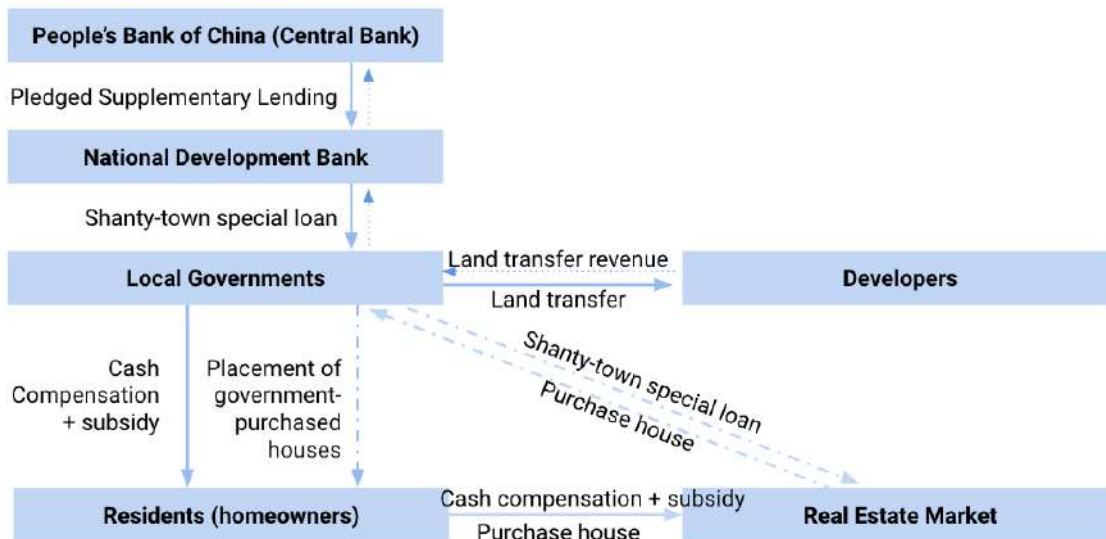


Fig. 2-1: Diagram of the capital flow of shanty-town redevelopment

2.2.2 The state and civil society, power relations, and right to the city

The role of capital is not enough to explain the complicated mechanisms in urban regeneration in China, primarily due to the authoritarian nature of the Chinese state. Many urban regeneration projects in Chinese cities are characterised with violence, forced eviction, massive demolition either directly performed by or endorsed by local governments. Scholars following the second theoretical approach, generally in political sociology, highlight the prominent role of the state and often regard urban regeneration as the direct result of the authoritarian state; more attention is given on the violence, conflicts and resistances in the state-dominant regeneration process (Tombs, 2017; Liu, et al., 2012; Sargeson, 2013; He & Tang, 2013; etc.). These scholars tend to question the overemphasis on the role of the market in the reproduction of power and inequality but highlights the role of the state. This second group of literatures tend to emphasize how the state reproduce power over its territory as well as the power struggles between the governing (the state) and the governed (civil society), by following a traditional Weberian framework that considers the state and state structure having central influence over politics; state actors were deemed important players in politics, who depending

on their autonomy and capacities might matter more than class or interest group actors in determining political outcomes (Janoski, et al., 2005).

One of the main characteristics of an authoritarian state is its strong state capacity, i.e., the ability to carry out lines of action. Despite the commodification of land use rights, urban land is state-owned and the state still acts as de facto landlord. In addition to land ownership, in China's urban regeneration, the state's hegemonic position reflects on its regulatory powers over the planning and funding of urban regeneration, its capacity to determine the pace and direction, as well as rhetorics that frames the process (Tomba, 2017). The state's role trumps both 'culture' and 'capital' in urban upgrade strategies (He & Tang, 2013). However, such arguments can risk to oversimplify the mechanism by viewing 'the state' as one monolithic entity who has absolute authority over urban territory and capacity to advance their agenda. As Tomba (2017:3) argues, 'it remains a fragmented grid of authority operating within a hegemonic cultural project, and strives to accommodate an increasingly complex and contradictory set of interests'. In addition, the socialist legacy presents another obstacle for municipal governments to implement their urban projects. Hsing (2006) points out that in competing the urban land control in the market, there are two main sets of state players: municipal governments and socialist land masters; it depends on the organizational and moral capacity of the municipality to maintain their territorial power.

As a transitional society that recently started and is still undergoing changes, its socialist legacies are still very visible and powerful in contemporary urban politics of Chinese cities (Hsing, 2006). In relation to urban regeneration, these socialist legacies, in addition to the fragmented urban land control by state players, are mainly evident in the fragmentation of property rights and divergent subjective conceptions over property. In terms of housing rights, during the planned economy socialist era, housing was a part of the welfare package entitled

to the urban working class who were the employees of state-owned “work-units” (danwei, a place of employment in pre-reform China that included public administration, state-owned enterprises, public institutions, etc.). Legally speaking, the employees (and their family members) were tenants (not owners) of public housing who are obligated to pay a very limited amount of rent (1-3% of monthly wage) to their work-units or the Municipal Housing Management Office, the local authority in charge of housing units. This has become a major challenge in the case of urban regeneration in public housing areas. Due to the long-standing lack of legislative framework on property ownership rights – not until 2007 the property law was established – and the right of tenure, violations and involuntary evictions are commonplace in China; and residents cannot seek justice and redress because there is no independent judiciary – in the worst case scenario, they can be imprisoned in the name of ‘disrupting public order’. In 2001, prior to the Beijing Olympics, the State Council initiated the Regulation on the Urban Housing Dismantlement, according to which, residents must make room for public use of their land and in practical terms the government can carry out demolition and displacement by coercion. The massive demolition and displacements happened in Beijing’s hutong areas after 2000 was a case in point - the local state basically acts like a de facto landlord expelling low-income tenants and homeowners (Shin, 2009; 2014).

The concept ‘right to the city’ (Lefebvre, 1967; Harvey, 2003;) also organizes a group of studies focusing on the housing rights and urban citizenship that are often violated in urban regeneration and generated contestations and resistance against eviction and demolition, for example, in Shanghai and Mumbai (Weinstein & Ren, 2009). However, the state initiative did not go without any challenges. The phenomenon of ‘nail house’ or ‘holdout’ is a manifestation of grassroot protest against these unlawful deeds. Therefore, rather than being passive victims as often portrayed in literature primarily on displacements and eviction associated with mega projects, residents and civil society groups in the Global South employ a variety of strategies

to make claims and reshape the state's implementation of urban development policies (Holston, 2008; Weinstein & Ren, 2009; Tomba, 2005). In China, political contestations from grassroots level contributed to the new regulations on Expropriation and Compensation of Housing on State-owned Land in 2010, which recognizes residents' housing rights in cities.

However, citizenship rights in Chinese cities are differentiated or stratified among urban residents, primarily due to the Household Registration system, i.e. hukou system who formed the urban-rural division. The Household Registration system was established in the 1950s which categorized the population into agricultural and non-agricultural hukou, and it aimed at restricting population migration and fixing residents at their place of birth. Even though a series of relaxation reforms happened since the 1980s in medium and small cities, in large metropolises like Beijing, hukou system still matters for many aspects of migrants' urban life such as education, job opportunities, housing ownership, and social mobility (Wang, 2005;); millions of migrants are still deprived (at least partially) from a range of entitlements and do not have full citizenship as local residents do in their destination cities (Li & Li, 2010; Zhang & Wang, 2010; Wu & Treiman, 2004;) The household registration system, i.e. hukou is the primary reason why millions of migrants in Chinese cities are deprived of a range of entitlements including tenure security. This issue matters in studying urban regeneration because the targeted areas are usually concentrated with many domestic migrants.

2.3 Culture and Urban Regeneration

The growing importance of culture in cities has been widely acknowledged in urban studies. Cities around the world have been mobilizing culture as a strategic resource to gain economic growth, rebrand city image, and recreate identities through, for instance, urban design projects and cultural events (Le Galès, 1999). Culture-led regeneration has become a new trend at the global level. However, how to account the role of culture in urban regeneration projects is still

open to debate. What seems to be agreed on is the instrumental use of culture in contemporary cities - culture is no longer an end in itself but has been used as an instrument to meet social, economic and political objectives (Miles & Paddison, 2005).

As discussed in the last chapter, within the tradition of Marxist political economy where capital accumulation overrides most processes, the role of culture in urban regeneration is understood at best as an asset to sell the city or a place in the marketplace whereas other motivations and mechanisms in action might be underestimated. Yet the explanation power of this approach has been questioned to study 'the culturalization of cities' (Pendlebury & Porfyriou, 2017; Le Galès, 1999;). Besides the commodification of culture, the meaning of culture has been redefined from a semiotic perspective over time as a resource to put into new use (Bocock, 1992; Miles & Paddison, 2005). In other words, the instrumentation of culture goes beyond the economic framework, i.e., place-marketing and consumption, but more importantly how culture is rhetorically mobilized to generate narratives to legitimate social and political objectives (Rius Ulldemolins, 2014; Zukin, 1995, 2009; etc.). The links between culture and urban regeneration not only includes how culture (is used to) shapes regeneration practice, but also, the other way around, how regeneration produces cultural changes - cultural change in a sense of way of life and meaning-making process, such as the construction of identities or the formation of lifestyle. Furthermore, it is questionable whether culture and regeneration should be treated as separate domains, i.e., how certain cultural elements interact or are integrated in a specific regeneration. On a certain level, urban regeneration itself can be seen as a cultural remaking process, or the spatial manifestation of a broader cultural change process.

This chapter discusses the relations between culture and urban regeneration, which includes two main parts: 1) culture as economy, i.e., the economic instrumentation of culture in urban regeneration as well as city marketing; and 2) culture as narrative, i.e., how culture is

rhetorically mobilized to generate narratives to legitimate regeneration projects, especially in the case of urban heritage.

2.3.1 Culture as economy

It is commonplace that cities around the world employ culture-driven strategies to stimulate urban economic growth and enhance their competitive positions in the global economy (Miles & Paddison, 2005; Zukin, 1995; Le Gales, 1999; etc.). Culture in its widest sense is regarded as a crucial pillar of economic development in the post-industrial city. Culture-led urban regeneration has become one of key drivers advocated by governments in today's city branding competition in the global economy.

Despite the prominence of culture on the urban agenda in cities around the world, culture is a contested concept. With a quick review of contemporary practices of culture-led urban regeneration, it demonstrates a mainly consumption-based understanding of culture either in the form of investment into cultural facilities such as museums, art galleries, or organization of cultural events, and further promotion of cultural (or creative) industries; such understanding is rooted in the transformation of the economy from manufacturing to service sector, parallelly cities becomes consumption centres from production sites (Bassett et al., 2005; García, 2004). Drawing from the case of New York SoHo district that being transformed from a rundown manufactural district into a trendy upscale residential and commercial area, Zukin (1987;1995;2008) provides an insightful analysis of the cultural-symbolic-economy of the city that based on tourism, media and entertainment.

The interrelation between culture and urban regeneration is embedded in a broader discourse on the link between culture, creativity and the city; and the growing culture-led regeneration is part of the larger city growth scheme adopted by governments in recent years that endorses culture as a key economic driver, which is evident in the common practice of “creative city”

initiatives in Europe, North America, as well as the so-called Global South countries. This language of cultural creativity bringing out economic growth advocated by Richard Florida (2002) and others has been widely incorporated by local policy makers in urban regeneration, although its logic and effects have been seriously questioned on theoretical level (Pratt, 2008; etc.) and empirical level, e.g. Baltimore (Ponzini & Rossi, 2010), Osaka and Kanazawa City (Sasaki, 2010).

“In the city, remote forces and influences intermingle with the local: their conflicts are no less significant than their harmonies” (Mumford, 1970: 4). As globalization continuously intensified, cities, especially major metropolises, are increasingly disembedded from the local context and go global, and become what Sassen (2001) argued as ‘global cities’. According to Sassen, certain cities have become world nodes in the global economic market; nation states are no longer spatial units in this re-scaling process on the global level. This is manifested in the polarized conception of space (or the scale of space) between the city - and its ruling elites - and the local citizens in many ‘global cities’. For example, in Milan, while the city is striving to be more connected within the global economy through urban renaissance interventions, local citizens are increasingly disconnected from the local state (Gonzalez, 2009).

This tension between the local and the global are also striking and more complicated in non-Western regions where divergent forces such as decolonisation, modernization, nation-building are entangled with globalization, consumerism, neoliberalism. Urban regeneration in these places often become a catalyst to escalate such conflicts. For example, the regeneration of colonial heritage in Singapore (Yeoh, 2005). The formation of local identity and the production of local culture are greatly affected by its colonial heritage i.e., the ethnic enclaves segregated by the British colonists in its urban landscape. In the 1980s, the government reinterpreted it into multiculturalism to construct a collective Singaporean identity; however, with the

development of the tourism economy, now Singapore uses their ethnic-historic districts and cultural heritage as a marketable landscape for the global audiences. Similarly, many other southeast Asian cities draw on local identity to gain a competitive edge in the global marketplace. In other words, the local culture has been repackaged into an exotic cultural product to be consumed in the global market. Heritage, as a particular cultural form, is increasingly instrumentalized and consumed. And this phenomenon of the 'exploitation of the past', argued by Boltanski and Esquerre (2020), is embedded in a new form of modern capitalism exploitation, the enrichment economy. According to their theories, this economy is based less on the production of new objects and more on the enrichment of things and places that already exist; and 'the valuation process relies on the creation of narratives which enrich commodities'. Following this argument, the importance of narratives in urban regeneration is discussed in the following section.

2.3.2 Culture as narrative

The instrumentation of culture goes beyond the economic framework, i.e., place-marketing and consumption, but more importantly how culture is rhetorically mobilized to generate narratives to legitimate economic, social and political objectives. Narrative is storytelling; the conflicting process of urban regeneration often shows competing stories told by different stakeholders. From the state's side, this primarily reflects on the framing of public policy. For example, the state uses culture-creativity-growth narrative to build its hegemonic project on creative city agenda. Cultural frames are increasingly seen as central to the understanding of urban policies by many scholars, such as the new paradigm 'cultural political economy' proposed by Jessop and his colleagues takes into account the narratives and ideas associated with the transformation of capitalism and the state (Jessop & Oosterlynck, 2008).

Why are narratives crucial to understand the complex process of urban regeneration? The

transformation of the image associated with a place is a key element in urban regeneration. In many cases, it undergoes a conversion from a old negative stigmatized connotation to a new symbolically attractive image in the perception of potential users, whether they are local citizens or global tourists or investors (Sandercock, 2003; Lloyd, 2010; Zukin, 1995); and narratives play a central role in this branding process, aside from actual, objective changes on buildings or infrastructures. However, the narrative in urban branding would not be effective if it is not based on 'authentic' values and uniqueness associated with the location (Jones & Smith, 2005). Thus local culture is mobilized to generate narratives that help cities avoid the perception of standardisation and to be globally competitive (Zukin, 2009) as discussed above. For example, urban regeneration in Barcelona's Raval district revised its stigmatized image by producing images and discourses that describe it as an unique and authentic urban space (Rius Ulldemolins, 2014). The complex relation between story and place offers insights in understanding cultural urban branding (Jensen, 2017).

However, authenticity is a flawed concept and can be interpreted in different ways driven by different motivations and incentives. In addition to the commercial understanding of authenticity defined by the cultural consumption and tourism economy, in many cases, the state assumes the interpreting power to define what is authentic and what is not - - as Zukin (2010) says, 'authenticity is a cultural form of power over space'. Such practice is especially visible in the process of heritage-making and urban heritage regeneration. The discourse around heritage-making is a perfect example of how culture is mobilized to develop a hegemonic project by the state and how heritage is used to achieve urban regeneration.

Heritage, as the contemporary use of imagined pasts, is mobilized for a wide variety of present purposes and public policy goals (Pendlebury & Porfyriou, 2014). In addition to using heritage to promote urban regeneration and develop cultural economy, what is more important, heritage-

making is a political ideological project and heritage is an instrument to legitimate a national consciousness or identity (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2012). For example, in Singapore, during the 1980s when its government reclaimed the “Asian cultural roots” and preserved the national past and the physical remnants of the past i.e. heritage, the government implemented several urban regeneration projects targeting the ethnic historic neighbourhoods (Kong & Yeoh, 2003). In recent years, along with the economic boost, there is a rise of nationalism among Chinese society to revisit and revitalise the traditional Chinese culture in many fields e.g., education, food, architecture. Against this backdrop, *hutong* area, the traditional residential neighbourhoods in Beijing, is classified as national cultural heritage manifesting China’s hundreds of years of history. Therefore, the state has been using these cultural narratives to legitimate extensive regeneration and massive displacement happening in the area (Martínez, 2016). In the urban regeneration of Beijing’s *hutong* area, there is a double-folded narrative: on the one hand, the state legitimate regeneration projects by playing up the cultural heritage value of the *hutong* area, and at the same time, condemning the current residents undermining its authenticity and not rightful people worth of living there. On the other hand, the state criticises the poor and inhabitable living environment and deems necessary for physical regeneration. Both narratives serve the same objective, i.e. to displace the local residents and reclaim the *hutong* space as national heritage for further exploiting its symbolic and economic value.

However, urban regeneration constitutes a field of competing cultural ideas, discourses and power relations. To contest and resist this hegemonic discourse articulated by the state, ‘memory’ is a powerful tool for the local community to legitimize their interests and form a collective local identity opposed to top-down initiatives. For example, in the culture-led urban regeneration in the historic neighbourhoods of Guangzhou, the lived collective memories of local societies significantly shaped the urban regeneration project (Chen, et al., 2020). In

Theatres of Memory, Samuel (2012) argues, the state dominance over heritage-making produces a hegemonic national memory and neglects alternative memories of ordinary people. Indeed, memory is a key concern of local communities to engage with heritage and how their engagement is linked to their identity (Zhu & Maags, 2020).

In spite of the prominent role of culture in urban governance and global economy as well as the ‘bringing the culture back in’ among academic debate, culture is an elastic and contested concept. The definition of what is considered as cultural varies from different times, contexts, groups, etc. Yet it is out of question regarding its ever-increasing links with urban regeneration among other issues in the city. Scholars across disciplines have well discussed its potentials and controversies, especially with regard to the instrumental use of culture.

However, it is questionable whether culture and regeneration should be treated as separate domains, i.e., how certain cultural elements interact or are integrated in a specific regeneration. Perhaps it is necessary to take a step back from viewing ‘culture’ narrowly defined by policy discourse or economy, and draw some inspirations from a more anthropological or structural perspective and therefore broaden the scope of urban regeneration studies. This paper, however, does not intend to promote a reductionist ‘cultural studies’ framework in analysing the dynamics of urban regeneration in China. Rather, it calls for a more inclusive model that explores the combination of culture, social structures, economics and politics in Chinese cities. After all, it is impossible to explain the dynamics of urban regeneration without considering the broader context it is embedded in - a context where rapid structural transitions happen regarding urban governance, economic model, and social and cultural restructuring and bring about unprecedented challenges and uncertainties. Here I would like to highlight two concepts that can be crucial for future studies of Chinese urbanism: temporality and fragmentation.

The Chinese society has been undergoing fast, massive and profound transformation in the last

few decades; such speed and scope are uncommon and the abruptness of this transition (or transitions) is also unusual - for only a few decades, it changes from a pre-modern traditional society, to a rigid communist-socialist regime, and then a neoliberal state with market economy. Changes not only happen on the political or socioeconomic level, but also manifest in space and landscape, for example, the juxtaposition of different styles of architecture and fragmented urban forms (Hui, 2013). During the last forty years, urbanisation rate tripled, and many cities just came to exist yet have already been built and rebuilt. What is established today is constantly becoming obsolete in the pressing future. If we undertake David Harvey (2003)'s conception of 'modernity' that it "constitutes a radical break with the past. The break is supposedly of such an order as to make it possible to see the world as a tabula rasa, upon which the new can be inscribed without reference to the past", then Modern China has seemingly been made as a tabula rasa again and again. However, such a 'break' "does not, and cannot, possibly occur". The past and its legacies never cease to exist but accumulate and intertwine with the present and the days yet to come. Such 'accumulative texture of culture' (Suttles, 1984; Molotch, et al., 2000) in a place as well as the conjuncture of *la pluralité du temps* (Braudel, 1958) and generated conflicts are helpful to understand the urban dynamics. In this sense, urban regeneration in Chinese cities raised a much deeper question - how to reconcile these different temporalities during its rapid and constant transition.

On the other hand, how is social life affected by such fast-paced development? How do people experience and relate to such multifaceted transitions? Chinese society has become increasingly or even extremely differentiated, stratified, segregated, and fragmented. While cities like Beijing and Shanghai are becoming global cities accommodating the affluent middle class, more than half of the total population are living in absolute poverty. At the same time, millions of migrant workers in cities are deprived from a range of entitlements. Local residents are forced to make room for urban regeneration projects and ordinary memories are uprooted

and disembedded in the rapidly-shifting urban landscape. While the state is omnipresent yet there is a lack of state regulations or coherent urban policies, and local practices are greatly diverged. Urban regeneration - remake a living place from something old into something new - puts the relation between past, present, and future on trial, and illustrates and shapes how we see our histories, our futures, and ourselves. Of course, 'we' always constitutes various, different groups whose interests, narratives and imaginaries are always conflicting and competing.

Each city has its own characters that distinct itself from others; however, this does not mean that all urban problems are unique to a particular place. Notwithstanding the complex situation of Chinese urbanism, it is necessary to not fall into the trap of idiosyncrasy. The huge amount of literature reflects a diversity of experiences as well as a number of common trends in cities across the world.

2.4 The Return of “Community” in China

The word “community” has undergone a turbulent journey in the Chinese context. The first generation of Chinese sociologists, represented by Fei Hsiao-tung, used the term “community” in the 1930s, but the term disappeared from public discourse in the early 1950s. The word reappeared with the promotion of “community services” in the 1980s and “community building” in the 1990s. Much like in the UK and the US, the discussions of “community” revolved around local governance and social welfare, but these debates emerged largely in response to the decline of the planned economy system (Bray, 2006); and the definition of community is still based on location, rather than culture or identity. Although there was a range of relevant policies, communities never actually played a significant role in state governance. Until the last five years especially after the Covid-19 pandemic, all the citizens are now aware of which

community they are located in. But to this day, what is “community” in China? And how is it relevant to the understanding of urban regeneration in the Chinese society?

2.4.1 From Work-Units to Urban Community: Socialist Legacies and Modern Transition

During the planned economy era, the Work-Unit (in Chinese “Dan Wei”, literal meaning the basic unit) was the organizational basis in Chinese cities. Because of the urban-rural dualism at that time – although still having significant effects on today’s society, the villages are organized based on production teams (in Chinese, “Sheng Chan Dui”, ‘Sheng Chan’ means production and ‘Dui’ means team). This urban-rural organizational structure, not only spatial but also demographical, is of importance to understand China’s urbanization process, population mobility, and urban development and redevelopment. Because of the market-oriented reforms, the previous public sector represented by state-owned enterprises who are also work-units undergoes restructuring process and gradually collapses, which means a huge amount of urban population are no longer under the management of work-units but became “social actors” (in Chinese “She Hui Ren”, Shehui means society, Ren means people). Meanwhile, there has been a massive influx of rural people to the cities, the grassroots governance in cities is in crisis. “Community” was introduced precisely for the purpose of replacing the basis of urban society from work-unit to local “community” (Shequ, She means social or communal, qu means area or district). In other words, it is to restructure urban governance in contemporary China.

Since 1949, the lowest level of urban government is Street Office (Jiedao) or Sub-District office, the Resident Committee is regarded as “self-governing” mass organization rather a formal governing apparatus despite it is strictly controlled by the upper level government.

Streets used to refer only to roads in towns and cities; it was after the founding of modern China that they became administrative divisions. After the abolition of the Baojia system - a

community-based system of law enforcement and civil control invented in the Song Dynasty in the 1060s, the government established new grass-roots organizations such as Street Offices, which mobilized and organized the masses to establish a new political and social order at the grass-roots level in the cities.

On 21 September 1954, the first session of the first National People's Congress adopted the Organic Law of Local People's Congresses and Local People's Committees at All Levels; and on 31 December, the fourth session of the Standing Committee of the first National People's Congress formally adopted the Regulations on the Organization of Urban Street Offices, which, for the first time, set out clear regulations on the nature of street offices and their establishment.

In 1980, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress reissued the Regulations on the Organisation of Neighbourhood Offices, which once again made it clear that Street offices were to be dispatched organs of the people's governments of the municipal districts. During this period, the various functional departments of the district government set up their own dispatches on the streets, commonly known as the "five offices + one hospital + one market" (including the industrial and commercial office, the grain management office, the housing management office, the police station, the sanitation office, the hospital and the fresh market).

With the development of the market economy, the growth in the material and spiritual needs of urban residents has led to the development of democratic participation at the grass-roots level, and in 1991 the Ministry of Civil Affairs put forward the concept of "community construction".

2.4.2 The New Policy Shift

In 2012, the 18th National Congress of the Party was held, and "community governance" was written into the Party's programme documents for the first time, and the overall process of

institutionalisation, rule of law, standardisation and refinement of community governance was significantly accelerated. Taking this as a starting point, China's community construction has begun to turn from management to governance. In June 2017, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued the "Opinions on Strengthening and Improving Governance of Urban and Rural Communities", which includes "general requirements", "improving the urban and rural community governance system". The Opinions on Strengthening and Improving Governance of Urban and Rural Communities include five parts, including "general requirements", "improving and perfecting the governance system of urban and rural communities", "continuously improving the level of governance of urban and rural communities", "making efforts to make up for the short boards of governance of urban and rural communities", and "strengthening organisational guarantee". And for the first time, "realising the modernisation of community governance" has been included in the target framework for the construction and development of urban and rural communities in China. In October 2017, the report of the 19th CPC National Congress proposed to "create a social governance pattern of common construction, common governance and sharing", "strengthen the construction of community governance systems, promote the centre of gravity of social governance to the grassroots level, give full play to the role of social organisations, and realise the benign interaction between governmental governance, social regulation and residents' self-governance". ". In 2021, the introduction of the Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Strengthening the Modernisation of the Grassroots Governance System and Governance Capability once again provided top-level planning for the governance of urban and rural communities, marking the entry of China's urban and rural grassroots into a new stage in the construction of governance modernisation.

2.4.2.1 The institutionalized community in Chengdu

Since the 18th National Congress, the CCP has clearly proposed to strengthen social governance innovation, build a social governance system of “party leadership, government responsibility, social coordination, public participation, and safeguarded by the rule of law” which has triggered a new round of grassroots governance system reform in cities. In 2017, Chengdu took the lead in setting up the Urban and Rural Community Development and Governance Committee of the Municipal Party Committee to co-ordinate and promote urban and rural community development and governance reform. There are currently 161 streets in Chengdu, including 11 in Jinjiang District, 12 in Qingyang District, 13 in Jinniu District, 15 in Wuhou District and 11 in Chenghua District.

In order to promote the modernisation of the governance capacity of mega-cities and the implementation of the governance system at the grass-roots level, Chengdu has carried out a series of innovative explorations of community development and governance, for the first time organically combining community development and community governance, and making it clear that community development and governance refers to the process and mechanism whereby a number of types of main bodies involved in the community, through coordinated and co-operative efforts, can effectively provide public goods to the community, promote the cohesion of the spirit of the community, satisfy the needs of the community and optimise the community order.

"I counted, in the past, each year when a variety of files to fill out more than 1,000." A community neighbourhood committee director introduced, issued to the community of various types of government services have more than 30 categories, are required to cooperate with the community, quarterly and monthly reports and even daily reports, just to cope with a variety of statements to let the community cadres collapse, basically no time to consider the community governance and public services.

Research in Chengdu found that community governance is the responsibility of more than 40 party and government departments, including organisations, civil affairs, development and reform, finance, housing and construction, human resources and social services, and the judiciary. This situation is largely similar in many cities across the country. In the absence of top-level coordination, public resources are used less efficiently. Communities are treated as subordinate units and "functional departments" by departments and towns, and community cadres passively undertake a large number of administrative matters that are not within the scope of their duties, and some even have to undertake the task of attracting investment that has been pressed down by their superiors, thus creating a situation where they have to bear the pressure of all parties.

In December 2020, Chengdu promulgated and implemented the country's first "Community Development and Governance Promotion Regulations", which made it clear that the people's governments of cities and districts (cities) and counties should establish and publish a list of community self-governance matters, and that residents' committees have the right to refuse to deal with matters that are not included in the list in an attempt to alleviate the pressure on the community.

2.4.2.2 From governing the minorities to the majority

At the beginning, to establish the system of community committee and Street Office is to govern the population fall out of the Work-Unit system including the handicapped, the elderly, workers who are not living in the work-unit compound

With the expansion of urban scale and the acceleration of population mobility, the composition of community populations is becoming more complex, service needs are becoming more diverse, community differences are increasing, and development and governance are facing new challenges. Community classification helps to grasp the characteristics of each type of

community in terms of community services, community culture, community industries, community environment, community governance subjects, etc., so as to achieve fine governance and precise development, and to help modernise the urban governance system and governance capacity.

CHAPTER 3.

Methodology and Data Collection

Through a case-studies based methodology, this research focuses on dilapidated inner-city housing neighbourhoods that are primarily targeted by the current urban regeneration policy program. This research analyses the general situation of urban regeneration at the city level. Based on which, it zooms into selective case studies and offers an intra-city comparative study of recent urban regeneration practices in Chengdu, China. Therefore, this research approaches the regeneration process at both the city level and the neighbourhood level.

Each city has its own context, character and history. In addition, the decentralization of economic decision-making in post-reform China has strengthened the role of the municipality as the organizer of urban development, which consequently contributes to disparity and diversity in different cities with respect to the process of regeneration, although they are marked with certain regularities and convergence as part of the national scheme. Therefore, this research studies both national and regional policies and information gathered about other cities in order to better understand both structural changes and local contingencies.

In general, the process of data collection includes two phases. The first phase of interviewing mainly consists of semi-structured in-depth interviews with different actors who are either directly involved in regeneration projects or knowledgeable about them across the city, selected through snowball sampling. Interviews were complemented by two participant observation in two community projects in which the author acted as academic observer. The second phase was ethnographic work that the author directly participated into two culture-led community projects assuming the role of expert or academic support.

The data collected in the first stage can be seen as the overall background context depicting the state of affairs in the city, while the second stage of the research is the specific setting full of details of what is happening up close.



Fig.3-1 timeline of fieldwork

3.1 Selection of Cases

The selection of cases were firstly based on preliminary research on policy documents and press articles prior to fieldwork. Then the cases were gradually identified and refined according to information gathered on site through, for example, formal and informal interviews with practitioners in related fields such as urban design, architectural design, or urban planning. The initial interviewees were contacted through personal network related to the author’s previous professional experiences. Four cases are selected within the second ring road in Chengdu (Fig.6) as follows: Yulin (Case A), Shaocheng (Case B), Fuqin (Case C), and Mengzhuiwan (Case D). These areas are all old dilapidated neighbourhoods and have been subject to regeneration in recent years.

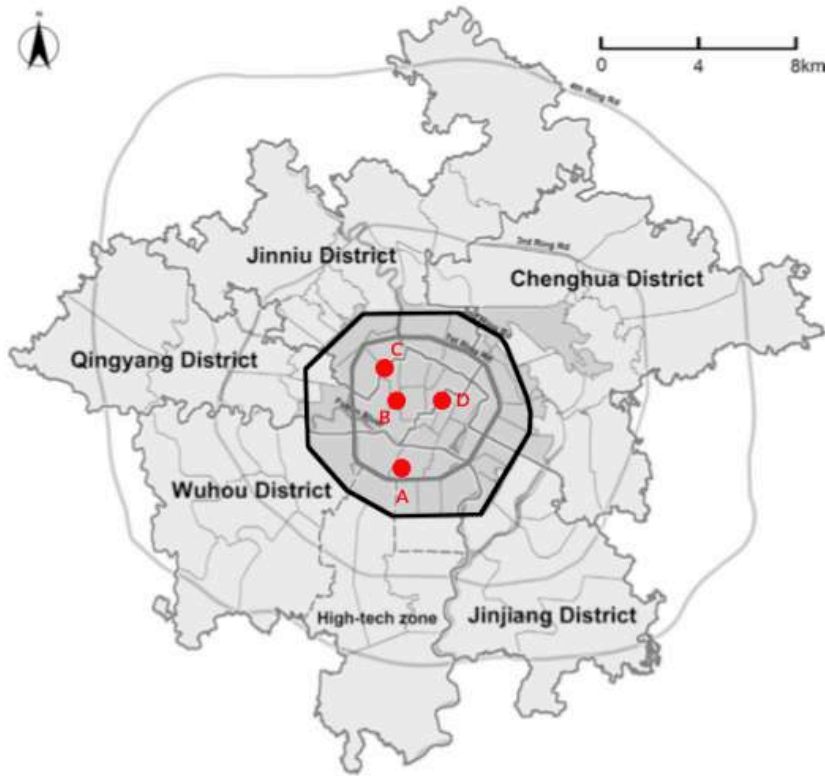


Fig.3-2: selected cases in Chengdu inner city

Site	Historic area	Admi. Division	Top-down	Displacement	Culture-led	Dominant land use		Features
						before	after	
A - Yulin	No	Wuhou	Yes	Low	Yes	Mix-use	Mix-use	Community revitalization
B - Shaocheng	Yes	Qingyang	No	Low	Yes	Mix-use	Mix-use	Creative industry
C - Fuqin	No	Jinniu	Yes	Low	No	Residential	Residential	Collaborative governance
D - Mengzhuiwan	No	Chenghua	Yes	Medium	Yes	Residential	Mix-use	Public-Private partnership

Fig.3-3 Basic Comparasion between Cases

Yulin (hereafter referred to as Case A)

Located in Wuhou District, between the First Ring Road and the Second Ring Road, the area is more of a multi-site regeneration with a focus on cultural and creative industries. The area has been Chengdu's cultural district since the 1990s and is home to many contemporary writers, painters, poets, musicians, etc. In 2017, a popular song, Chengdu, used the area as a setting for a story that sparked a nationwide popularity craze. And to this day, many tourists come to explore the area, and to visit the “The Little Tavern”, a cultural landmark. However, as the

region is administratively divided, with the western half belonging to the Hi-Tech Zone - the Hi-Tech Zone is not a formal administrative go but a functional area, the government platform companies on both sides have also adopted different strategies, although both are culture-led practices.

Shaocheng (hereafter referred to as Case B)

Located in Qingyang District, the area is a historical and cultural reserve area, and at the same time one of the first commercially developed tourist areas in Chengdu in the early 2000s, which is still a must-visit for tourists up to this day.

Fuqin (hereafter referred to as Case C)

Located in Jinniu District, adjacent to the First Ring Road, it used to be a dilapidated old residential area, dominated by the housing of iron and steel work-units. In 2018, the sub-district government started to renovate old courtyards and beautify the streets in the area, and created a commercial area with a focus on food, such as “Noodle Street”, parks focusing on bird-walking and recreational activities, unused buildings in the community were transformed into communal centres for resident life, etc. Unlike the previous case A-1, this case did not involve the collaboration of private developers and was mainly led by the government.

Mengzhuwan (hereafter referred to as Case D)

Located in Chenghua District, across the river from the city's commercial centre, Case A-1 is a decaying waterfront post-industrial inner-city area that is now being transformed into a trendy leisure, consumption, and touristic urban space through culture-led regeneration interventions based on new forms of public and private partnership, i.e., “EPC+O” (Engineering, Procurement, Construction, and Operation). In collaboration with the local government, the real estate developer repackaged the local culture – real or invented – as a strategy to rebrand

the local identity and deliver upscale growth. The area is now full of diverse boutiques, cafés, bistros, cocktail bars catering to the new urban middle class. On the face of it, the regenerated area demonstrates a highly mixed diversity with authentic local vibes. However, such diversity is intentionally channelled by the developer and fuelled by the media, especially social media and influencer marketing, and consumers' tastes. Moreover, the project is subject to wider urban planning processes as well as city branding strategies.

In addition to the selected main cases, several other notable cases also provide supplementary information on the analysis of mechanisms, For example:

Huaxiba (hereafter referred to as Case E)

Similar to Case D, the area is also regenerated by the same private developer in collaboration with the district government. Seeing the success of another case, the Wuhou government invited the same property developer to renew the area with the same strategy. The developer even made large-scale replicas of the shops it had attracted to the Case D area, but the results were unsatisfactory. The area did not meet the local government's expectations. It is understood that it has been decided that the co-operation between the two parties will not continue.

Shuxiangli (hereafter referred to as Case F)

Located in Chenghua District, next to the first ring road, the project was organised by the Mapping Workshop in collaboration with the CPC Chengdu Chenghua Committee Party School. The Workshop is an organization founded by an architect who is also a professor in architectural design in one of well-known universities in this field. During last two years, over 30 workshops have been held in different Chinese cities collaborating with local organizations, universities and institutes, or in this case, local authorities. The workshop publicly recruits participants with an application and selection process among college students or recent

graduates in relevant fields, mostly aged from 18 to 25. The location of the workshop is decided beforehand and all participants will go to the site for a one to two week intense fieldstudy.

Ethnographic Work

Supo

Located in Qingyang District, outside of the Third Ring Road, the project was a community-based art residency project in collaboration between artists, non-governmental organization, and the sub-district government. More specifically, the sub-district government purchased services from the local NGO who would provide culture or art oriented contents to the local residents; In this case, the organization invited two artists to make artwork, artistic events, and/or exhibitions. The local communities provide space and/or facilities to the artists and the organization as well as mobilise residents to participate related activities. In this case, the local community provides a vacant shopfront to the artists to turn into a gallery space that is suitable for artworks and workshops. The duration of the project is one year with two stages. The author visited the project several times at the first stage and participated in person for two months at the second stage.

CACP (Community Art Creative Project, hereafter referred to as CACP)

Located in Yulin neighbourhood (Case A) at Wuhou District, the project started from July 2022 and its first phase ended in June 2023. The project was initiated by an architectural atelier in collaboration with the communication department of the municipal government, which aims to create a space to promote the exchange between young creative people working in cultural sector and the common citizen. The location of the project was later decided between the atelier and the local community, i.e. Yudong Community, where the atelier has successfully completed

a regenerated project since 2018. It is a process of assembling like-minded people to be regular members of the project including graphic designers, fashion designers, photographers, documentary makers, scholars, etc. The author joined the project in October 2022 after three months when the project launched. The ethnographic study provides a different insight into the overall urban regeneration dynamics of Case A who serves as a context with heterogeneous practices.

3.2 Data Collection

First-hand data collection include three parts: interviews, participant observations, and ethnographies. Interviews have been conducted through snowball sampling, with actors who are either directly involved in regeneration projects or knowledgeable about them. In addition, there are other ways of getting in touch with interviewees. For example, the author participated in one small-scaled regeneration project workshop organized by local authorities, i.e., Case F. Most of the interviews are with bureaucrats, architects, and urban planners who are playing active and dominant roles in the process of regeneration. Nonetheless other stakeholders including residents and NGOs' opinions also matter.

Interviews

There are 107 interviews in total with different actors (Fig.XX). Most of the interviews are semi-structured in-depth interviews from thirty minutes to two hours; the others are informal conversations especially with residents. Over half of the interviews are conducted with actors directly involved in selected four main cases while the rest are actors either involved in other projects or in other forms of relevant practice for example consulting. An interview log is weekly updated with key information of the interviewees (*More information in Annex D*).

Category	Number of interviews
Residents	18
Bureaucrats/civil servants	13
Architects/urban planners	22
Artists	8
Academics	5
Consultants	9
Professionals	9
Developers	6
NGOs	3
Others	14

Fig.3-4 Interviews

Focus Groups

Two small focus groups are conducted. The first is with three residents in Case C; and the second is with four volunteers in the ethnographic project CACP.

Participant Observations

Participant observations include two types, first, workshops and meetings related to regeneration project, for example, the one-week workshop of Chengdu Chenghua District of local food market regeneration. Second type is on-site visits to multiple regenerated neighbourhoods.

Secondary data

In addition to firsthand data, this research also reviews relevant policy documents regarding urban planning policies, e.g., city plans, as well as cultural policies, e.g., cultural and creative industry, city branding, etc. Media contents especially articles on digital media with official public accounts on WeChat that is now has become a major information circulation channel in China.

Field Notes

During the ethnography, the author keeps notes regularly for record.

Data Analysis

Analysing interviews, observation notes, policy documents and press articles using content analysis software (e.g., NVivo).

3.3 Reflections on the Positionality of Researcher

3.3.1 Shifting Identities: Observer vs. Participant

Defining the relationship between the researcher and the field or the subject is largely a matter of various degrees of “observation” and “participation” – from complete observation, more observation, more participation, to complete participation (Gold, 1958). Each approach has its benefits and limitations. At the first stage of data collection basically involving interviewing, the author had preferred the former, to avoid over-involving oneself in the course of events. However simply being present on-site has an impact on the status quo. And so-called positivist social reality does not exist outside of one’s own subjectivity.

The author used to work in Chengdu for a few years at a well-known architectural atelier. This on the one hand gives the author a lot of advantages because of the already existing network of people, in fact a lot of interviews and connections start with the architect; on the other hand it creates a lot of obstacles, for example because of the small circle as well as the complexity of the relationships, the author's previous job label may also be seen as some kind of obstacle to obtaining real information, after all it may be prying and competition among peers. Even if the author keeps emphasising that she has resigned from her previous job and is now doing purely academic research, others may still feel that there is a risk of truth-telling. The authors therefore also take the decision of whether or not to mention their previous work experience and background depending on the setting and the different interviewees.

The author returned here to do fieldwork and have been struggling between the two extremes of “participation” and “observation”. The urban space and people are so familiar and yet so foreign that the author have to re-examine not only the tangible and intangible changes in the city, but also one’s own self and past experiences. The age-old question with ethnographic research method is to remind the researcher not to ‘go native’; but in fact, the researcher also runs the risk of ‘going strange’ when confronted with a familiar setting. But when invited to collaborate by a project artist or architect, even though it is full of hesitation and questions, it still feels like a good opportunity to enter the field. Directly involvement might be an excellent opportunity to get to the heart of a community project, rather than be a “rational” bystander. But at the same time the authors are fully aware that her involvement will make a difference to the status quo, both on environment and people. And many of the projects do in fact do what academics have criticised, namely cultured-led gentrification. The authors' own theoretical positions are constantly being challenged to the point where they are often left with a sense of hypocrisy and deception in playing a certain role.

3.3.2 The role of expert in practice

The word “role” already implies one of the key issues is the role-and-self problem. In the meetings the author attended as expert in which the author is usually at the invitation of the architects or artists who provide service to the local authorities who are expecting progressive and effective solutions to their practical problems at hand. As an expert, in this case, a Europe-trained Chinese sociologist who also has years of relevant working experiences, the author is expected to express endorsement with citation of “successful” western models but with a good knowledge with the reality in Chinese settings. The author was not expected to critique the proposal or the general progress the local authorities have achieved. The qualifications and training experiences are regarded as source of legitimacy. Role-pretense is a basic theme in

these activities.

For example, in a local community revitalization project, The author was invited to become an expert on the project during an informal chat with an artist, and the actual "invitation" was very vague: "We've been working on a project on the subject, and you might be interested in joining us for a meeting to give us your opinion". - In fact, for community projects like this, because of their community or public nature, there is a budget for "expert consulting fees" (e.g. an intermediate expert with a relevant PhD is recognized as an expert at a cost of around \$700 (i.e. 90 euros), and the expert may only be required to make 2-3 appearances for a single project) because the participation of relevant experts is a necessary condition for the audit. And very often this kind of project is only a verbal co-operation at the beginning of, there is no paper contract, and the community and the artist's or architect's company don't add to the contract until the implementation phase, which involves budgets and money transfers, but may also remain so without a contract. The author participated in the subsequent meetings, during which photographs were taken (and later used as evidence of the "presence of experts" during the review of the materials), and made some critical comments on their renovation plans, but they were not of any use. In the subsequent meeting with the community, the author could not really object, but had to play a 'role'. In some urban projects, so-called third-party professionals such as architects often act as mediators between the government, developer, and residents, and in some cases activists for certain agenda (Zhang et al, 2020). However, the professionals may be project service providers who are there to facilitate the implementation of the project. At the most grassroots level, the participation of experts especially academic experts is merely embellishment and has little or no impact on the decision-making process, and even contributes to it. For example, in the same project, there were other experts involved, two professors from the local university, who were obviously quite experienced in this field, and who could make proposals that seemed constructive, but in essence only supportive of the current proposal, and

who were skilled in citing municipal and even national policies. Lacking experiences, the author is thus caught in a certain dilemma of expression and integrity in similar meetings.

3.3.3 Obstacles and Limitations

Personal health issues I have been suffering from serious health issues since May 2022 and was hospitalised for some time, and till today going through regular medical checks. From August 2022, I started to take a medical leave for a duration of one year. However, during the medical leave, on the basis of recuperation, I stayed in the field and took certain time – less than twenty hours each week – to do ethnographic work. I participated in two local projects as regular member.

Covid19 mobility restrictions My fieldwork trip from Europe to China was delayed till the end of April 2021 due to Covid-19 international travel restrictions, the suspension of international mobility at University of Milan-Bicocca, and four weeks' obligatory quarantine after arriving in China. And later the fieldwork activities were constrained by domestic Covid19 travel and health restrictions between cities in China for till November 2022 when Chinese government officially adopted new Covid19 policy and elevated the mobility restrictions. During which, Chengdu has two periods of city-wide lockdown in 2021 and 2022. Interviews and field visits were often delayed or cancelled.

Interview transcribing The transcription of interviews is time-consuming, and the contents need to be translated from Chinese to English. Voice-recognition software can assist partially; some interviews are in local dialect and cannot be recognized by recording-to-text software.

CHAPTER 4.

Community:

A Way of Economic, Political and Cultural

Governance



Fig.4-1 Public square of Yudong (Yulin East Street) Community in Chengdu

We can witness an increasing prominence of the word “community” in the realm of public discourse - despite its vague definition; and in practical terms it is more equivalent to the word “neighbourhood”. And local community development and management becomes a policy mandate for small-scaled urban renewal practices. *“For the third year in a row, the city of Chengdu has been doing micro-regeneration of neighbourhoods. And there's also the official competition at the city level, which is for micro-regeneration projects with community or neighbourhoods as the focus”* (interview with local official). In fact, all kinds of “community” projects are already everywhere in Chengdu. The fieldwork in Chengdu raises new questions about the analytical framework for urban regeneration in China today; one of the often-overlooked facets is “community”.

Since the 1990s, the urban work-unit system has been slowly dismantled and the community (*shequ*) has slowly become the most basic unit of urban governance. But the fact is that ordinary citizens living in cities have rarely been aware of the existence of ‘community’ in the past two decades, even though the state has been trying to strengthen ‘community construction’ (*shequ jianshe*), it has achieved little in most of Chinese cities, until the last few years especially after the COVID19 pandemic, that community has really become relevant to everyone due to mass mobilisation and systematic monitoring at the neighbourhood level – *“after the pandemic, everyone knows to which community they belong”*. But in Chengdu, significant amount of effort has been put into strengthening of the role of the community started before the pandemic. In 2017, the Chengdu Municipal Committee of Urban and Rural Community Development and Governance (the Committee) was formally established, which is the first of its kind in China. More than 3,000 communities in Chengdu have an annual security fund dedicated for their own community use. In urban governance and management, almost all the problems and conflicts are transmitted and rammed down to the most basic level - the community, testing the institutional arrangements, organisational system, resource allocation and service provision of

the community as the frontline of urban governance. From the state's point of view, today's societal transformation in China requires a more tailored, refined, and probably more importantly, economical managerial system to govern effectively.

Different community-based practices can be found across different districts and neighbourhoods in Chengdu. But an important feature is that all has a strong spatial dimension. Many practices use extensive physical alteration and spatial reorganisation as an important instrument and component of social governance. Small-scale urban renewal has two main relevance to communities. First, city-level initiatives usually driven by local district governments need to be implemented at the community level, with the community playing the role of intermediary and implementer. Secondly, many small-scale urban renewal projects are themselves community-driven projects with community's own investment and mandates. Therefore, it is important to analyse the mechanism of urban renewal in relation to community development and neighbourhood governance.

This chapter focuses on mechanisms and power relations of small-scale urban renewal projects at the neighbourhood level and the role of community plays in the process to initiate and/or facilitate urban regeneration. More specifically, during this process, how the community interact with the upper-level state – street office (*jiedao banshichu*, subdistrict), district, and municipality, as well as non-state actors such as social organizations, planners and architects, residents, etc. The increasing prominence of community in urban China manifests the wide-ranging small-scale urban regeneration as a spatial-social restructuring process happening at the neighbourhood level which reassures public support and reinforces the state's power at the grassroots society.

This chapter includes the following four sections. First, a short review of historical context and the case of Chengdu regarding institutional arrangements and urban policies on neighbourhood

governance. Second, the economic dimension of community that focusing on the commodification of community development and governance; third the political dimension of community in building participatory citizenship and everyday governance practices. Fourth the cultural dimension of community in building collective identity as a response to societal transformation challenges. Fifth, conclusions and reflections.

4.1 The Chengdu Model: The Urban and Rural Community Development and Governance Committee

During the planned economy era, the Work-Unit (in Chinese “Dan Wei”, literal meaning the basic unit) was the organizational basis in Chinese cities. Because of the urban-rural dualism at that time – although still having significant effects on today’s society, the villages are organized based on production teams (in Chinese, “Sheng Chan Dui”, ‘Sheng Chan’ means production and ‘Dui’ means team) and the cities are organized based on work-units. This urban-rural organizational structure, not only spatial but also demographical, is of importance to understand China’s urbanization process, population mobility, and urban development and redevelopment. Because of the market-oriented reforms, the previous public sector represented by state-owned enterprises and work-units undergoes restructuring process and gradually collapse, which means a huge amount of urban population are no longer under the management of work-units but became “social actors” or “person of society” (in Chinese “She Hui Ren”, Shehui means society, Ren means people). Meanwhile, there has been a massive influx of rural people to the cities, the grassroots governance in cities is in crisis. “Community” was introduced precisely for the purpose of replacing the basis of urban society from work-unit to local “community” (*Shequ*, *She* means social or communal, *qu* means area or district). In other words, it is to restructure urban governance in contemporary China.

In order to promote the modernisation of the governance capacity of mega-cities and the

implementation of the governance system at the grass-roots level, Chengdu has carried out a series of innovative explorations of community development and governance, for the first time organically combining community development and community governance, and making it clear that community development and governance refers to the process and mechanism whereby a number of types of main bodies involved in the community, through coordinated and co-operative efforts, to provide public goods to the community, promote the cohesion of the spirit of the community, and keep the community order.

In September 2017, the Chengdu Urban and Rural Community Development and Governance Conference was held, and Chengdu was the first city in China to set up the Urban and Rural Community Development and Governance Committee. It is important to note that the head of this new committee is the minister of the Organization Department - Organization Department of the Chinese Communist Party is one of the most important organs that controls staffing positions within the CCP. In October 2019, Chengdu issued the “Overall Plan for Urban and Rural Community Development and Governance (2018-2035)”, which specifies the goals and paths of community development and governance. In addition, on 1 December 2020, Chengdu City formally implemented the “Regulations on the Promotion of Community Development and Governance in Chengdu City”, the first local regulation in China that comprehensively focuses on "community development and governance”.

In 2018, Chengdu officially released the Chengdu Urban and Rural Community Development and Governance Master Plan (2018-2035). According to the Master Plan, Chengdu will be three types of community appropriate spatial scale and the status quo comparative assessment, clear three major community spatial adjustment strategy. The planning scope of Chengdu City as a whole, including 20 districts (cities) and counties and Chengdu High-tech Zone, Tianfu New District Chengdu direct administration area, 375 streets (townships), 4357 urban and rural

communities (villages), with a total area of about 14,335 square kilometres. For existing communities, if the spatial scale is too small, conditions are in place for merging; if the spatial scale is appropriate, the status quo is retained; if the spatial scale is too large, conditions are in place for splitting. In the process of community zoning optimisation, the complete spatial extent enclosed by roads, rivers and other elements should be used as the community boundary. In terms of population scale, the appropriate population scale for urban communities is 3,000-5,000 households and 10,000-15,000 permanent residents; industrial communities are considered to be mainly employment-based, with about 10,000-50,000 people employed in park-type communities and 5,000-30,000 people employed in building-type communities; and the appropriate population scale for rural communities is 500-1,500 households and 5,000-30,000 people employed in building-type communities; and the appropriate population scale for rural communities is 500-1,500 households and 500-1,500 people with permanent residents. is 500-1500 households and 1500-5000 permanent residents. Urban communities within the second ring of urban communities: Suitable spatial scale is 0.3-0.5 square kilometres. Urban communities in the second to third ring: Suitable spatial scale is 0.5-1 square kilometres. Urban communities outside the Third Ring Road: The appropriate spatial scale is 1-2 square kilometres.

The main duties of the Committee include, taking the lead in formulating medium- and long-term goals and stage-by-stage tasks, policy systems, development plans and standards for the development and governance of the city's urban and rural communities; being responsible for organising, guiding and coordinating the city's social governance work; being responsible for co-ordinating the promotion of the organic renewal of urban and rural communities and the building of the capacity to supply public services; being responsible for co-ordinating the promotion of the construction of a multi-dimensional governance system for urban and rural communities; being responsible for the fostering and development of urban and rural social

organisations and social enterprises in the city's urban and rural communities; and setting up a mechanism for co-ordinating the resources for the development and governance of the urban and rural communities as well as mechanisms for guaranteeing the inputs of people, finances and materials; etc.

More than 3,000 communities in Chengdu now have an annual security fund dedicated for their own communities' use. In 2021, the total budget was 1.77 billion at the municipal level.

“It is government subsidy to every community no matter it is urban or rural. The fund is not only used for small-scaled regeneration projects but all kinds of community issues. It aims to encourage residents themselves to discover, discuss and solve the problems, with certain financial support from the state. But the subsidy would not be enough to cover the cost and communities and residents need to mobilise all resources at hand”
(Interview with the Deputy Director of the Committee)

The government hopes that administrative resources and social funds will complement each other, forming a system of financial security for community proposals supported by government financial funds, social funds and self-financing. In Jinniu District, for example, more than 8 million yuan has been invested at the district level, and community funds have been set up in 90 communities throughout the district; in addition, more than 3 million yuan has been raised through the implementation of public welfare activities such as “99 Public Welfare Day”. In 2021, the General Office of the Ministry of Civil Affairs announced the 2021 National Typical Cases of Grassroots Governance Innovation List, and the Jinniu District Community Proposal Work Mechanism to Stimulate Endogenous Dynamics of Community Governance was on the list.

The practice of Chengdu City firstly refers to John Friedman's discussion on quality community standards, the indicator system of “sustainable cities and communities” of the United Nations

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as the construction requirements put forward in the “Chengdu Beautiful and Livable Park City Plan” and the “Guidelines for Park Community Planning in Chengdu”, and combines the elements of people's feelings, people's needs, and people's development, and proposes that five dimensions, namely, “public services, community culture, ecological environment, spatial quality, and industrial vitality”, be the main objects of community governance in Chengdu City.

4.2 The Economic Dimension

Cities are increasingly becoming a commodity, and many local governments are committed to ‘branding’ their cities, packaging them as commodities to be sold, attracting attention, increasing exposure, and promoting extravagant projects. In Chengdu, community is also becoming a commodity. The municipal government is encouraging all communities to create brand themselves and to attract a variety of external social and private resources to revitalise the community. The trend, similar to the post-war policy of fiscal austerity in many late capitalism societies which curtailed public spending on social welfare and put responsibility at a more local level with more external private sources, reflecting a kind of marketization and financialization of public service provision. Furthermore, communities are encouraged to pursue economic development on their own even establishing their own social enterprises, aside from public funding, which indicates a rise of entrepreneurial community, a process from ‘asking for money’, to ‘finding money’, now to ‘making money’.

4.2.1 The Entrepreneurial Community

The increasing commercialisation and marketisation of the community is manifested in several ways, including the commercial use of community space; the establishment of community funds to diversify sources of funding and allow more private sector involvement; the

commercialisation of community services and activities, with the main focus on the purchase of third-party services; the setting up of social enterprises by the community itself to carry out commercial activities; and the establishment of a brand name for the community's party building; etc.

Many community-based renewal projects are initiated primarily targeting the adaptability of commercial activities into community space. The reorganization and redesign of the space aim to attract more retailing and catering business into the community. In the “In the Alley” project of Yudong community in Wuhou district, the project includes two phases. The first phase is renovation of a semi-outdoor space that used to be a temporary bicycle parking area next to the main building of the Yudong Community Party-Mass Service Center and a police station. The space is renewed as a café. The second phase of the project extends to the whole area of the public space around the service center and the community public square. The buildings around the area now includes barber shop, canteen, bookshop, and cinema (Fig.4-2).

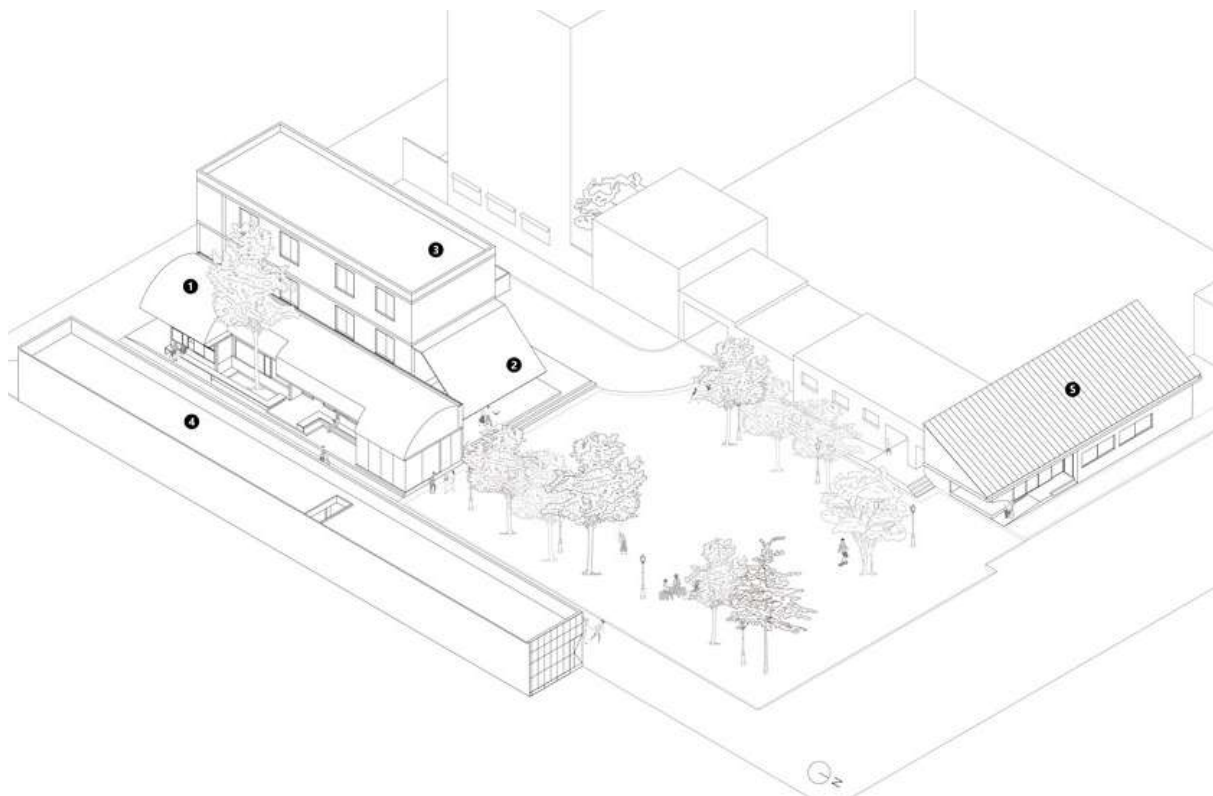


Fig. 4-2 Plan of Yudong community space. 1-café, 2-stage, 3-office, 4-bookshop/barber/cinema, 5-canteen.

Most of the community spaces are used as offices; and some of them are even temporary or illegal structures such as the temporary bicycle parking area. Often, these spaces are not allowed to have commercial activities. For example, a café requires a business license. Usually, if the building in which the shop is located is not for commercial use and allows food and drink, then it is usually not allowed to apply for a license. But these seemingly difficult policy procedures are no longer a problem in community-based regeneration projects. In Qingyuan community in Qingyang district, the community center is also completely commercialized including restaurants, tea houses, boutique, etc. The government allow and encourage similar actions.

For example, the entire public space of the Qingyuan community is used for commercial operations including restaurants, shops, tea houses and so on, with an annual turnover of 30 million yuan, which is not a small amount of money for a local community. But the money is not shared by private investors, it goes back into the community fund through social enterprise and is fed back into the community. Now they are building a six-storey community centre with their own investment. What is taken from the people is used for the people, and there is no problem with commercial operation. (Interview with deputy director of the Committee)

Moreover, these community spaces are not allowed to be rented out to retailing or catering business. In the Yudong community renewal project, the renovated café is managed by the architectural design company itself. The community did not sign a formal rental contract with the company. The monthly rent is paid to the community as social donation to the community fund.

The community fund is a recent policy innovation to allow more diversified funding resource into the development of local community. In recent years, the State has continued to strengthen

community building and to provide financial support, the main sources of which include daily office funding, project-based allocations and the purchase of services. However, since the funds basically come from the public treasury, the purposes, processes and methods of use are strictly regulated. And therefore, the capacity of the community is greatly restricted, often caught in overloaded administrative paperwork and procedures. Community Fund, as a platform of raising and using public funds, is one of the policy innovations of channelling resources to the grassroots level. Community funds come from social donations that are mainly social organizations, private institutions, and individuals. and are set up by urban and rural communities as special subjects in the fund management platform to realise the expression of community interests of the fund sponsors through the operation of special funds.

“It takes money to transform spaces, but we don't have enough, so we need to find ways to find funding in various ways. For example, in this project, the China Disabled Persons' Federation (Chengdu) invested in the project because it fitted into their programme. We designed a disability-friendly space and set up a project under the name of an accessible ‘Sunshine Home for Unity and Joy’”. (Interview local official)

Meanwhile, Chengdu has been vigorously promoting the purchase of services by the government from social organisations. From 2020 onwards, the proportion of the government's expenditure on social organisations in the purchase of services will be maintained at more than five per cent. At the same time, Chengdu is exploring the use of PPP mode in the construction of community integrated service facilities, the transformation of old urban areas, and the creation of distinctive neighbourhoods to introduce social capital to participate in governance and construction. Besides, the concept of community partners is also introduced to encourage participation of social agents in community governance and development. For example, some community partners, usually social organisations, specialise in providing services to the elderly,

including cleaning or medical care. The community provides the venue for the activities free of charge, and the partners only pay for the utilities water, electricity, heating cost, so that the residents receive a better public service. Currently, Chengdu Hi-tech Zone introduced urban renewal partners in terms of investment, construction, management and operation, revitalising unused space and introducing new industries.

While introducing socialised resources into the community, community funds provide a legitimate platform for social resources to participate in community affairs. The operational activities of the Fund involve social donors, community committees, residents, social organisations and the general public in various forms and to varying degrees in the day-to-day operation and development of community governance. By 2019 the city has established nearly 600 community funds with 23 million yuan, distributed across nine fund management platforms, including the Chengdu Charity Federation, the Sichuan Red Cross Foundation, the Chengdu Jinjiang District Social Organisation Development Foundation, the Chengdu Qionglai Community Development Foundation, and the Chengdu Wuhou Community Development Foundation.

After 2017, to further support the development of urban communities, Chengdu began to encourage urban and rural communities to create social enterprises on their own. 2018, Chengdu issued the Opinions on Further Cultivating Social Enterprises to Promote Community Development and Governance, and carried out the first batch of pilot work on the assessment and recognition of community-based social enterprises in the city. Since then, community social enterprises have developed rapidly, and a number of more professional enterprises and entrepreneurs have emerged. Community social enterprises in Chengdu refer to specific economic organisations established wholly by Residents' Committees as special legal persons for grassroots mass self-governance organisations in communities made up of populations

mainly engaged in non-agricultural population, which carry out operation and management, with the proceeds used to continuously feed the community and promote social governance. As of June 2020, there were 181 urban community social enterprises in Chengdu, including 131 social enterprises in agriculture-related communities and 50 in urban communities. The practice of social enterprises in Chengdu has, on the one hand, emphasised the support of higher-level Party organisations to community Party organisations in economic development, and on the other hand, re-aligned and re-emphasised the 'Party organisation - Residents' Committee' relationship at the community level, as the head of the Residents' Committee is required to act as the legal representative of the community social enterprise. On this basis, Chengdu has further developed the concept of “empowerment”, and has begun to explore the new concept of Party building as an enabler of community governance.

Where do the resources for community reform come from? In addition to inputs from the top, Chengdu draws on market operations to solve social problems by commercial means, using community enterprises as a platform for resource revitalisation, so that active participants in the community can contribute to community governance and participate in the distribution of the corresponding benefits. For example, through the form of “shares”, it is possible to revitalise community space, thus integrating urban community space with multiple property rights. “In the past, it was ‘doing things to get money’ but now it’s ‘doing things to make money’, social enterprises inject vitality and imagination into community development and governance.” (Interview jiang) In 2018, in Huangmenjie Community of Wuhou District, twenty-eight residents founded the first community company in Chengdu “the Sichuan Huangmen Yilin Resident Service Co.”, each contributing 10,000 to 20,000 yuan, with the Party Secretary of the community as the CEO. Chengdu is the first city in China to promote the development of social enterprises at the municipal level and to allow companies to use social enterprises as a business feature in their names. Today there are 73 certified community

enterprises in Chengdu, the highest number in the country.

The emergence of community social enterprises has further changed the organisational function of community neighbourhood committees, which are not only semi-political organisations, but also, in a sense, economic organisations. On the one hand, the community social enterprise realises individualised operation through the head of the neighbourhood committee acting as a legal representative and hiring professional managers; on the other hand, it does not aim at individual or collective profit-sharing but uses all its profits for the collective welfare of the community. For this reason, community neighbourhood committees that run community social enterprises are also “intermediary” in their economic functioning and can be regarded as “semi-economic organisations”. As some kind of economic organisation, the community needs to seek more economic sources on its own to raise income, for example, by seeking financial support from various funds, seeking donations from businesses or individuals, or conducting business themselves i.e. selling products through community platform companies.

Communities are encouraged by the municipality to brand their communities for better media exposure and economic development and set up their own “community party-building brand” (*shequ dangjian pinpai*). The Yudong community had a professional graphic designer redesign the logo, which became their brand identity (Fig.4-3).



Fig.4-3 New logo of Yudong community and new space for café, canteen and bookshop

4.2.2 Community as Intermediary

The community often assumes the role of an intermediary to mediate between the higher level of government (e.g. the district government) and the residents and businesses. The community also welcomes urban regeneration as it improves the overall physical environment and enhances the image and visibility of the whole community, which is good for future development. On the other hand, some informal elements that are difficult to manage can take this opportunity to be removed, such as some unlicensed, i.e. illegal, vendors. And this also starts the process of gentrification of the whole neighbourhood, with some low-end industries being squeezed out.

In the Yulin East Road renewal project, the Yudong community used funds and resources from the district-level urban renewal project for its own community. Negotiations were held with the street office and district governments to use part of the project's funds on upgrading the community's public square. And the community secretary has pulled together the project

designers to design the project locally.

In the case of a newly opened restaurant in the Yudong Urban Renewal Project, for example, the shops they leased were owned by a state-owned work-unit, but in many cases state-owned assets, including street-level shops, cannot be leased out (although this is not the case in most cases in practice), much less to another state-owned unit (in this case, the Wuhou District Platform Company). The community signs a lease contract with the landlord in the name of “borrowing” and pays rent to the landlord in the name of "management fees", and then hands the shop over to the property management company under the state-owned developer for rental.

Because urban renewal involves changes in the content of specific shops and the transformation of shop fronts, and because property rights in old urban areas are complex, it is difficult for district-level actors to grasp the local situation, and community help is needed to mediate and obtain the right to use these shops. For example, in the regeneration of Yulin East Road, the community negotiated with property owners, including institutions and private landlords. Especially for the institutions, several of the shops belonged to the National Yi Translation Bureau, and as institutions, they were more willing to give the right to use the building to the grassroots community, rather than to individuals or commercial property management companies. So the community signed a contract with the Bureau as the legal lessee to pay the rent every month, but the shops were actually handed over to the property management company of the urban renewal project to manage, i.e., they would find the end-users. The business owner, as the actual lessee, pays the rent to the property management company. It is important to note that there is no legal agreement between the property management company and the community or property owner, which creates a loophole.

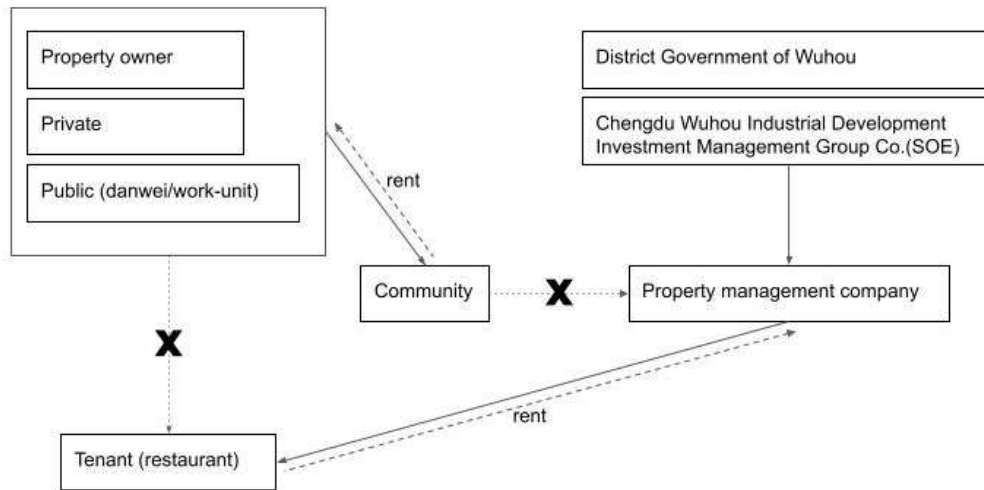


Fig. 4-4 community as intermediary in urban renewal project of Yulin East Road

In community-based projects, policy deficiencies or loopholes create many obstacles in the formation process, such as not being able to be rented out properly or freely handed over for use by others, and the community will be at risk, both financially and administratively. As a result, in the Yudong renewal project, the community and the design firm come to some sort of verbal agreement to manage and operate the space commercially in a de facto landlord-tenant relationship. The income generated, both from rent and from the sale of products and activities, is shared with the community, 50/50 or 40/60, and handed over in the form of a donation. With this in mind, it seems that the community is actually very flexible in dealing with similar procedural matters, as well as having a lot of room to manoeuvre and solve practical issues in a creative form. The higher levels of government have not explicitly disagreed with this, and have even allowed and encouraged the community to be flexible in its handling of such matters in a tacit and supportive manner.

As a matter of fact, this is also one of the channels for policy innovation, that is, direct interaction between the most basic government agencies and civil society and the flexibility to find some ad hoc or temporary solutions. If the approach proves to be workable, it can be learnt and copied by other communities. When this approach has been proven to be feasible through

repeated practice, it is likely to be formally endorsed by the higher levels of government and further extended to more districts.

Our space is very limited, to meet a variety of functions at the same time, for different users, single into a public thing is very that, so we can only go to do regeneration. At that time, when we started to renovate the public space in our community, this side was originally a utilities room, and then in order to start the renovation, we went to coordinate with 13 work-units, and gave them this shared space (strictly speaking, it belongs to the engineering infrastructure jointly used by state-owned enterprises and state-owned organisations) to the community, which is about 270 sq. ft. Therefore, the community has the right to re-adapt it as a non-commercial space. (Interview with community party secretary)

4.3 The Political Dimension

The rapid development and increasingly important role of communities is also a process of strengthening the Community Party of China's leadership at the neighbourhood level. As the front line of the urban governance system, neighbourhoods directly engage and interact with specific residents. Understanding the day-to-day practice and mechanism of community governance can help analyse how it contributes to the survival of the regime.

Community-based renewal projects provide opportunities and challenges for community governance. The community party secretary is a key person in the process who need to mobilise local residents to agree and participate into the renewal projects. Spatial level remediation is an important tool and part of urban governance, not only to remove informal spaces or illegal structures, but also to reprogramme spatial structures. In some neighbourhoods, the spatial reorganization and redesign is extensive and often affects the convenience and interests many

residents which lead to social conflicts.

4.3.1 Self-Governing Participatory Citizenship

In recent years, the renewal of urban physical space has increasingly enhanced the participation of residents. Although the agency of residents in decision making process are strengthened and a sense of community somehow formed, it is also an effective way to reinforce local governance and party leadership at the local level.

In last decade, Chengdu has been promoting the policy of renewal of old and dilapidated residential compounds. Since 2012, the Chengdu Municipal Civil Affairs Bureau has issued the Guiding Opinions on Strengthening the Self-governance of Community of Residential Yards, and the Notice on Strengthening the Work of Building Autonomous Organisations in Old Residential Area. In 2015, the Municipal Government issued the Opinions on Deepening and Improving the Mechanisms of Governance in Urban Communities. The renewal of physical environment is more and more in line with the governance of community in inner city.

Old and dilapidated residential compounds are mainly neighbourhoods where there are no property companies or work-units after the dissolution of work-unit system in the 1990s. And these places are viewed by the government as ‘governance void’ where the community needs to take on the role of day-to-day governance to manage the daily life of residents. These places are usually in need of renewal at the spatial-physical level, including upgrading of building facades, renovation of underground waterway systems, and other urban infrastructure improvement. However, previous renovations have often returned to a state of disrepair due to a lack of management, such as a property company in new gated residential communities. As a result, the government has required that these old neighbourhoods have a self-governing group of residents who are responsible for the maintenance of the infrastructure and the billing of the property, as part of the urban renewal process. The community plays a mobilising role

in this process, encouraging residents especially CCP party members to participate and form self-governing groups.

“Old residential yards come to be urban renewal involving a lot of infrastructural and environment improvements, such as, rainwater and sewage diversion or electricity lines to the ground. But because there is no resident subjectivity, it is unsustainable and goes back to the original state. We encourage self-governance of the residential compound. That is to say, if you want the government to invest 200,000 yuan to make environmental improvements to your neighbourhood, first set up a self-government group so that later this improvement can be managed in a sustainable way. First self-governance and then renovation. From 2012, the Chengdu civil affairs department has been doing this. And in 2016, the approach is merged into the practice of community building. All communities in Chengdu now are doing it, but some are good and some are bad.”

(Interview with deputy director of the Committee)

The financial investment of physical urban renewal is also part of the community fund. To use this fund, communities need to establish self-governance teams and even make proposals about how to use it. The government usually subsidises only a portion of the funds, while the rest has to be worked out by the self-governing groups themselves with the help of the community.

Earlier, in Chengdu, around 2010, there was a financial programme at the municipal level to give each community a public service fund, which has now been changed to a community security fund. This money can only be used for public services for the community. The most important thing is to mobilise residents to think about how to use. The residents themselves will propose what they want to do from the bottom up, and then we (the community) will even encourage them to use the money, but they need to crowdfund part of it themselves in order to use it. This is the concept of community

building that we have been working on in Chengdu for so many years, to mobilise our residents to grow up and find some motivation for what they want in their own lives, in their own daily lives, in their own inner being. (Interview with community party secretary)

In some community-based renewal projects following practice of community building, participatory design or participatory planning is widely used as a strategy to encourage participation of residents to form their subjectivity in the community. In the Yudong community, urban planners and architects come to the neighbourhood to discuss with local residents about what kinds of their ideal community space are through many collective meetings. In the process, residents gradually come to understand community space from the planner's point of view and connect their needs to community space planning. In Wuhou District and Chenghua District, community planners are slowly becoming an important part of community governance and development.

4.3.2 Power Relations in Everyday Community Governance

In the process of participatory planning, power and discourse are not equal between the different participants. The community secretary usually has the greatest say in collective meetings. The community secretary is also the chairperson of the residents' committee, which means that she or he is also the representative of the residents. Because of familiarity with government policies and meeting procedures, the community secretary usually guides the direction of the entire discussion. The community planners have their own expertise and background and is usually regarded as an authority by those involved. The inexperienced residents, on the other hand, although they have real life experience and maybe most familiar with the local neighborhood, do not have the expertise nor the training in deliberative skills, and their position is weak. Meanwhile, nowadays, the community party secretaries are more

and more become professionals in urban affairs as a result of intensive interactions and collaborations with a variety of professional urbanists such as architects, planners, journalists.

“A community secretary is not a simple person, no less than a civil servant, who has to understand urban planning, resident participation, CCP party building leadership, and who has to understand coordination and communication, and even now has to go and learn urban culture and the urban aesthetics”. (interview with community party secretary)

Residents also consists of different groups. During the last decades of rapid urbanisation, urban populations have become increasingly complex and diverse. Different social groups live in the same neighbourhoods but have different positions and interests. Some social groups are more vocal, while others are disadvantaged. In the process of participatory governance in the neighbourhoods, many party members and former retirees from state-owned organisations are more active and fight for their rights. Tenants from rural areas may never show up at any meetings. Moreover, community affairs and even the social welfare of the whole city are centered on the interests of officially registered household population, i.e., population with local hukou. These immigrants from outside the municipality are not considered as priorities. For example, in Fuqin community, the most powerful residents were the colleagues of the party secretary in previous work-unit in early years. They are also the party members. The other residents rarely have a say in the extensive spatial reorganization process.

4.4 The Cultural Dimension

The word “community” has undergone a turbulent journey in the Chinese context. The first generation of Chinese sociologists, represented by Fei Hsiao-tung, used the term “community” in the 1930s, but the term disappeared from public discourse in the early 1950s. The word

reappeared with the promotion of “community services” in the 1980s and “community building” in the 1990s. Much like in the UK and the US, the discussions of “community” revolved around local governance and social welfare, but these debates emerged largely in response to the decline of the planned economy system (Bray, 2006); and the definition of community is still based on location, rather than culture or identity. In recent years, the cultural dimension of community is becoming more important. In the system of urban governance, the local community focus more on the formation of collective identity and cultural identification.

4.4.1 From Community Construction to Community Building

The concept of community building (*shequ yingzao*) has become popular in Chengdu over the past few years. The term emphasises bottom-up and public participation more than previous top-down community construction. In the Chinese context, ‘building’ (*yingzao*) refers to the creation and cultivation of a community in a conscious and slow manner through a number of strategies and methods; it also emphasises a cultural or spiritual identity among residents. Often, community building requires the participation and guidance of external professionals to encourage residents to participate and to enhance their sense of identity and belonging to the community; and ultimately it stimulates the subjectivity of the residents so that they can actively participate in community affairs and continue to develop the community on their own in a sustainable way. It is a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems, and through which a sense of belonging and collective identity is formed.

“In terms of community building itself, one of the most important missions of community building implementers is local empowerment. Without local empowerment, it is only a kind of false prosperity caused by outsiders. Residents need to have some imagination for self-empowerment”. (Interview with community party secretary)

The concept is widely believed to have been borrowed from Japan and Taiwan. In fact, several influential figures and social organisations in the field of community building in Chengdu have a Japanese or Taiwanese educational background. For example, Big Fish Creation, a NGO founded in 2018 in Shanghai, is made up of architects, community building researchers, journalists who mainly studied in Japan. They have several community-based projects in Shanghai and also have collaboration with communities in Chengdu. And another key figure, who is the director of the Centre for Community Building in Chenghua District of Chengdu is from Taiwan who also actively participated in community practices in early years in Taiwan. The concept was adopted as the main approach to social work in Taiwan between the 1960s and the 1980s. In 1994, the Ministry of Culture put forward the policy of Community Building with a name “Overall Community Building” (*shequ zongti yingzao*), which sought to build up a sense of community, improve the living environment of the community, and establish the cultural characteristics of the community through the perspective of culture and art. After the 1990s, the promotion of community building no longer followed the original model of community development, but rather, it was a new mode of work, whose goal was not only to create a physical environment, but most importantly, to build up the sense of participation of community members in community affairs and enhance the aesthetic level of the living situation of the community residents. Therefore, the essence of the work of community building lies in the creation of a new society and culture, that is, the making of citizen, which contributes to the formation of a civil society. Similarly, in 2016, the Social Affair department in Chengdu also put forward such policy with the same name “Overall Community Building.

There is a kind of policy transfer here in East Asian societies that is believed to be more applicable to the Chinese society than western-centred theories and practices. Interviews with local officials and practitioners often mention that the indigenous nature of community and community building in Asian and Chinese society as opposed to ‘individualised’ western

societies – “*Chinese have a tradition of a greater sense of community and a higher identification with the collective, families or previous work-units*”. For the last few decades of modern China, people living in the cities had clear work-unit affiliations; and after the market-oriented reforms, especially after the disintegration of work-unit system in the 1990s, many people went from being work-unit workers to ‘individuals’. This transformation provides opportunities for people who are bound by traditional or work-unit collectives. At the same time, it contributes to feelings of insecurity, especially among those who feel uprooted and alienated in the midst of rapid social change. This forms a broad social and cultural context for people to seek new identities and communities.

In recent ten years, community building has become a trend, with different styles of ‘community’ emerging across the country: the participatory design of Liu Yuelai's community gardens and Big Fish's creation in Shanghai, the community culture of Luhu, Chengdu, and residents’ association in Cuizhuyuan, Nanjing – Cuizhuyuan is a middle-class residents’ association based on the interest of tennis initiated by Wu Nan who is an American-trained architect and now an expert in community building and he is quite influential in Chengdu. Besides, in China, the covid19 pandemic may well have fostered an understanding of the importance of community, either assistance or monitoring; atomised individuals cannot stand alone in the midst of a crisis. And the anthropologist Xiang Biao's idea of ‘rediscovering the nearby’ and ‘rebuilding the neighbourhood’ has resonated with young people and have been quite popular on local and national media. In 2022 and 2023, Luxe Social Innovation Centre of Luhu, a middle-class and upper-middle-class residential compound in Chengdu, held the ‘CCC Chengdu Community Conference’ with over seventy associations across the country participated. The translation of ‘community’ here is however not ‘*shequ*’ but ‘*shequn*’; while *qu* indicates locality *qun* means social group. Community based on ‘interests’ rather than ‘locality’ has also become a popular topic on local media.

4.4.2 The Imagined Urban Community

Imaginary is an important factor in this popular trend of community building. People imagine what the ideal urban community should look like. The community enthusiasts revisited the centuries-old concepts of Ferdinand Tonnies - *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* - and emphasize that *Gemeinschaft*/community should be translated into Chinese as ‘*gongtongti*’ (gong-shared, tong-same, ti-group) instead of ‘*shequ*’, as the former emphasises more on shared identity and sense of belonging. In their imagination, people living in a neighbourhood share a collective identity that can make meaningful connections, despite their age, gender, occupation, educational background, income level, etc. However, the question we need ask here is – whose imagination? Or whose imagined community? This imaginary exists more in the minds of those in power, such as city officials, planners, architects, social workers, or some enthusiastic middle-class community builders.

In the renewal project “In the Alley”, the name itself signals the imagined community life by the grassroots bureaucrat and architects. The space assembles different kinds of residents and daily encounters and social life can happen naturally.

“The name of this new space is “In the Alley”, a name I chose. I think the name actually represents a kind of life, that is, the daily life of our common people, meeting and socialising in the alleys. And it’s not only for elderly residents normally we have in the community. Young people can come here and connect with community as an everyday thing. I think the concept of ‘alley’ is a little bit broader than park, that is, it is in our daily life and around us; parks are still thought to be a leisure to be withdrawn from the daily life.” (interview with party secretary)

“The neighbourhoods I like can often be found in the old part of some cities. There, people come and go, showing a mix of the old and the new.” (interview with architect)

“I think the process of community building is also the process of reconstructing social relations.”(interview with social worker at local social organization)

Place, or place-making is one important factor in the practice of community building. The redesign and planning of space is considered necessary to host new social life and social practices. Many community spaces, including administrative office - often called “Community Party-Mass Service Centres” - and public spaces like small squares were not built with participatory community life as a necessary function. There was also no standardised design for community spaces when they were built 20 or 30 years ago. Some of the community spaces, especially in the outskirts of the city, are relatively large, and some of the spaces have since been used for residential activities. In addition, there are community spaces where some of the buildings themselves are ‘illegal structures’, i.e. not on the official planning map - therefore, redesigning the space is a way to regularise these buildings. More importantly, redesigning spaces is also necessary for the community to re-establish its identity and brand. Interviews with residents show that they thought the newly-designed community space being “cleaner and more beautiful”.

“I myself have been to Japan, Hong Kong and Germany to study their community spaces before I started the project. I think a semi-open space is more meaningful, a space where everyone can come in, without being specially invited, and can use it as they like”. (Interview with community party secretary)

As a vehicle for carrying out new forms of community life and governance, spatial planning and design require the intervention of professionals. Both Wuhou District and Chenghua District in Chengdu have implemented a policy of community planners. A system of community planners is built in Chenghua district - a group of over 100 experts are assembled to advice on community development.

“The community planners are recruited by Street Office as consultants for the local development of communities. They are mostly architects, urban planners and most of them are professors at universities. In Chenghua district, we have experts from Tsinghua University, Tongji University, Sichuan University, etc.” (Interview with social worker at Chengdu Tianfu Social Innovation Centre)

“I think it is the first time in China that the community and the street office jointly initiated the recruitment of professional planners and designers to come into the community. We initially sent out an open call for to the whole of China and even abroad. Some answered for it. For example, some famous architects in China and even teachers from the University of Tokyo and Chiba University in Japan are very willing to become our community planning consultants” (interview with local official).

Often these professionals work with local communities by conducting short-term workshops. Some of the experts, who are university professors themselves, will lead their students to the community for a short period of time to conduct research and meet with the residents in the form of participatory design. Residents are usually recruited by the community, and many of them are active members of the local community as representatives of the residents.

“In 2017, a Japanese professor brought a group of students together to do a week-long community planning session. One of the focuses was that we imagined what this plaza meant to the residents of our community, and then we also wanted the space to reflect that meaning. When the experts come, they discuss with the ordinary residents, and then in this process we get to know each other. And we, the local residents, as the main body, we have to have some positive imaginations and consultations about our own neighbourhood, and then we have to make it better. (interview with community party secretary)

Conclusions and Reflections

Urbanisation in China is a recent phenomenon. Between the 1950s and the 1980s, China's industrialisation was a process without urbanisation. It was only after the reform and opening up that urbanisation in the true sense of the word and the emergence of so-called modern metropolises began. The urban population has become complex and diverse, and urban space and culture are changing rapidly. Meanwhile, with the deepen process of market-oriented reforms in all the spheres, market rules have become the basic logic and behavioural driver of social life. The restructuring of State-owned enterprises has encouraged more laid-off workers to leave the system and become self-supporting individual labourers who are no longer a burden to society. And the community is also part of this trend. There is a convergence of civil society and party-state on the turn to community. On one hand, rapid urbanisation present new challenges for the governance and community can be units of governance; on the other hand, city dwellers are just freed from work-units experiencing ideological rupture and the idea of community seems to be a resort in the mist of crisis.

CHAPTER 5.

Authenticity:

City Branding, Consumption, and the Making of Middle-Class City

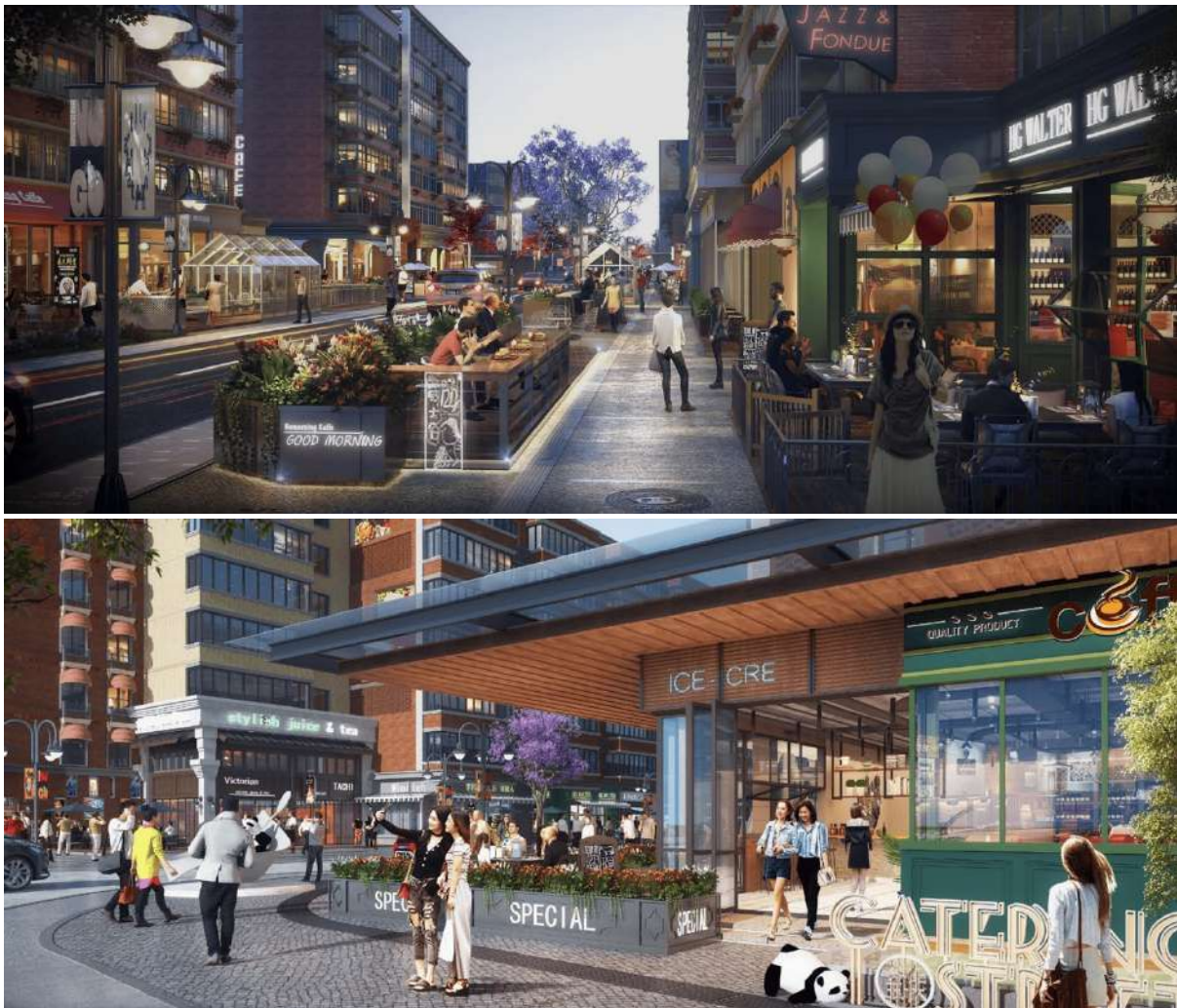


Fig. 5-1 Selected rendering images of Case A Yulin renewal project (Yulin East Street) produced by the Sichuan Architectural Design and Research Institute Co.,Ltd

As a city of culture and tourism, Chengdu always emphasizes city branding and the government is very keen on investing in the promotion of city image. In recent years, the rise of social media and “wang-hong economy” (internet celebrity economy or influencer economy) has become a key factor in the acceleration of urban regeneration. Chengdu has been widely recognized as a “wang-hong” city and has been very popular on social media with feeds on food, fashion, travel, lifestyle, etc. Such increasing social exchange and circulation of image and sign have significant effects on the spatial production in the city. Many renewal projects are more and more visually oriented with similar alternative retailing business and hipster atmosphere which meets the taste and lifestyle of the new middle class. Also, cultural and creative industry has always been an important part of the strategy of its city branding. In recent years, one of the directions of development has been to give full play to the role of cultural and creative industries in urban renewal or the transformation of old neighbourhoods.

In this chapter, I organise the discussion mainly based on data collected on two cases: Case A Yulin and Case D Mengzhuiwan, each has a different path of neighbourhood renewal by mobilising local culture and create authenticity or narratives of authenticity. In collaboration with the local government, along with entrepreneurial newcomers, the real estate developer repackaged the local culture, real or invented, as a strategy to rebrand the local neighbourhood identity and deliver upscale growth. The regenerated areas are now full of diverse boutiques, cafés, bistros, cocktail bars catering to the new urban middle class. On the face of it, the regenerated area demonstrates a highly mixed diversity with authentic local vibes. However, such diversity is intentionally channelled by the developer and fuelled by the media, especially social media and influencer marketing, and consumers’ tastes. It shows a homogenizing process although build upon “authenticity” as cultural difference itself being mass produced.

I would argue that the wide-ranging neighbourhood renewal projects happening across the city

is a process to re-organise the form and style of physical space in line with the new urban middle class and their tastes, lifestyle, consumption practices, and imagination for city. It is a mutually-construct process that not only middle class have effects on the making of urban space but also the cultural landscape of the city shapes the dispositions of the middle class. For the last few decades, the state aims to develop economy, elevate income level, increase property ownership and that to enlarge the middle-class population. This societal transformation is not only socioeconomic but also symbolic by bring more citizen into this common cultural order reflecting on lifestyle and consumption.

The chapter includes four parts. First, the public image and city branding of Chengdu in relation to the spatial production of authenticity; second, the city as a contested space with competing narratives; third, the urban renewal projects as a spatial manifestation of the broader socioeconomic transformation of the Chinese society to become a middle-class society. Forth, conclusion and reflection.

5.1 Reproducing Authenticity: Chengdu as A Beautiful, Creative, and Everyday City

Authenticity is a keyword recurrently appears in Sharon Zukin's work on New York City when she discusses its urban renewal, gentrification and the change of the city's cultural geography that how the city's authenticity is produced, interpreted, and deployed in its upscaling redevelopment process (2009; 2008; 2011). Being "authentic" means being genuine, resembling an original, made or done in the traditional or original way. In cultural sociology, authenticity refers to a variety of things such as originality, sincerity, truthfulness, naturalness, genuineness, or realness, as well as the feeling and practice of being true to one's self or others (Vannini & Williams, 2016). And the staging of authenticity as an integral part of the culture production process (Grazia, 2018).

When we say a city or a neighbourhood being authentic, it means that it has a distinctive

character and unique identity without standardization or homogeneity; and in many cases it also means the place is true to history or maintains its historical culture and tradition, in this case, it is almost equivalent to have a historical urban identity and an authentic urban identity. This also reflects why authenticity is an important issue regarding heritage conservation and its renewal projects and tourism development – whether the place’s authenticity being preserved or exploited. Creating authenticity narratives by mobilising culture are widely used as a strategy to brand urban places (Rius Ulldemolins, 2014). However, to different social groups, the origin and identity of a place can be very different. Therefore, authenticity of a place is always debated, and different actors are eager to claim it. Among the top-down renewal projects, state and media use authenticity to implement renewal projects while longtime residents use authenticity to against it. If authenticity attributes to history, the question is at what point in time? Or more precisely, which history and whose history? Thus the concept of authenticity is also related to the notion of temporality.

A French historian, Fernand Braudel, in his influential work on *La Méditerranée*, emphasizes the idea of plural temporality, i.e., *la pluralité du temps*, that multiple threads of time simultaneously exist and intertwined in the current social reality – “these social times, the multiple and contradictory temporalities of human life, are not only the substance of the past but also the fabric of the social life in the present time” (1958:726). The time of today is composed simultaneously of the time of yesterday, of the day before yesterday, and of bygone days. The “accumulative texture” (Suttles, 1984:284) is evident, especially in cities with a long history or historic areas in a city, when we look into local culture and “place difference”, i.e., how an urban area produces a particular character compared to another (Molotch, Freudenburg, & Paulsen, 2000). The complex conjuncture of multiple histories - the pre-modern time, the socialist time, and the post-reform time - produced by the rapid transformation and ruptures in Chinese society is fundamental to understand today’s urban spaces and urban processes in the

historic inner city. One study of Beijing's historic area specifically highlights the concept of "authenticity" and examines how the flawed conceptualisation of authenticity influenced by the creative and tourism industry affected the historicity of the built environment and more importantly displaced the local communities and their social life. The study also points out such problematic heritage conservation is part of the strategy adopted by the state in promoting Beijing's global city branding (Martínez, 2016). Nonetheless, what if there is almost new area with no longtime history and/or perpetually have new beginnings? The Case Yulin is an example that gradually built and rebuilt from the 1980s to the 2010s. What sources can narrative of authenticity obtain from?

The question of authenticity raises another more general question that why different places, no matter a city or a neighbourhood, have different local character, in other words, cultural distinctiveness? And in what kinds of way such distinctive character can be produced, manufactured, or interpreted? The enduring and changing social and cultural geography of Chengdu is relevant to the discussion.

5.1.2 The City Image and Cultural Geography of Chengdu

The image of the city of Chengdu has been known as a city of liveability, leisurely life, food culture, inclusive atmosphere – for which it is also known for its queer culture. In late nineties a very popular national media named Chengdu as the "Fourth City" in China following the so-called first-tier cities, i.e., Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou (NewWeekly, 2000), although there are many sceptics. During the two decades from 1998 to 2018, the media has grown a fond of the city, and it has been awarded many titles such as "Leisure Capital", "China's Happiest City", "Gourmet Capital", the Most Liveable City among many others. In recent years, the city worked with the media to promote the city and publicizes itself as the "new first-tier city" (YiCai, 2024). Chengdu has also become one of the preferred cities for the trend of

“fleeing from the big cities” in recent years, a social phenomenon among white-collar workers since the last decade, that is, fleeing from Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen in the context of high housing prices, high workload and pressure, and high cost of living, etc. Such trend is believed to contribute to the population decrease happened first-time in all first-tier cities in 2022, provided with the hukou-related population control policy in big cities and continuously declining fertility rate in China. Amidst all these positive comments there are also sceptics. Especially in recent years, Chengdu has been widely recognized as a “wang-hong” city – wang-hong is equivalent to internet celebrity or social media influencer who develop fame and popularity on the Internet particularly social media such as Little Red Book (similar to Instagram), TikTok, WeChat in China. The effects of social media nowadays on popular culture and public life are influential across different fields of cultural consumption in lifestyle, travel, food, music, exhibition, etc.

Like any other cities, Chengdu has its own cultural geography with different areas of the city having different qualities and reputations. Such landscape has certain historical basis but substantially a recent development owing to the city-building and rebuilding process in the last few decades specifically from the 1980s. There is a local saying mentioned by many interviewees that *‘the north is poor, and the south is rich; the west is noble, and the east is messy’*. Similar to Beijing, in the Qing Dynasty, the Manchu officials reside in the west gate of the imperial city whose legacy are grand courtyards along paralleled alleys. Many government apparatus offices are located nearby. The area is now classified as a historic and cultural conservation area yet have become a signature touristic area since the 2000s. This is also Case B Shaocheng is located. During the planned economy time, the east part of the city is dedicated to industrial use and many heavy industries and factories are located there, where later is subject to wholesales urban redevelopment in the 1990s and 2000s and neighbourhood in recent decade. Case D Mengzhuiwan is located in the east. As for the south area where Case A Yulin is located

transformed from virtually farmland to dense residential area since late 1980s and 1990s when real estate development and housing market started to grow. Many gated residential buildings are built with mostly six to seven floors. Many work-units including offices and workers locate here. Later in the 2000s more and more affluent people moved into the area for private apartments. And Case C Fuqin is located in the north where generally neglected in the last few decades as the city of Chengdu heavily invest on the south part even the southern area that forty kilometres away from city centre is now well developed with dense population and high-rise buildings. Over the past three decades, the city has focussed on the development in the south by the establishment of the High-Tech Zone in the 1991 and the most recent Tianfu New Area in 2014. Ten years ago even in the most prosperous south, beyond the third ring road, it was a desolate suburb, whereas today it is densely built up even twenty kilometres from the city centre.

Case A Yulin

Walking around the neighbourhood, with hipster cafes everywhere, it is rather difficult to imagine that just five years ago there were only two cafes there. Not only café, but art galleries, boutiques, bistros, independent bookshops, and more and more artist workshops are popping up all over the place that has made the neighbourhood known for its hipster atmosphere and creative culture. The image of Yulin as widely articulated in media has been known as a place where artists, writers, poets and architects live. Its social diversity runs along with its small-town alike attributes such as slower pace, neighbourly interactions, lack of sophistication. The everyday life in the neighbourhood resembles small-town life with vibrant social life on the streets and other public spaces.



Fig. 5-2 Street life in Yulin Neighbourhood (photos taken in 2016)

According to the official archive of the Yulin area by Chengdu Wuhou District Local Records Compilation Committee (2021), this area was originally Yulin fields, which had been farmland before the Reform and Opening-Up, and belonged to the Desheng Commune of the Yulin Production Brigade. In the 1980s, a number of state-owned work-units, such as Chengdu Radio Factory No.1, Civil Aviation Air Traffic Control Bureau, and Thirty Institute of the Ministry of Electronics Industry, constructed staff dormitories here – usually few six-storey buildings forming one small residential yard, and new neighbourhoods sprang up in patches. Yulin neighbourhood, the earliest residential area in Chengdu, start to take shape. Over the next two

decades of urbanisation and densification, thanks to the rapid development of the real estate market, this area came to represent the urban chapter of the city. The neighbourhood experiences renewal almost since its inception. High-rise residence starts to grow since 2000s by replacing low-rise buildings. The latest round of renewal starts in 2017 characterised by culture-led small-scaled regeneration without demolition or displacement.

Case C Mengzhuiwan

Mengzhuwan is a decaying waterfront post-industrial inner-city area that is now being transformed into a trendy leisure, consumption, and touristic urban space through culture-led regeneration interventions based on new forms of public and private partnership, i.e., “EPC+O” (Engineering, Procurement, Construction, and Operation). Previously the private real estate developer is only responsible for the first three parts but now they take charge the operation part after the construction. In the case C, the developer obtains the spaces through the government, produce design, implement, attract and select business, and manage day-to-day activities of the regenerated area. Before renovation, the area is similar to Yulin neighbourhood. The street was full of tea houses and small shops catering for the daily lives of the neighbourhood.



Fig. 5-4: Case C Mengzhuiwan: Before Renewal in 2018

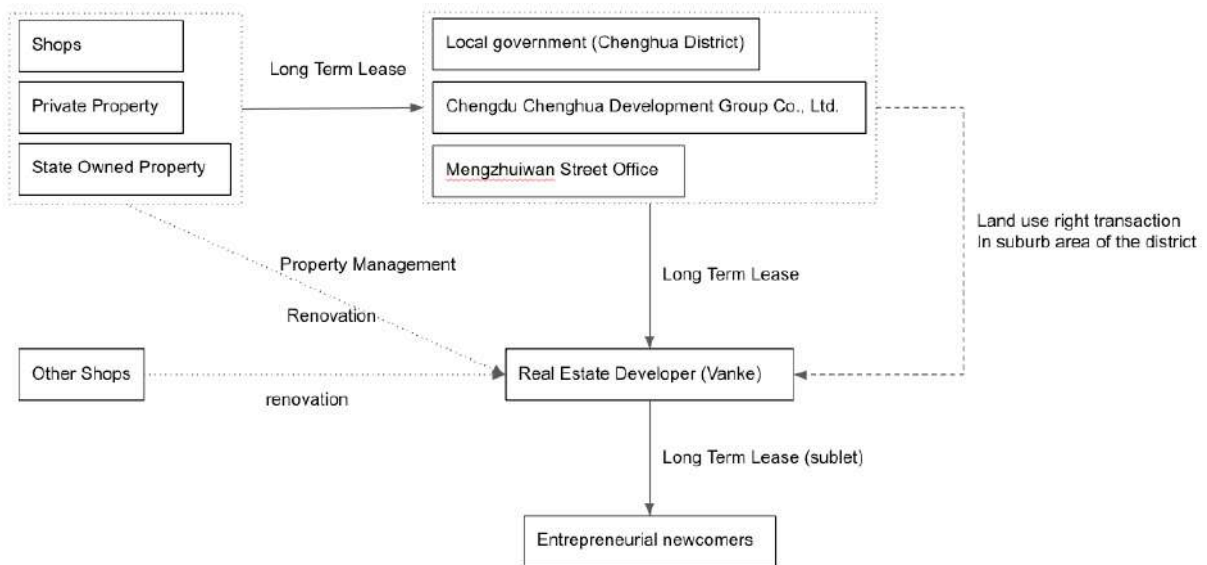


Fig.5-3 Case C Mengzhuiwan renewal project implementation process

5.1.2 Social Media and Spatial Production: The Role of Image

Social media has become a stage for the expression and affirmation of social status (Boy and Uitermark, 2023) How the reality – city streets, material objects, social relations, experiences,

and so on – are represented reflects on how we see and show ourselves. Our very images of our own body, our own selves, our own personal self-worth it mediated by the omnipresent images of mass culture (Featherstone, 1982). The ubiquitousness of social media in today's consumer society reinforced what Marxist scholars have been critique for a long time – commodity fetishism. The images and videos circulated on social media also create consumer demands and assume a cultural legitimating force to reproduce the consumer society (Marcuse, 1964); and it constantly fuel people's desire for having, no matter it is a plate of food, a piece of clothes, or a journey. People share them on social media and turn into images on social media and viewed by others. Debord (1970) call it spectacle, a social relationship between people mediated by images.

Social media such as Instagram and TikTok has grown tremendously in recent years. Especially among the young population, social media is intertwined with daily life in a more profound way. Compared to facebook or whatsapp that social networking based on real personal social network, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube can reach a much broader audiences; everyone can become content creator or influencer when they successfully attract wide attention and increase their number of followers. Influencers have the power to influence buying habits in cultural fields such as fashion, lifestyle, travel, gaming, etc which makes influencer marketing has becoming more and more important.

Such phenomenon is more so in China especially with the rapid growth of e-commerce. Similar online channels are many such as Xiaohongshu (also known as RED), Douyin (TikTok), Bilibili (YouTube). The “wang-hong economy” has become a key factor in local economy development. Wang-hong economy is a type of digital economy based on influencer marketing on social media by gathering a large number of attention and turning popularity into purchasing power. Wanghong effects not only impact lifestyle or consumption habits but have real effects

on the spatial production in urban renewal projects. Local government and real estate developers have made it an important criterion whether the effect of the renewal will have popular on social media or not. ‘Check-in’ photo spots have become a must-have element in regeneration projects. Such photo-taking spots are usually specially designed visually striking scenes with sculptures, motion images, or interactive installations, similar to the effects of landmarks of tourist attraction sites. Many renewal projects go beyond scattered specific spots, but redesign the whole neighbourhood from the perspective of a photo backdrop, turning the whole street into a Disneyland-like existence.

As a city of culture and tourism, Chengdu always emphasizes city branding and the government is very keen on investing in the promotion of city image. Chengdu has been widely recognized as a “wanghong” city and has been very popular on social media with feeds on food, fashion, travel, lifestyle, etc. Such increasing social exchange and circulation of image and sign have significant effects on the spatial production in the city. Many renewal projects are more and more visually oriented with similar retailing business and hipster atmosphere which meets the taste and lifestyle of the new middle class. Such phenomenon is also fuelled by real estate developers to produce a simulation of reality, a certain kind of superficial aesthetic spaces with a loss of authenticity. In a way, many urban neighbourhoods even the city itself have become what Lefebvre called “space of representation” (1991).

“Nowadays, people are keen on checking-in photos and sharing them on social media. This will call in more ‘traffic’, not only online but also offline, in a pattern of mutual influence. If it gets noticed on social media and more people come and spend their money here, the businesses will do better and the economy of the area will be better. The government, the merchants, and our operators will be happy about it. Chengdu is a good city for that.” (Interview)

The power of social media, or specifically the power of wanghong, affects real life, and the approach of urban renewal. These decision makers, governments or developers, justify their visually-oriented strategies by saying that they did not create the wanghong neighbourhoods, but that social media made these neighbourhoods being wanghong. Such ‘successful’ cases were copied by more other practitioners, the media made a big deal out of it, and the local governments are eager for economic development, so that a trend of similar wanghong urban renewal projects emerged in many cities.

“The “wanghong business” is only a feature of some of our urban renewal projects. Being popular on the Internet is the result, not our original intent, nor is it the goal of spatial production. Architectural superficialism (meaning only renovating building facades) is a thing of the past, people now are here for the consumption content. Wanghong is a daily life in the internet age, and has nothing to do with urban renewal. Every urban renewal project has different genes, mechanisms, dynamics, and strategies, and probably only the management team can replicate it, so it can't be McDonaldized.”
(Interview)

‘Scene’ is another key word in the recent policymaking, with the slogan of making a good life, to create consumption scenes, community scenes, park scenes, etc. The government regards ‘scene creation’ as a way to achieve modern urban development and a materialized space that meets the needs of a better life.

Visual appeal remains an important marker for measuring the efficacy of renewal projects. The design of every shop in the renewal area should be approved by the management team. No matter how subjective and constructed it may be, aesthetics has real effects on the city making process in many places. For example, as suggested in the book *Ruled by Aesthetics*, the world-

class city imagination and aesthetic norms set visual criteria on how the city of Delhi should look like and it became a powerful motivating force to build a slum-free city (Ghertner, 2015).

“Each store one has a different content niche, which communicates and connects to a different clientele that recognizes the place, it’s more of a shared cultural identity.”

(Interview)

Many local communities are eager to create artistic and beautiful space in community to attract young people and exposure on social media.

“When we communicated with the designers about the design programme, we hoped that the space was to have a sense of aesthetics, a space of beauty, something artistic.

We have also been doing art inside the community to shape the community, using art to shape, educate and mobilise people so that they can be good and kind.” (Interview)

5.1.3 Manufactured Diversity and Imagined Social Mix

Filled with a wide variety of social groups, customers of different classes, workers in various professions and all kinds of retail businesses are how the general public perceives Chengdu – at least in the discourse communicated towards the public, as an inclusive, everyday city accessible to everyone. This is believed to be an essential part of the city’s authenticity. In Case C, the local government and the real estate developer purposefully kept certain number of original shops mainly tea houses and even an adjacent narrow alley known for its messy environment and local street foods is maintained as an element to be integrated into the authentic narrative about the renewal project. Which shops are worthy remaining is decided by the management team and there are selection criteria to be meet. For example, the shop front, signage and interior design must be changed and upgraded to not be out of tune of the newcoming café or bistros. There is a designer team for such needs. And the cost of the

upgrading is subsidized by the local government through the developer management team. However, the shop owners cannot update their shop appearance at their will, but it must reflect its authentic character.

“We value the consistency of the tone, rather than to control their specific style; the most important thing is that its “clothes” fit its “content”. So, we sometimes update some existing business, the very core point is that we control the design to match the business of this shop. If the shop sells a bowl of noodles for 10 yuan, we will design a shop sign that looks like it sells noodles for 10 yuan, of course with a better design, but we won't be making a shop sign that looks like it sells a bowl of noodles for 100 yuan, because it doesn't match. Customers won't buy it. Likewise, we won't allow the shop design of a convenient store looks a fine dining restaurant. But the business owners do not necessarily understand this but want something they think beautiful or fancy.”

(Interview)

For many middle-class consumers - and many staff of the local government and developer management team also belong to this group as did the real estate professionals I interviewed - they are no longer satisfied with some kind of superficial upgrading programme upon such as environment or building façade, rather, they expect a more “real” and organic consumption experience that includes this seemingly mixed streets with different levels and types of shops. This seemingly random and mixed but highly regulated and carefully produced diversity constitutes the image and identity they seek in line with their imagination of urban experience in Chengdu.

The other issue is about distinctions in taste. As Bourdieu argued that taste is socially produced and marked the distinction between different social classes. In everyday life, people are constantly choosing between what they consider beautiful, tacky, fashionable or ugly. The

different aesthetic choices people make are distinctions, in opposition to choices made by other classes; this categorisation marks and maintains the concealment of the roots of social inequality (1984; 2010). Merchants who are not professionally trained in design have a different standard of beauty than architects. This led to a disagreement between the two sides about the design of the shop. And designers consider their taste above the merchants and consider their taste as tacky and vulgar. These designers who think they have better taste are also more empowered to control the aesthetic presentation of the renewal projects; while the local business owners must compromise, although they themselves think their idea about beauty is more authentic in line with the city culture of Chengdu.



Fig. 5-4 Case C Mengzhuiwan: after renewal

Geographical proximity does not mean that different social groups will interact. The original shop owners and the newcomers as well as their own customers sit side by side but they rarely have social interaction. The main customer base of the original shop was local residents mainly elderly retirees. The new shops such as cafes, restaurants, bars and bakeries are aimed at the young middle class throughout the city – they visit and consume and taking photos with their food and drink; and more than often they post feeds with pictures of the busy street, grandpa

drinking tea wearing their slippers, and the two-square-meter barber shop in the background – this shop is specifically kept there because it basically a symbol of authentic Chengdu life (fig.5-5). The local residents and shops produce an authentic vibe for the customers who are consuming an idea of authenticity (Zukin, 2008). Such scenario is similar to Lloyd’s description of the neo-bohemia in post-industrial city (2006) – “sharing the streets with working-class and non-white residents, even if personal interaction remains superficial is part of their image of an authentic urban experience.”



Fig.5-5 Barber shop

But not all renewal projects can meet the middle-class customers’ needs for authenticity despite their idea of authenticity is usually manipulated, especially when such cultural difference is mass produced (Smith, 1996). In another neighbourhood in the south, Huaxiba, the same real estate developer of Case C attempted to renew the area using the same strategy, at the invitation of and in collaboration the local district government. The developer was expected to deliver similar authentic scenes characterised with diversity and social mix. To do so, they introduced

many same stores, for example, a café in Case C opened their second branch here with expectation to attract similar customers. The developer also re-designed and upgraded some selected existing shops. However the two neighbourhoods are not identical in terms of location, history, and neighbourhood vibes. Huaxiba is a historic conservation area that is known for its first western medical school founded in Republican China. The university and hospitals are still located there. Without considering the local culture, the project is meant to fail with declining business and therefore the local government has decided not to continue the collaboration. Other disappointing renewal project can be found in a main street in Case A Yulin – the Yulin East Road. Once again, the local government wish to copy the Case C model; however, the local platform company only managed to collect a handful of shops for the property management company to sublet who also fail to attract similar hipster shops like Case C. Due to a lack of time and resources, the designer team redesigned all the shop fronts of the entire street quickly and extensively at the request of the local government. Whilst each shop looks different, it shows a more homogenised style than Case C, being criticized as a ‘plastic-alike’ mass-produced fake diversity. These two projects are considered as lack of authenticity as the renewal strategy and new image have no relevance of the original character of the neighborhood and at the same time failed to create a new beginning – the other source for authenticity – but merely a mindless replica of renewal projects somewhere else.

5.2 Which Authenticity and Whose City?

5.2.1 Urban Experience vs. Everyday Experience

In today's cities, the urban experience and the everyday experience are at odds with each other. Everyday experience is built upon familiarity, continuity and a gradual accumulation of daily practices and routines. Whereas urban experience is about diversity, density, novelty and anonymity. Urban scholars have insightfully pointed out the long-lasting small-town mentality

in cities ever since Georg Simmel's influential work on *The Metropolis and Mental Life* (1903; 1950). Robert Park written in the 1920s that the United States was colonized by villages and cities might be composed of different villages; so did Herbert Gans' account on village in the city or urban village (1982). Immigrants families are predominant by kinship and closed social networks forming a tight community. Even later on, people's appeal to community or small-town life never disappear. Just as in Sharon Zukin's analysis of transforming Brooklyn, artists and writers are attracted by the unneighborly, slow-paced, lack of sophistication small-town life there because it resembles the hometown they leave behind. Similar phenomenon happened in Chengdu – artists and intellectuals came to the Yulin neighborhood for its small-town-alike atmosphere, and they can also socialize with a group of like-minded neighbors and form their own cultural community. As the previous chapter discussed, it is not uncanny that there is a convergence forged by both top-down and bottom-up forces of turning to 'community'. As the unstable 'stranger society' befalls so fast and extensive, the state face challenges to govern and the people must adjust to a new mindset to reidentify themselves and others. 'community' offers a tool to navigate in a transitional society.

In the imagination of many, the city is a place full of all kinds of people and things, new and exciting places and experiences, unpredictable and everchanging. It is not a place to be 'lived' but a place to be 'read'. Mobility enables us to see our own city from an outside perspective; in a sense, we become tourists in our own city. And the tourist gaze (Urry, 1992) not only apply for tourism industry but the everyday living experiences of many city dwellers. This 'alienated' view affects the production of urban spaces, physically and socially.

The city of Chengdu has been redefined as a 24-hour sleepless city where nightlife economy thrive. Among the many photos and renderings of renewal projects, there are far more scenes at night than during the daytime, full of neon lights and nightlife sights such as drinking in bars

or eating hot-pot on the street. Chengdu's city image is represented by its nightlife, a 24-hour city that gives everyone a non-stop 'flowing feast'. As a tourist city, a large number of tourists come here every year wanting to have this sleepless nightlife experience. The locals are also increasingly internalising this lifestyle, even if it has only been this way for 20 or 30 years. The opening of more nightlife venues has also changed people's habits and ideas of urban life. And the imaginary of the urban lifestyle is still dominated by western city life, full of cafes, bakeries, western-style restaurants. With the full of stores, urban experience has been redefined as a consumption experience. In several interviews with professional urbanists, the book of The Experience Economy by Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore as well as the Scenescape by Daniel Aaron Silver and Terry Nichols Clark were mentioned in discussion of the creation of consumption scene and experience.



Fig.5-6 Comparison between original street and rendering images



Fig. 5-7: China Urban Organic Regeneration and Consumption Scenario Creation Conference in Chengdu 2021

5.2.2 Whose Imaginary and Whose Neighbourhood

Authenticity relates to historical origin and the enduring culture of a place. However, a place can have different versions of its history. Last few decades have witnessed Chinese society becomes rapidly transformed, diversified, and fragmented. And the urban and cultural landscape of the city also constantly changing and multiple processes is at work. Urbanization and re-urbanization happen at the same time. In Chengdu, many so-called inner city urban areas only came to exist from the late 1980s such as Case A Yulin. Before the 1980s, it was purely farmland and only peasants live scattered in this area. The first step of urbanization process started with building collective residential buildings for the peasants who are also workers of production team in rural area during the planned economy time (1950s-1970s). In 1981 eighteen collective dwellings are built with two-storey houses built in red brick – this area is later officially named Yulin Second Lane in 1988 which is the site of the renewal project as well as my ethnographic research is located at (Chapter 6). Later as the urbanization continues, more buildings are built and many work-units and their workers along with their family

members moved into the area. Later private housing market grows fast, more people moved into the area for their first private apartment – they were relatively affluent social class at the time given the housing price. In 2000s, some parts of the area were subject to wholesales demolition and property-led redevelopment; many high-rise residences are built. And more recently, neighborhood regeneration started. There were rounds of population change and spatial restructuring. Today this area in total has over 190,000 residents with 120,000 local residents with hukou.

While the area has an history of urbanization and a wide variety of groups that have come to the area at different times and settled in different parts of the area, the dominant narrative of the origin of the area, however, is about a cluster of artists, poets, and writers who are fond of the open floor plan of the new private apartment design, the scale of the streets, the neighbourly atmosphere, the variety of leisure, and the rich nightlife. This narrative has been trumpeted by the media and gained power in official discourse and thus turned into the definite measure of the authenticity of this neighbourhood. The renewal projects constantly use this rhetoric to displace existing ‘low-end’ retailing business such as hardware shops, shoe repair shop, laundromat, etc and introduce more stylish, tasteful and cultured business to reclaim the neighbourhood. These cultural elites are only very small group of residents in this area - and almost all of them have moved elsewhere, many other common people with various social backgrounds are neglected in this narrative, not even mention the marginal residents such as the farmers who live in public housing or rural migrants who can only afford a room with a 50-euro monthly rent. As Zukin puts it, authenticity is a cultural form of power over space and eventually squeeze out the working class out of the original area (2009). Chinese cities are so new that the neighbourhoods that represent the city’s urban culture are only about twenty to forty years old – in this way, the so-called “old” residents do not have much moral superiority over the current newcomers to claim the urban space. It is not about the real origin – who settled

in earliest, but which origin – who can represent the authentic character of the neighbourhood. It is a selection process to decide to whom this neighborhood serve and belong to. Of course, mass displacement is a thing of the past; now the local state and developers only introduce a gentrification starting point and let the market does the rest.

“We are not nostalgic but full of all kinds of feelings. The city changes so fast and so does our life. But in any case, we want a better life and a better house to live.” (resident in Yulin Second Lane, Interview)

Increasing urban renewal provoked many criticism and at the same time a widespread nostalgic feeling about the loss of the authentic neighbourhood. However, nostalgia is not always a shared sentiment. While historic preservationists and community activists are lamenting the loss of old streets, residents and traditional way of life, and the consequent loss of their distinctive identity; residents who are living and working in these neighbourhoods may have a different view. Many of them are not born there and neither do they live in the same house for generations – taking Yulin as an example, the whole neighbourhood is only built for just over thirty years – the physical fabric of the city is constantly changing and has been transformed dramatically. Some of them have been hoping the government implement renewal projects so that they gain compensation with cash or new apartments, especially for the residents who live in the dilapidated buildings.

5.3 The Making of Middle-Class Society

5.3.1 The Absence of Gentrification Discourse

Gentrification is a trendy word; it depicts a vaguely familiar image of a certain urban transformation in the minds of many, who may never truly reflect on what exactly it is. Yet it has gained its eminence beyond the Global North and become a global or “planetary” phenomenon (Lees, Shin, & López-Morales, 2016; Kharas & Goertz, 2010; Atkinson & Bridge,

2005), despite the ever-heated debate around its definition; or on the contrary, this war of word manifests and contributes to its popularity. Now the conceptualization of Gentrification has departed from a typical residential-based class displacement i.e. working class neighbourhood invaded by middle class through residential rehabilitation (Glass, 1964), a more emancipatory definition of gentrification generally refers to a process of upscaling change in demographic, material, socioeconomic dimensions - “a change in the population of land-users such that the new users are of a higher socio-economic status than the previous users, together with an associated change in the built environment through a reinvestment in fixed capital” (Clark, 2005). Similar to Ley and Teo’s finding in Hong Kong (2014), a somewhat absence of the language of gentrification can also be observed in mainland China. A quick keyword search with “shen shi hua” (translation of gentrification in Chinese) on the China Core Newspapers Full-text Database, only 78 results are listed (including some clearly irrelevant articles) compared to 13,192 results of “*chengshi gengxin*” (urban renewal) and 53,825 of “*jiucheng gaizao*” (old city regeneration). Not only in media circle, academic works utilising gentrification theory is also of limited volume (Shin, Lees & López-Morales, 2015).

In practical field, either the name of gentrification or its phenomenon disappears. Instead, it is being praised. As for the issue of rising rents after the renewal, especially for low-income tenants who have to move out because of the rising rents, grass-roots officials think that it is a positive process. Since their constituents - that is, the people for whom they are directly responsible - are local residents - that is, residents whose hukou registration are officially recorded in the local community and who own properties here - as long as the interests of these "local residents" are safeguarded or even enhanced, then process such as regeneration or gentrification will become reasonable and just.

“I think it's good that the façade has been renovated to improve the overall appearance

of the city. Of course, after the urban renewal, some businesses will be adjusted, I think this is also inevitable. Even if you don't adjust, the market will adjust. For example, the traditional low-end retail industry will be impacted, is an iterative process, I think it is precisely should be actively involved in guiding the rationalisation of this space process. There will be rent increases, but the impact on the indigenous residents will not be very great. For the indigenous residents, they may feel that it is a kind of enhancement, that their homes have become more valuable, that they have more employment opportunities, and that they can even start their own businesses. But it is possible that for some of our other new citizens there will be certain, for example, he may need higher capital to live in this place” (Interview with local official)

In addition, the optimisation of the structure of the local resident population is one of the assessment indicators of their performance. The so-called demographic optimisation means that more middle-class people are living or working in the city, with higher incomes, higher education and more marketable skills. They can be consumers with higher purchasing power, or they can be producers who enhance the overall economic condition of the region. This is a welcome development for grassroots officials whose main focus is on economic development to attract more investment.

To a great extent, the logic of the market has been internalised as the basic mode of thinking of local officials. The mechanism of market operation is considered “natural”, “proper”, and should not be interfered with. This is largely in line with the Chinese government's tendency towards the marketisation since the opening-up reforms of China in the 1970s. The seemingly Social Darwinist position is also reflected in the grassroots officials, architects and artists, as well as the residents themselves, who believe that under the so-called “natural” market mechanism of “survival of the fittest”, if a certain subject is not good enough and suitable for

the market mechanism, it is acceptable to be eliminated or driven to other places that are more suitable.

“It's really iterating throughout the central city area, and there's going to be more and more high-rise office buildings in the centre. The mix of people who live in our area has changed - the people who used to live in this area were probably a little bit more in the service sector like deli sellers, construction workers, nannies, etc. Now slowly this area has more white-collar workers. Then for the local residents (landlords), the income will also increase because of rising rents. I think this area of Yulin has been undervalued in terms of prices and rents and should actually be more valuable.” (Interview)

5.3.2 The Rise of New Urban Middle Class

If the concept of class in contemporary China is elusive, the definition of middle class is more so. The market-oriented reform starting from 1978 give a rise to the middle class in urban China. Especially after 2000, we can see a great popularity on mass media and official discourse on “zhongchan jieji” (jieji - class) or “zhongchan jieceng” (jieceng - stratum) – the latter is more politically secure as the notion of ‘class’ has become an omission or even taboo in post-reform society. The description of urban middle class in China is not only in terms of occupation and income level, but also consumption in housing, education and lifestyle (Goodman & Chen, 2013). The reinforcement of urban community governance is greatly in line with the cultivation of middle class, i.e. making new subjects who are autonomous enough to choose what to consume and therefore stimulate the market (Tomba, 2009). The rise of the consumer society is a profound process of transformation and restructuring. Instead of political mass mobilisation, leisure and consumption have become important ways of mobilising and organising Chinese society; the space of consumption has become a space for dividing, reorganising and rebuilding the social order. In today’s post-socialist society, classes are eliminated in terms of consumption

instead of the communist view of classes.

Rather than carefully catering for the needs of the middle class, popular or consumer culture is assiduously teaching and regulating a future middle-class group. One of the self-orientated social functions of the popular culture of the 1990s and beyond is to call for and construct a middle-class community. Consumption styles and contents have become a symptom of the increasingly sharp class division in Chinese society. Clothing brands, lifestyles and living spaces have not only become markers of the so-called different tastes of modern society, but also symbols of class identity. It is a mutually-construct process that not only middle class have effects on the making of urban space but also the cultural landscape of the city shapes the dispositions of the middle class.

5.4 Conclusions and Reflections

The issue of authenticity in city leads to two broader questions, first is about culture and cultural difference - why different places have different character; why each place has or needs to have its own identity? Second is about the nature of urbanity – what a city should be and how urban experience is like?

After the 1990s, the main task of China's social transformation was to transform previous urban work-unit workers into citizens, and at the same time to transform the peasants who entered the cities into citizens. The integration under the picture of middle class, not only on the economic level, but also on the level of consumption and lifestyle, of the peasants who left their farmland in the cities and the new generation of urbanites who have only an imaginative experience of rural China. Urban construction and regeneration are providing the context and conditions for this life scenario. But these seemingly diverse and rich spaces are largely produced by a top-down process of urban reorganisation, which makes the issue of authenticity is open to debate.

However, authenticity is related to mobility. We can only place a place as authentic from outside. Is it interesting? Is it real? That is exactly why the site for the renewal project, which I will talk about in the next chapter, was chosen: a group of young urban professionals in cultural fields including myself – architects, artists, designers, researchers, filmmakers - found that particular dilapidated neighbourhood unique, organic, interesting – and therefore authentic. Only it does not fit into the grand highly orderly diversity scheme put forward by urban decision makers; it is not a representation of messiness or everydayness, it is a ‘real’ mess.

CHAPTER 6.

Living with Uncertainty:

An Ethnographic Practice in A Renewing Street



Fig.6-1: Aerial view of the Renewal Project (Photo by YIIIE Architects)

In October 2022, at the invitation of a local architectural design, the author participated in a culture-led small-scaled community renewal project, i.e., Community Art Creative Project (CACP). The project is located at a small alley named the Yulin Second Lane in the Yulin Neighbourhood (Case A) of Wuhou District. This forty-year-old alley used to be the starting point of the urbanization process of the area and undergone waves of demolition for land redevelopment; however the process was halted halfway and left it being a dilapidated marginal urban space in form of urban ruins with many low-income migrants and street vendors. In collaboration with local community and the municipality, the renewal project starts in June 2022 and originally aims to establish a cultural and creative space to promote exchanges and collaborations between young designers, interaction between designers and residents, and to explore new models of regeneration for dilapidated urban space.

The newly built space (Fig.6-1) is located in the backyard of a residential compound named the 19th Yard of Yulin East Street at the north end of the Lane that was previously used for warehouse equipment - but actually had tenants living in it in the past years and one middle-aged carpenter still lived there until June 2022 when the project started. The original building was in despair and being demolished, and a new structure with prefabricated steel units was rebuilt at the same site. An opening exhibition was held at the end of June 2023 when the first phase of the project officially complete – yet the space is still under final construction till today and its function remains unclear.

The project is in close cooperation with local grassroot administration with residents' participation – in fact, the residents meanwhile formed a “self-governance team” (*zi zhi xiao zu*, *zi* means self, *zhi* means govern, *xiao* means small, *zu* means team) and started to renovate infrastructure of the street such as sewage pipes and pavement by themselves from November 2022 for a few months and drafted a neighbourhood convention. They also collected

'management fees' and later registered as community funds regulated by the Chengdu Wuhou Community Development Foundation. Participants of CACP including formal members, interns, and volunteers are mostly young practitioners from interdisciplinary backgrounds, gradually joined the project in the first six months, starting with the architectural and graphic design team, followed by the fashion designers, sociologist, photographers and documentary film team, among others. A dozen of college students from different disciplines also joined as interns or volunteers. As a regular member of CACP, the author started the ethnographic study by regularly participating in site visits and meetings within CACP members as well as with local community. And the main role is academic support i.e., providing relevant sociological concepts and theories, to plan and implement field research and data collection.

This chapter aims to depict the process of a neighbourhood renewal project in which the author was involved and illustrate the complex power relations in the making and remaking as well as experiencing the changing urban space. The study also explores the instrumentation of renewal project and the ways of how the Lane as an in-between or informal urban space become legible in relation to broader socio-political goals. This lane is an urban relic of previous rounds of urban renewal in the early 2000s when large-scale demolition and construction playing the central role to China's urban and economic growth. Such space are the remnants of China's rapid urban development and a symbolic representation of China's socio-economic transformation in recent decades. The focus of the study is not so much on the social ecology of the street, but on the process of implementing the renewal project, the interactions and struggles between the various actors, both internal and external, a cultural politics in which meaning and common sense are constructed and contested. Nonetheless, knowing the historical trajectory of the street and its status quo is the key to understanding the project in its context.

The chapter includes four main parts, first the historical trajectory of the Lane aiming to

contextualize the lane into broader societal transformation; second, the overall process of the project highlighting two parallel tracks of actions and the way the project is used by the decision-makers; third, the nature of the Lane as a kind of temporal fault and spatial informality in the city; fourth, the reflections on the organization of CACP and its further implications on knowledge production and political engagement.



Fig. 6-2 Location of Yulin Second Lane (Area A) - (1) Nijiaqiao St. (2) Yulin East Street (3) Yulin Street



Fig. 6-3 Yulin Second Lane (Photos by author in 2023)

6.1 The Rise and Fall of Yulin Second Lane in Forty Years

Yulin Second Lane, which starts from Nijiaqiao Road in the south and ends at Yulin East Street in the north, has a length of 243 meters and a width of 7 meters, and was officially named in 1988 along with other nine streets, i.e., Yulin first Lane to Yulin Tenth Lane. The alley used to be the starting point of the urbanization process of Yulin in the early 1980s. The alley had undergone demolition for urban land redevelopment in the 2000s and 2010s but was interrupted due to various reasons; and it is now becoming an informal urban space similar to an urban slum or urban village within a city, with low-quality housing, infrastructure and sanitary conditions. Many low-income people live here, and many street vendors congregate here - often being chased and fined by city management police as an informal economy.

According to the official statistics provided by the local administration, Yulin Second Lane consists of three parts: private residential housing from No.2 to No.4, the work-unit owned buildings (mainly ground-floor shopfronts from No.2 to No.4), and villagers' residential houses from No.5 to No.18. The first two part at the north end of the Lane are built in the 1990s with over 140 registered households. The second part, the main part of the Lane, despite its half-demolished conditions, 55 households are living here, with 3497 square meter registered housing area and 3214 non-registered. Most of the residents are tenants; and most of the shops on this street are unlicensed.

To analyse and interpret the current status and recent changes of the site and contextualise the project, it is necessary to first understands the historical trajectory of this small alley from a mere farmland to a waiting land in the city and situates it in the overall process of China's urbanization and reformation in the last few decades.

6.1.1 From old farmland to brand-new red-brick houses: the thriving Yulin Production

Team 6

After the founding of modern China, the administrative district of Chengdu City was adjusted several times. In the 1960s, with the Funnan River as the boundary, the urban area within the Funnan River was the Dongcheng District and the Xicheng District; while the suburban area beyond it was the Jinniu District - the Yulin second Lane belonged to the jurisdiction of the Jinniu District at that time. During the planned economy period, in today's Yulin area, the Yulin Sixth Production Team had more than 100 households and 500 people living in five compounds, including the Liu Family Courtyard, the Li Family Courtyard and the Chen Family Courtyard, and most of the people were engaged in agricultural production activities, and it was once rated as one of the most advanced production teams in the Jinniu District People's Commune of that year. The so-called production team is a form of organisation of the rural population in modern China during the period of planned economy, specifically from 1958 to 1984. This form of organisation is established vis-a-vis the Work-Unit system among urban population in the cities.

After the reform and opening up of Chengdu, the city was re-planned and gradually expanded, and the Sichuan Metallurgical Bureau, Sichuan Nonferrous Metals Industry Company, Sichuan Organic Silicon Company, and the U.S. Consulate in Chengdu expropriated the Yulin Sixth Team's agricultural land and compensated the team one million dollars for the construction of housing. In 1979, the Yulin Sixth Team officially began building houses in the Yulin Second Lane area, and the construction was completed in 1981. In 1981, the construction was completed. Eighteen two-storey red-brick houses were built on both sides of Yulin second Lane, with single-family houses and water and electricity supply. Street lights were installed on both sides of the street, and flowers, plants and camphor trees were planted. Each household in the

Yulin Sixth Team was allocated a certain number of houses of a certain size, for example, one floor with one floor, i.e. a ground floor and a main room upstairs, more than 30 square metres.

“In the impression of the people, the lane at that time was very bright. The road is straight, the trees are in rows, beautiful houses. When Chengdu's Second Ring Road had not yet been built, and Renmin South Road was still a two-lane road. I could see far away from the house, and the grain was yellow, the wheat was golden, and the rice paddies were flat and neat. It was nice.” (Interview with resident)

6.1.2 From Urban Village to Urban Community: Farmers vs. Workers

With the development of urbanisation and industrialisation after reform and opening up, the original collective ownership and collective management system was abolished after the adoption of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Land Contracting in Rural Areas in 1982, and the production units of the Jinniu People's Commune and the Yulin Sixth production unit were gradually withdrawn and transformed into villagers' committees, at which point Yulin Second Lane was turned into a “village within a city” community. "After the State Council issued the Circular on the Settlement of Farmers in Towns in 1984, the villagers formerly belonging to the Yulin Sixth Team, as landless peasants, were transformed into urban residents through the conversion of farming to non-farming status, and were centrally resettled in neighbouring enterprises and public institutions, such as the Pressure Machine Tool Factory, the Welding Rods Factory, the Iron and Steel Factory, the Aluminium Bars Factory, the Electronic Components Factory, the Forklift Factory, the Sewing and Clothing Factory, the Tobacco Company, the Family Planning Department, and the School of Economic Management Cadres, among others. At the same time, with the loosening of the household registration system after the reform and opening up of China, and the adjustment of the management of the temporary urban population, farmers from Chengdu and the surrounding

cities and counties in Sichuan have flocked to Chengdu to work, and they have intervened in Yulin Second Lane in different capacities, and the ecology of the area has gradually become more and more complex and varied.

6.1.3 Prosperity and Chaos in “Little Hong Kong”: Self-seeking Laid-off Workers and the Domestic Migrants

In the early 1990s, Chengdu's city planning was adjusted to abolish the Dongcheng and Xicheng districts and reset them as the five central districts of Jinjiang, Qingyang, Jinniu, Wuhou, and Chenghua, with Yulin Lane coming under the jurisdiction of Wuhou District from then on. Between the late 1980s and the end of the 1990s, Yulin Alley was once called "Little Hong Kong" by the locals, and was very popular for a while. With the restructuring of state-owned enterprises, many of the former Yulin Six production team were laid off one after another, and began to set up their own businesses in their own shops. Some of the households with the financial means to do so widened their original houses to three or four floors, and rented out unused single rooms outside their own homes at low rents, attracting many workers from neighbouring cities and counties. Many shops gradually opened on both sides of the street, such as hotpot shops, skewer shops, noodle shops, bun shops, fried potato shops, dry goods shops, tobacco shops, etc. Stalls on the street flowed and gathered, forming a spontaneous market, especially the night market in the evening, which was very lively.

During this period, Yulin Second Lane was also characterised by harassment, fights, robberies, thefts, frauds, triad extortion and drug abuse due to the mix of people in the area. In the late 1990s, after the crackdown on gangs and pornography, law and order improved, and most of the merchants in Yulin Second Lane installed their own surveillance cameras to prevent thieves from taking advantage of the area.

6.1.4 Unfinished Evictions: Locals Leaving and Outsiders Staying

With the reform of the tax system in the late 1990s, the reform of the land system (especially the marketisation of urban land use rights) and the housing reform, property development gradually flourished; in 2005, the Yulin Second Lane area was planned to be included in the area to be demolished and relocated, and Chengdu Shuangtong Real Estate Company Limited was in charge of demolishing and relocating residents. In 2008, Chengdu Shuangtong Real Estate Co., Ltd. demolished approximately two-thirds of the 132 homes in Yulin Second Lane, but due to broken financial chains, debt issues and changes in demolition and relocation patterns, more than 50 of the homes remained undemolished. Some of the demolished households received compensation ranging from \$200,000 to \$1 million, which they used to purchase other properties and move out. Others were offered resettlement housing in Runxin Garden, Shunjiang Xinyuan, Xinbei District, Rongyuan and Xinyuan, but some residents have not yet been able to obtain property titles.

After the demolition and relocation of houses, Yulin Second lane gradually declined, and many residents and merchants moved out of the alley. During this period, however, many migrant farmers who had moved around Chengdu to work, set up stalls, and do business, gradually gathered in Yulin Second lane because of its low rents and relatively relaxed business environment after the reconstruction of the major markets one after another. Tenants who had not moved out of Yulin Second Lane used to rewire their demolished houses and install water pipes and then rent them out; they also reopened blocked storefronts and rented them out to foreign merchants. These cases lasted from one year to several years, and were subsequently sealed off again as a result of the Housing Authority's inspections.

In 2014, Chengdu City initiated a shantytown renovation project, and Chengdu Gravity Real Estate Co., Ltd. won the bid for the Yulin Second Lane Shantytown Renovation Level 1 Land

Consolidation Project in 2015, which was later stalled due to a dispute over the transfer of equity between the company and the Chengdu Landmark Oriental Core Assets Investment Centre, etc. In 2017, due to the construction of the Nijiaqiao Subway Station of Metro Line 8, the government-led demolition of the Yulin Second Lane houses, No. 15 and No. 17, was initiated by the government. The construction workers used to live temporarily during the construction period. During the construction period, construction workers temporarily lived in some of the demolished houses in good condition and moved out after the project was completed, after which the houses were left vacant and not allowed to be rented out or occupied.

At a time when urbanisation is slowing down, it is not clear when the shelved Yulin Second lane shantytown redevelopment project will be restarted, and the people who live in Yulin Second lane are very different from those who lived there when it was built forty years ago. Today, only a dozen households formerly belonging to the Yulin Sixth Team live there. Tenants have gradually become the mainstay of the housing stock on Second Lane, with migrant workers, ethnic Yi, and the elderly predominating, with most of the migrant workers being people at the bottom of the social ladder, such as delivery workers, security guards, janitors, sanitation workers, and construction workers; most of the ethnic Yi are couples coming to the nearby Fertility Hospital to undergo in vitro fertilisation; and most of the older people are former agricultural workers and laid-off retirees. The vendors and shopkeepers who run their businesses in the street markets have also been living here for a long time. These mixed faces have reshaped the appearance of Yulin Second Lane.

6.1.5 A Sudden Change: where do the people go from here

In June 2022, the CACP Chengdu Community Art Creation Programme was launched and located in the northern section of Yulin Second Lane. In consultation with the neighbourhood and the community, the unused backyard of No. 19 Yard was upgraded to a new space on the

site of a warehouse - previous bicycle shed. And in October, the residents of Yulin Second lane set up a community-driven residents self-governance group to upgrade physical environment such as the underground water pipes and pavement, as well as delineating the street and charging stall fees for itinerant hawkers to establish a co-management fund. This shanty town, which seemed to have been “forgotten”, suddenly faced new changes.

6.2 Project in Progress: A Twofold Story

The project is a top-down practice yet without clear mandates, which leaves room for implementation. The project involves several main stakeholders, i.e., the municipal government specifically the department of communication, the design company, the grassroots administration, and the residents who are property owners rather than tenants – the first two parties initiated the project in late 2022, after several rounds of negotiation, the design firm found the grassroots community to select the specific site. At the same time, the community and the local self-governing group took this project as an opportunity to regenerate the area and therefore took action on their side. From the very beginning of the project, these two storylines have been running in parallel – the self-governance team along with the grassroots administration vis-à-vis the CACP team and its spatial renovation – with different agenda on their own despite of considerable intersections such as meetings, events, and the possibility of building a communal garden, but only briefly and at the end of the day going their separate ways. Some of the reasons for this seemingly unsuccessful collaboration include the different demands of stakeholders and the conflicts they bring, information mismatch and miscommunication, disordered internal organizational structure of CACP team, lack of consensus at different levels, different perceptions of the project by different members, lack of time and financial resource, and lack of referable local cases, and so on.

6.2.1 Origin and Process of CACP

Chengdu's city branding has always placed emphasis on the cultural and creative industries, and one of the directions of development of the sector in recent years has been to give full play to their role in urban regeneration or the renewal of old neighborhoods. In the last decade, Chengdu has also seen the emergence of many small cultural and creative companies and independent practitioners; and the design company in this case is one of them. The company was founded in 2018 by a young architect who studied many years in Japan, and the company focuses on architectural and graphic design and participates in many cultural communication activities and small-scaled community revitalization projects. The “In the Alley” project (Fig.6-4) - located in the same neighbourhood (Case A) as the case of CACP - has been recognized a good example of small-scaled community regeneration in Chengdu and has been featured in the local and national media. The case has also won recognition from the Chengdu Municipal Government and several awards for the local community and designers. Because of this, the company has developed a deep and well-established relationship with the local administration and community - despite some conflicts of interest and constant negotiation - and ultimately chose to locate the project there. In addition, the company has been committed to arts and cultural activities to engage the community, having previously done two sessions of the Community Arts Project in 2018 and 2019. For the first time, they refurbished a disused bike shed in an old neighbourhood and hosted exhibitions and pop-ups; and the second time, they invited ten artists to organize ten art events in different neighbourhoods in Wuhou District - the project budget of 400,000 RMB is funded by the Municipal Community Development and Governance Committee and the Wuhou Community Development Foundation. The company therefore also has a good relationship of co-operation and trust with municipal and district governments. And the CACP project can be seen as a continuation of the previous two sessions.



Fig.6-4 “In the Alley” project - renovated space next to the Yudong Community Party-Mass Service Centre

However, the project ending up here in a dilapidated inner-city alley was not what was planned at the beginning. The project was initially launched by the Department of Communication of the municipal government in 2021 to create a cultural centre for promoting creative culture industry and networking among young practitioners in relevant fields. However, the project had been temporarily put on hold because the initial site selection was cancelled - the original building site was in a public park in the high-tech zone, located in the south suburb of the city, was taken back by the state-owned developer company for another use. The deputy director of the communication department, initial leader of the project who retired in 2023, decided to reduce the size and budget - from nearly two million to seven hundred thousand - of the project and leave it to the design company to carry out the implementation on its own, out of a sense of compensation of previous cancellation and a strong personal desire to leave a legacy before retiring. The deputy director, insisted on handing the project over to the design company - and indeed there was a lot of skepticism and resistance within the government, with others preferring to give the project to a large state-owned cultural organization. In fact, the final solution was that the project is dedicated to a state-owned publishing company who buys the service of the design company. It means that, on paper, the design company’s client is the publisher, not by the municipality – however this is only on paper and never in act. Meanwhile, this project is no longer the original large-scale Cultural and Creative Centre project proposed

by the department, and the leader responsible for it is retiring soon, so that the importance of the project has been greatly reduced. This meant that the project had a great deal of freedom at the operational level and was essentially left entirely to the discretion of the design company, without clear mandates or delivery expectations, either from the publisher or the municipality who are the sponsors of the project. The community administration involved is only a co-operating party and has no control over the project – although they in some ways provide the space for the project and acting as landlord. Therefore, to a certain extent, the design company is only acting out of goodwill in responding to the expectations and needs of the local community including both the grassroot administration and local residents in the Lane.



Fig. 6-5 Site Map – (3) location of the site

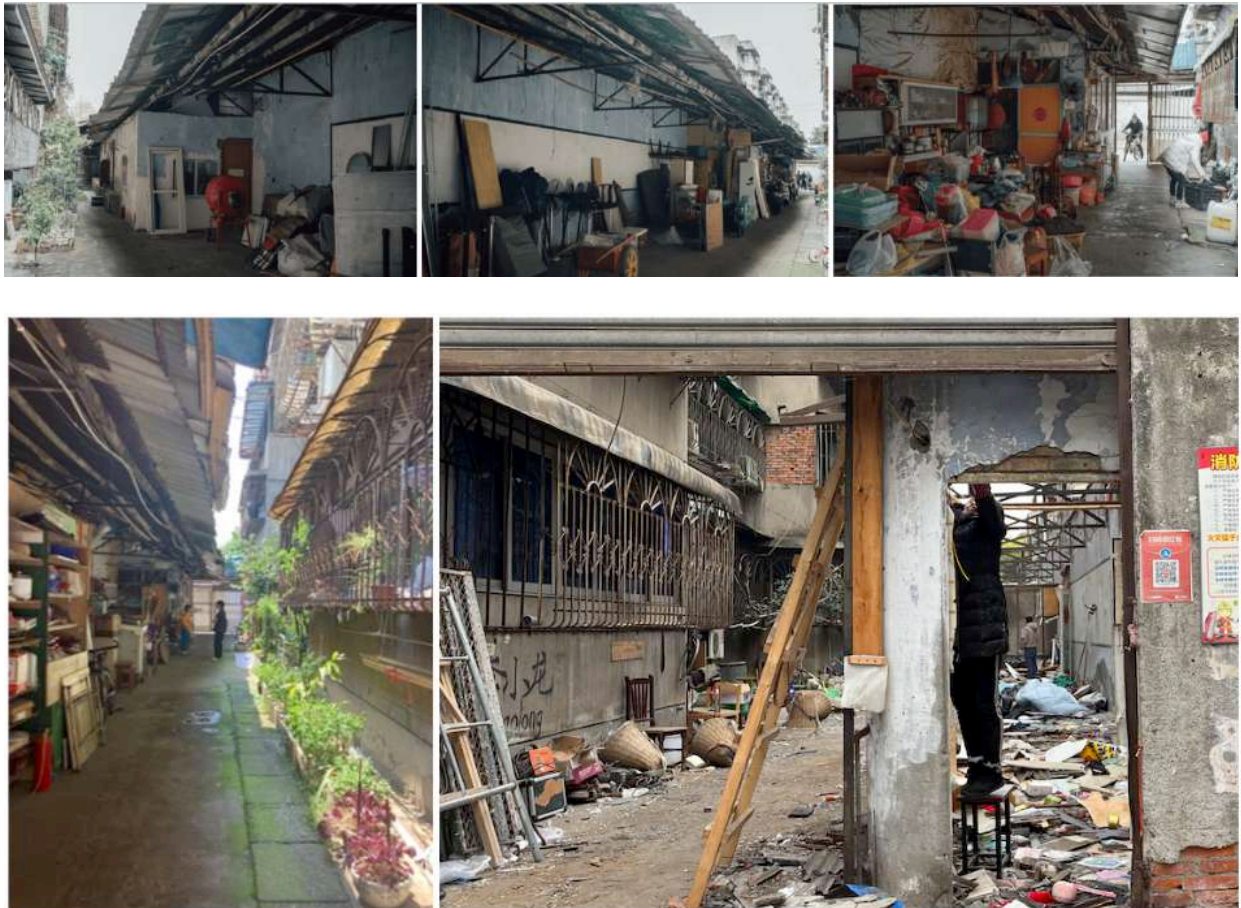


Fig. 6-6 original site condition and the demolition

At the beginning of the project, the first step is to decide on the specific points. The company contacted the party secretary of the community for advice, who took them to in person check out several locations, all of which were abandoned or semi-abandoned bicycle parking space or equipment rooms located inside of old small, gated communities. Unlike the other sites, the chosen site, although once the backyard of the gated community, is now open to the street and is relatively more public and accessible. The party secretary warned them the difficulties of the site because of the complexity of the Yulin Second Lane.

The building in the selected location was originally used for utilities and storage in the backyard of the gated community the 19th Yard of Yulin Street East, which was later rented out to migrant workers and being used as shop as well as a car wash. But with the demolition twenty years

ago, most of the tenants moved out. Before the project started, there was one middle-aged male living on the site – he was evicted in July 2022 with a small amount of compensation – “*the community (local administration) gave him about three thousand yuan of compensation. He actually owns an apartment elsewhere and he lives here because he’s a carpenter and most of his clients are around*” according to conversations with a project member. The ownership and use of the building belonged to the 19th Yard. With the agreement of the representatives of the residents of the 19th Yard, the lease of the right to use the site was given to the local administration at the rate of 800 yuan per month, which in turn transferred the site to the design company – again, the local administration acting as intermediary between the property owner and the users, as discussed in Chapter three. There was no paper contract or any official agreement for the whole process, which is not uncommon in the field of urban community projects. As verified later, the design company did not sign a contract with the local administration for the operation of the “In the Alley” project; the rent is paid in the name of ‘social donation’. In the case of no legal binding between two or more parties, trust is crucial between them especially the accountable parties such as the grassroots administration and the designer company who are responsible in the case of anything goes wrong with the project. According to the interview with the party secretary of the community, the community also paid the three residents' representatives about 2,000 yuan for their “hard work” in obtaining the consent of the residents in the yard, which aimed to co-ordinate a majority of the residents to be informed and to agree to the use of the site, mainly to avoid potential resistance in the future - however, several conflicts arose in the course of the implementation of the project.

The assembly of members for the project was a gradual process. Initially the only project member was the design firm; soon two graphic designers joined who also both studied in Japan; followed by one fashion designer who studied in the UK, before I joined. During the first few months, in addition to choosing a location, they had several meetings with the grassroots

community to discuss what to do. While the design company still hopes to maintain the original project concept to the greatest extent possible, that is the function of the renovated space as initially set out remains to promote exchange and collaboration among young designers, building on the previous vision and mission of the Cultural and Creative Centre project. However, in fact, from the beginning of the project, the grassroots administration, especially the party secretary, began to actively participate and guide the project, attempting to use the project to regulate and formalize this longtime eyesore, i.e., Yulin Second Lane.

The local community communicated with the designers in the hope of improving the environment, changing its overcrowded and dirty conditions and, in particular, clearing a “lifeline”, i.e., the fire escape - which, according to Chinese urban planning regulations, needs to be maintained at more than four meters. This means that a space-clearing process is needed to massively clean up the street vendors that have been occupying the street for a long time - one of the major challenges of governance at the grassroots level. *“The safety of human life and property is of paramount importance, and it is necessary to raise awareness of fire prevention and clear a fire escape”* says the party secretary of the community. The designers did not put too many thoughts on it and felt it was an important issue. They start thinking about what they can do within their area of expertise. For example, graphic designers began designing visual guide signs and security awareness brochures. Meanwhile when the fashion designers joined in and started to design uniforms for shopkeepers. In October 2022, I had an informal gathering with the leading architect at the design company who in general has ‘the more, the merrier’ attitude – *“the diversity of our team members brings more perspectives and ideas to the table”*. So, I joined the project in the fourth month after it started when the original building has been cleared and the designers have started working on the presentation of the visual design. Meanwhile, the community and residents have moved on and started to do some physical renovations, such as repairing sewage pipes.

With the vision of the project being inclusive and participatory, the construction process also involves other stakeholders aside from all CACP members, such as the local administration represented by the party secretary and residents' representatives who are main members of the self-governance group (Fig.6-7). For publicity, the whole process was documented by a national media. The building structure is designed with a prefabricated light steel structure that is easy to operate and can be done by non-professionals under the guidance of engineers. The designers believe that this cheap, environmentally friendly and easy-to-build nature is also similar to the temperament of the lane. The main structure took four days to build. However, the subsequent construction of the ground, roof and façade was left to specialized workers until the end of June - the first phase of the project ended with an exhibition (Fig.6-8) and the planning of a street festival with the participation of many shops.



Fig. 6-14 Meetings between CACP members, residents and the Party Secretary of the local Community



Fig. 6-7 Process of construction with participation of all project members, the party secretary of local community and several residents, under supervision of two structural engineers



Fig. 6-8 Exhibition of the Phase One

6.2.2 The Self-Governance Group in Action

The sudden launch of the project in this long-forgotten alley was seen as an excellent opportunity to make a difference. Enthusiasts among residents - who later became core members of the Self-governance Group - approached the party secretary to discuss how to improve the environment in Second Lane, according to the party secretary. The party secretary organized a meeting on the street (Fig.6-9). The members of the self-governance group are basically self-appointed with certain informal consent from some homeowners and the party secretary, rather than publicly elected.

“We need to keep an open mind and have these open square meetings so that everyone can know and hear and see, and they are welcome to join in and put forward their ideas.”

(Interview with grassroots party secretary)

Residents are most concerned about two issues: firstly, environmental and infrastructural issues, i.e. the need for sewage repairs and the refurbishment of pedestrian pavements; and secondly, the management of street vendors, i.e. residents would like to see the designation of leased units on the refurbished pavements and the imposition of management fees to limit the number of vendors and to maintain order. From November 2022, the self-governance group themselves who also hired few workers along with themselves to repair the sewerage and pavement (Fig.6-10). The members raised a certain amount of money within themselves – the amount remains unclear from a few thousands to tens of thousands – and spent on the physical renovation. They later wanted to be reimbursed from the management fees collected from the street vendors. However later the fund is registered under the Wuhou Community Development Foundation for supervision and legal procedure. The members cannot provide valid receipts for their spending and therefore can only be reimbursed partially, according to the members of self-governance group.



Fig.6-9 Meetings organised by the party secretary (in green top) with self-governance group



Fig. 6-10 Renovation of sewerage and pavement; the yellow line of vending unit

In early December 2022, with the physical renovation is almost finished, the self-governance group set about counting and managing the stall rental process. Furthermore, they posted a notice informing the public of the commencement of the collection of management fees, under the name of the ‘Common Governance Fund’ (Fig.6-11). Moreover, this fee is a ‘donation’ to form a pool of funds (Fig.6-15). Some vendors have complained that “*since it is a ‘donation’, it should be voluntary. If they want to give money, they give money; if they do not want to give money, they do not; it is just a nice name, but in fact, it is just charging fees indiscriminately*”. In fact, this strategy was probably taken with the community party secretary's guidance so that it could then be formally registered as a social fund in proper name for regular income and expenditure later on.

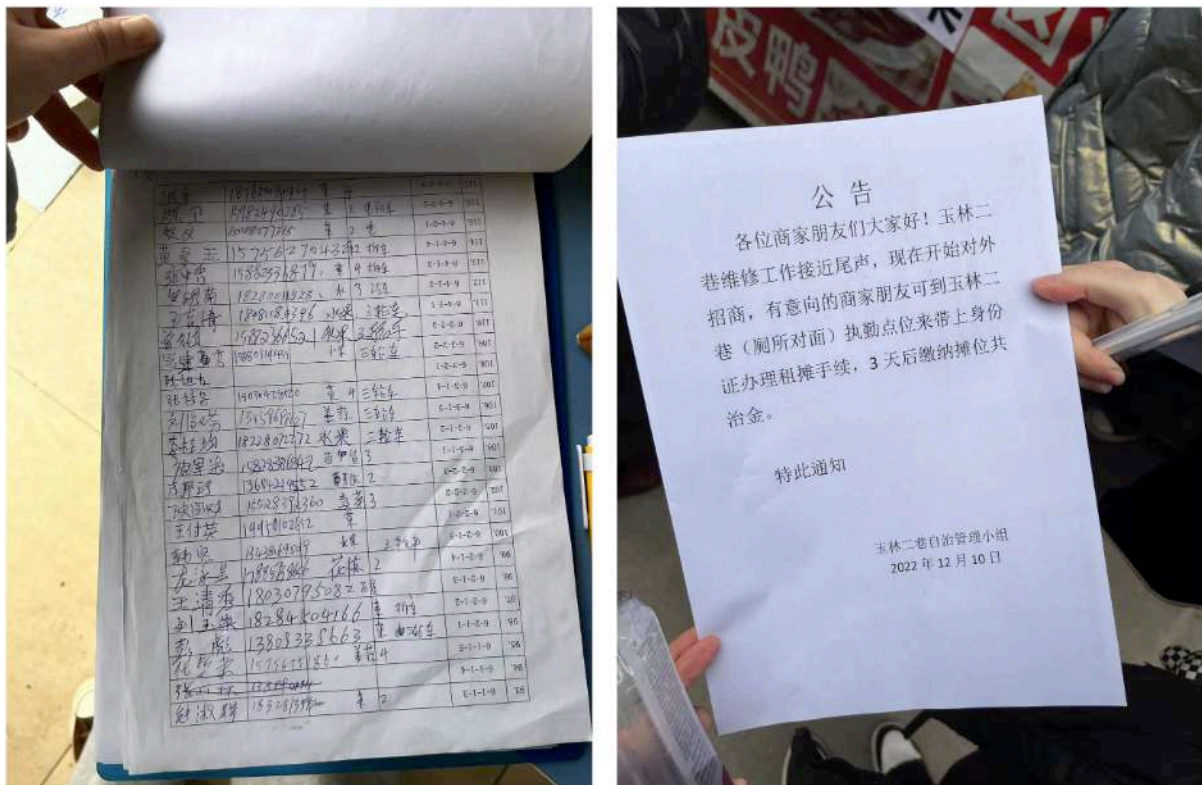


Fig. 6-11 registration form of street vendors; notice of new management regulations for street vendors issued by the self-governance group

At the same time, all vendors have joined a WeChat group called ‘Yulin 2 Common Governance and Sharing Normative Management Group’ (Fig.6-12), which is mainly used to disseminate information, such as notifications from the self-governance group to vendors about construction time and charging procedures. The group had 74 members by the end of 2022. Vendors who register and pay a fee are given a document that allows them to enter the alley and open business (Fig.6-13).

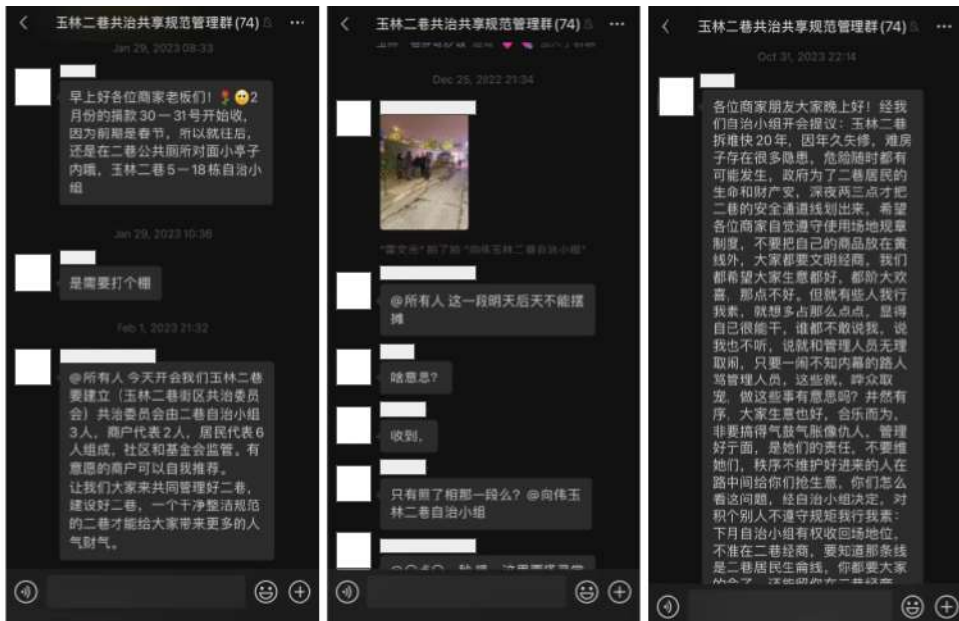


Fig.6-12 WeChat Group Messages



Fig.6-13 Street vendor ID document issued by the Self-Governance Group

The charge of management fee is mainly in the interest of the landlords - they are the main members of the self-governance group, yet most of them have long since moved out and have flats in the neighbourhood. Some tenants also feel the need to regulate the vendors because of traffic and hygiene issues, while others feel it is none of their business – *“We go out early in the morning and come home late at night, so we don't have time to think about this. What does this have to do with us? We don't even know how much longer we'll be living here, one day at a time”*. More people can only express their discontent quietly. For example, during one of the documentary filming sessions, an elderly woman selling daily necessities quietly asked one of the CACP members and me if we were journalists, and told us, *‘The fee is too expensive, charging me 300 yuan a month, and I only sell a few dozen yuan a day, so how can I afford to pay it? I have paid this month, but I really cannot afford to pay next month. Can you have a word with them?’*. She showed us the paper receipt issued to her by the self-governance group. For a moment, I felt very powerless. The self-governance group is endorsed by the local administration, and we are not in a position to interfere with their actions; we are more like professional urbanists who are here to provide a service. But for whom exactly is it a service? Later I expressed my concerns about the overcharging fees to two members of the self-governance team. But they told me this is already a bargain given that they have invested so much to repair the pipes and pavement - *“If they think it's high, they can just not have a stall here. They can go somewhere else. It's their choice. We're already volunteering our labour. The reason for charging a fee is to better manage the street in the future.”* In the process, the self-governance team tried to get architects to help design the stalls, but that didn't work out. The architects were busy designing the main building structure and designing takes time and money - none of which was available. The self-governance team could not wait that long to start the new management process in a few weeks' time after all.

There are some attempts to converge these two lines of action but with little success. At a later

stage of the project, we tried to make the newly built space more connected to its inhabitants, and some of the team members came up with the idea of a community garden - which in fact is not a new experiment, as there are already a number of community gardens in Shanghai where neighbours collaborate together, although many of them are just bubbles of middle-class neighbourhoods - and we thought it was worth to try. There was an empty space at the back of the new structure, and the neighbour's grandmother was a keen gardener and had about 60 plants. We wanted to try and use these plants as an opportunity to interact with the neighbourhood, such as growing spices or vegetables that residents could come and look after and get the vegetables for free. However, the representatives of the residents of the 19th Yard did not welcome the inclusion of the residents of the alley, which has a lot to do with the social ecology of the neighbourhood, where the residents are diverse and not open to making connections. *“And why go to the trouble of growing your own vegetables when the whole street is full of vendors selling cheap and fresh vegetables?”* Moreover, growing flowers requires a lot of skills and knowledge that most residents, both in the internal residents of 19th Yard and those living in the Lane, don't have, and it requires more professional intervention. As a gardening enthusiast, the neighbour's grandmother, who is 80 years old, does not have the energy to guide others to grow flowers from scratch. It is an idea that came out of nowhere, but it is not uncommon amongst the young members within CACP. Many of whom still think about realities in abstract ideas. It is rather ironic that these young people who live in the city and have never known their neighbours are acting as outsiders in the community practice of trying to build connections among local residents. Just as Lefebvre says in *The Right to the City* (1967), ‘the architect, the planner, the sociologist, the economist, the philosopher or the politician cannot out of nothingness create new forms and relations. More precisely, the architect is no more a miracle-worker than the sociologist. Neither can create social relations.’

玉林二巷 5-18 栋街区共治管理公约（初版）

为了改变玉林二巷长期以来的脏乱差、道路失修和基础设施年久失修无法无人维护更新的现状，以及无序占道经营秩序混乱给巷子里的住户带来的严重的消防安全隐患等生存安全问题，经玉林二巷 5-18 栋全体居民住户共同商议决定，全体居民住户将联合所有进入玉林二巷的流动商贩，共同制定玉林二巷街区共治管理公约，本着谁使用谁承担的原则，群策群力，利用共治的力量进行自我管理、自我承担、自我监督、自我服务，逐步解决巷子里的各种问题，营造和谐美好的生存环境。具体内容如下：

1. 在武侯区社区基金会设定的玉林东路社区睦邻公益基金项目下设定玉林二巷街区共治基金专账，发动进入玉林二巷的全体商贩及热心居民住户进行街区共治众筹捐赠。捐赠款项将用于玉林二巷环境卫生维护、秩序维护、路面维修、基础设施维护、应急储备及应对（灭火器、沙袋、抽水泵等）、巷子里邻里文化活动、扶贫济困等公共事务及公共管理。共治金将在武侯社区基金会的指导下通过相应程序使用。
 2. 所有机动车和三轮车通过玉林二巷时慢行，遇老人和儿童经过时自动避让。机动车卸货后立即离开玉林二巷，不得占道停放。所有三轮车进入按指定位置停放，不得乱停放。以保证玉林二巷的消防通道畅通。
 3. 所有商贩进入玉林二巷必须按玉林二巷自治小组和共治委员会规划的区域内摆放货品，不能下街沿、出场地经营，不得堆放易燃易爆杂物。每日场地使用后需自行清理完垃圾杂物方可离开。
 4. 位于 5、11 栋的消防栓做明显标识，相邻住户及商贩必须留足空地、不得遮挡，在紧急和应急情况下周边点位使用者必然无条件配合清空场地，供应急使用。
 5. 所有场地使用须在院落自治小组处进行办理登记手续，场地押一付一，自行按月捐赠相应街区共治金。每月提前 10 天捐赠下月的街区共治金。场地使用者不得私自转让场地，需由自治小组负责并协调场地使用事宜。
 6. 自治小组负责聘请 4 名人员对巷道场地进行日常管理，包括场地日常规范、流动摊贩劝导、每日公区场地垃圾清理督促等内容。
- 以上内容各位居民住户及所有进入玉林二巷的商贩共同自觉遵守，共治共建共享美好街区生活环境。

玉林二巷 5-18 栋自治小组

Fig. 6-15 Neighborhood Co-governance Management Convention for Blocks 5-18 of Yulin Second Lane issued by the self-governance group (original version)

**Neighbourhood Co-governance Management Convention for Blocks 5-18 of Yulin 2nd Lane
(preliminary version)**

In order to change the alley's long-standing unhygienic and chaotic state, as well as the roads and infrastructures that are in disrepair and lack of maintenance and updating, as well as the disorderly occupation of the road by street vendors that leads to disorder and serious fire safety hazards and other life-safety problems for local residents, it has been decided by the common deliberation of all the residents that all the residential tenants will join hands with all the street vendors to formulate the Yulin No. 2 Lane Neighbourhood Co-governance Management Convention. Based on the principle of "whoever uses the area is responsible for it", we will work together to use the power of shared governance to carry out self-management, self-responsibility, self-supervision, and self-service, to gradually solve the various problems in the alley and to create a harmonious and beautiful living environment. The details are as follows:

- 1) Under the Yulin East Road Community Neighbourhood Fund project set up by the Wuhou Community Development Foundation, a special account was set up for the Yulin 2 Lane Neighbourhood Governance Fund to mobilise all traders and enthusiastic residents and tenants to make donations to the Neighbourhood Governance Crowdfunding Campaign. The donations will be used for public affairs and public management such as environmental health maintenance, order maintenance, pavement repair, infrastructure maintenance, emergency stockpiling and response (fire extinguishers, sandbags, sump pumps, etc.), neighbourhood cultural activities in the alley, poverty alleviation and relief. The Co-Governance Fund will be used through appropriate procedures under the guidance of the Wuhou Community Foundation.
- 2) All motor vehicles and tricycles should walk slowly when passing through the alley, and consciously avoid the elderly and children when they pass by. Motor vehicles should leave the alley immediately after unloading and should not occupy the road for parking. All tricycles enter and park according to the designated location, not indiscriminately, in order to ensure that the fire escape is clear.
- 3) All traders must set up their goods in accordance with the areas planned by the Self-Governance Group and the Co-Governance Committee when they enter the alley, and must not operate out of the site or pile up inflammable and explosive debris. Vendors are required to clean up their own rubbish and debris before leaving after daily use of the site.
- 4) The fire hydrants located in Buildings 5 and 11 are clearly marked, and adjacent residents and vendors must leave open space and must not cover them. In the event of an emergency, users of the neighbouring sites must unconditionally cooperate in clearing the site for emergency use.
- 5) All use of the site is subject to registration with the Self-Governance Group, a deposit is made for the site, and the vendors themselves donate the appropriate Neighbourhood Co-Governance funds on a monthly basis. Traders are required to donate the next month's neighbourhood governance funds 10 days in advance. Users are not allowed to transfer the space privately, and the Autonomous Group is responsible for coordinating the use of the space.
- 6) The Self-Governance Group is responsible for hiring four people to manage the alleyway site on a daily basis, including the daily regulation of the site, supervision of itinerant vendors, and daily supervision of rubbish removal in the common area.
- 7) The above content of all residents and all vendors to consciously abide by the common governance and share a better living environment in the neighbourhood.

Self-Governance Group of Yulin Second Lane

Fig. 6-15 Neighborhood Co-governance Management Convention for Blocks 5-18 of Yulin Second Lane issued by the self-governance group (translation in English)

6.3 The Lane as Urban Informality



Fig. 6-16 The text painted on the wall “yi chai” (yi - already; chai - demolish); bricked shopfront on the street.

Yulin Second Lane is a place that is difficult to be defined; it can be compared to shantytown, slum, urban village, residual space, informal space. Or in its physical form, it is urban ruins, at least partial ruins. It is not only a physical place, but a social space made up of complex and diverse people. And it is not an isolated urban enclave, where daily life takes place in a way that is closely related to the everyday functioning of the city. How should we understand this heterogeneous urban space and how should we interpret its social ecology? and how should its formation process and operation mechanism inform our understanding about China’s urban development?

6.3.1 Informality in Chinese Cities

The informality of this neighbourhood has two main aspects: economy and housing. Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, a large number of rural-urban migrants have flooded into most of China's cities. The urban informal sector has played an important role in this process, providing

not only employment opportunities but also low-cost accommodation. While many early studies often viewed the informal sector as a temporary work and housing situation for migrant workers, many more recent studies have demonstrated that the informal sector (particularly employment and rental markets) is a regular feature and plays an important role in economic development. Studies show that the informal economy is currently the area of employment for the largest group of non-farmers in developing countries (Wu & Zhang, 2016).

The 'urban villages' in China's large cities are informal settlements built and maintained mainly by local farmers. Often farmers have lost their farmland to expropriation and have become 'landless peasants' who build high-density housing on their own land and rent it out to low-income migrant workers flooding into the cities. Studies of urban villages across the country have found that they have their own unique governance and methods of regenerating their daily activities, and that their responses to public intervention are random and highly policy-dependent. In general, local farmers see their self-built informal rented accommodation as a reasonable means of compensation, as much of the potentially high land value is taken by the government. Therefore, as long as the area is not redeveloped, they will continue to operate their businesses. When redevelopment occurs, they will be absorbed from their status as rural dwellers into the formally urbanised status of city dwellers. Such an urbanisation process provides them with appropriate channels as their 'right to the city'.

The status of Yulin Second Lane can be compared to 'urban village' because the self-built houses by the production team whose members were farmers. These are fundamentally different from other adjacent buildings that are either built by state-owned work-units or private real estate developers. The nature of the buildings in terms of property ownership status become an obstacle to later demolition and redevelopment. And the half-halted redevelopment further complicates its situation. As a result of demolition, many houses are officially recorded as

"demolished" buildings and therefore cannot be used, sold or rented. Many of the shops and restaurants on the street cannot obtain legal business licenses because they cannot provide a valid address to register their shop. Some property owners still live here, even if they have theoretically moved out and are compensated with flats elsewhere. Because the building has not been demolished due to the demolition interruption, they still live there illegally – this can be seen as a type of “squatting” which rarely found in Chinese cities; and more landlords rent the rooms to low-income people, even if they are not allowed to do so, because they do not “exist”. The average monthly rent ranges from 200 to 400 yuan for a room, usually without any written contracts.

Many studies have investigated and illustrated the inadequate supply of affordable housing and services for migrants in China's metropolitan areas. Few, however, have examined how the patron-client relationship between local landlords and low-income tenants has disintegrated in the context of state-led formalisation of informal housing (Huang, 2009; He, Wu & Webster, 2010;). From the government's point of view, cheap and informal housing built by farmers to house migrant workers in urban villages is tolerated in the transitional period in order to support economic growth with low-cost migrant entrepreneurship and labour; but when a higher stage of development is reached, it proceeds to formalise and regulate this informality in the quest for a modernist urban image and higher financial returns. From a Lefebvrian perspective of spatial production, the elimination of informal urban villages to make room for higher levels of economic growth represents a new form of social domination and a new means of economic power and control. We therefore need to revisit the socially and politically contested spaces of China's urban villages to understand and analyse the informality of former landless peasants and itinerant tenants, as well as their dynamic interactions with public power (Wu & Webster, 2013; Wang, et al., 2009; Liu & Wong, 2018).

6.3.2 Urban Ruins and Contested Space

Urban ruins are a marginal place of Chinese urban landscape as well as a relatively neglected subject in the field of Chinese studies. But they are also the remnants of China's rapid urban development and a symbolic representation of China's socio-economic transformation in recent decades (Audin, 2018). Yulin Second Lane, a peculiar type of urban ruins that the land use rights have been auctioned off to the developer and its demolition and compensation work has begun; however, it has to be halted halfway and not completed for many reasons. Other similar projects are usually because the developer, private or public, lacks sufficient funds and cannot afford to complete the project, or because of disputes over property rights, non-compliance with procedures, substandard quality of work, officials stepping down in government change, etc. In a Chinese city where every inch of land is rapidly changing. Construction land in inner city become extremely scarce. These half-demolished dilapidated buildings stand there in an almost ironic way for years, silent and unchanging, yet full of tension.

To understand the production, representation, and possibilities of urban ruins, some key concepts are relevant. Urban interstice: or in-between space, a minoritarian small space, being surrounded by other spaces that are more economically and legally powerful (Brighenti, 2013); urban spaces with improvisation means to form ambiguous political openings (Müller and Trubina, 2020). Urban void: a particular kind of 'nothing', the 'other' to the city, a place of absence (Akkerman, 2009). Waiting land: brachen in German, where absences of urbanisation offer a moment of pause to reveal the diverse wish imagines involved in the making of cities (Beveridge and Oevermann, 2022). Junksapce: what remains after modernization has run its course, or, more precisely, what coagulates while modernization is in progress, its fallout (Koolhaas, 2002).

6.3.2 Heterogeneity and the Paradox of The Local

The population living here is very complex and consists of various low-income social groups. And the inflow and outflow of local population are highly mobile. The so-called local residents are not monolithic, but consists of different groups, and there are complex power relations between them. Different residents have different perceptions of identity and their own interests, which leads to constant conflicts among them. The main conflicts can be found between landlords and tenants, locals and migrants, former urban workers and former farmers, the Yi minority and other residents, etc.

The residents mainly consist of several social groups. First, property owners or landlords who are mainly former members of the Yulin sixth production team and not living in the Lane anymore but having apartments elsewhere – the members of self-governance team belong to this group. Few landlords are still living here because they have business here. For example, one member of the self-governance group owns a tea house here. These landlords did not accept the compensation terms in the 2000s; some of them were hoping for a higher price to be bought out. However, the redevelopment process was interrupted. Among this group of residents, there is a sense of insecurity and agitation, because of unpredictable state policies about renewal, displacement, compensation. Over the years, they have mixed feelings. Just as many residents of other parts of Yulin neighbourhood have faced previous urban renewal, they lack strong nostalgic sentiment but aspire to development. When asked how the Lane's history was and how they had experienced it, the residents – former members of the Yulin sixth production team, are nostalgic only for a particular period of time that seems to have no past or later. The time they miss is the 1980s to be precise, when both they themselves and the alley were at prime of their time. Since the demolition began, twenty years until now, their time, or their perception and experience of the time of the Lane, has suspended and been 'waiting' for the future. Nobody

has foreseen this waiting time would be over a decade. Until today, on the one hand, they seem to have given up the expectation of demolition and started to invest in improving their homes and environment; and on the other hand, they have avoided investing too much, both monetarily and emotionally, as they may still have the opportunity to move out of the area and live a new life elsewhere.

Most tenants living in the Lane work in the service sector such as retailing, catering, security guards, housekeepers, cleaners, construction workers, takeaway delivery staff, or simply street vendors. Most of the population are migrants from rural areas across Sichuan province with some who are from other parts of China. Many people choose to live here because it is in the centre of town, next to a metro station and the rent is very cheap and can be paid monthly with no deposit. But at the same time, they do not 'want' to live here because the environment is so poor. They have no choice but to make a living in the city. Some of them cannot wait to move out as soon as they earn some money.

The lane has been home to a group of ethnic minorities, i.e. Yi people, also known as Nuosu, a major ethnic group in southwest of China. They are predominantly married couples in their 20s and 30s who often stay for a short time for IVF - a public hospital specialized in reproductive science is located nearby. They often come here for a few months for the medical appointment. If the IVF succeeds, they will return to their hometown soon; if not, they need to recover for some time and come here again a few months later. They choose to live in this area because it is very cheap and close to the medical institute. And some of them mentioned that their relatives or friends recommend them to stay here owing to their kinship network. Another important reason is discrimination against Yi people in the city although such phenomenon being less severe than before. Yi people were stigmatized for their heavy heroin use and a subsequent HIV/AIDS epidemic and their image in the city was also associated with theft and robbery (Liu,

2011). Both grassroots officials and other residents also mentioned that their living habits are different from the majority Han people especially they like to gather round the bonfire in winter which “a huge threat to the life safety in the area”. Some landlords also mentioned that they do not wish to rent their houses to the Yi people.

The definition of the local is vague. Who is the local? Many property owners do not live here. The population in this area is highly mobile. Many residents (tenants) only live here for a few months and then leave. And some of the business owners who have set up shop here for many years but live elsewhere and have no attachment to the Lane. Most importantly, almost all of them want to leave to a better place and have a better life but they have no choice. The status of ‘not being here’ or not being rooted here characterised all the people come across the Lane. It seems to be a temporal place for everyone. This lack of ‘locality’ or ‘localness’ provides room for the top-down urban regeneration initiatives. Those in power seem to be able to change the space at will, as long as they have justifiable reasons such as public health and fire safety. But for some members of the CACP who hold ideals in terms of ‘community building’ or ‘local participation,’ this is not a blessing – because there seems to be no ‘real’ local, at least not the ones who really think of this place as their home.

6.4 Process, Assemblage, and Reflectivity: the Organization of CACP

As it turned out, the renewal project did not meet most people's expectations, although many people did not have specific expectations in the first place, but seemed to think it could be a more substantial and influential thing. For example, 19th Yard thought it could have a wang-hong café similar to the In the Alley project that would attract a lot of customers - and some residents even once voiced their concerns about nuisance to the everyday life here - as a way to generate significant rental income much more than eight hundred yuan. The grassroots administration thought they could use the project as a force to clearing out the street vendors,

and in doing so begin the formalisation of the whole street, even though they had already taken the opportunity to secure the right to use the adjoining shopfronts for the following year from the landlord, and to make it mandatory for the current tenants/business that mainly fresh groceries and butchers to move out by the end of their current contract - “*the whole street is a fresh market, we don't need all of these veggie shops. Some of them can be gone, they can go elsewhere*” says the party secretary. The local property owners thought they could rebrand the identity of the street and use the media to attract more ‘attention’ to finally resolve their longstanding inability to redevelop the street. And they also hope for a significant rise of their housing price. Other residents thought their lives might change immediately, such as having their rents raised or being forced to move. As of the summer of 2023 when the project is completed, none of that has happened. And the residents, from initial suspension and alarm, are slowly becoming accustomed and unconcerned - ‘*it's like you're not doing anything, you're not seeing any results*’ - and rumours are circulating such as ‘*the project is bankrupt, there's no money to finish it*’, or the self-governance group has made money out of it.

As for the internal members, even after the completion of the first phase of the project, many of them still had many questions about the origins, purpose and significance of the project, as well as a lack of clarity about their own roles and functions in the project. Near the end of the project, we were still discussing about what CACP was, how it happened or should happen, and what direction and objectives the project aims to. And my first involvement as a researcher in a small urban renewal project was even more full of questions, confusions, and agony, in terms of ethics, methodology, and epistemology.

whose side are we on

In 1967, an American sociologist, Howard S. Becker, raised a question to all social scientists – “whose side are we on”, to question the possibility of doing objective research, and more

importantly, “to have values or not to have values” when undertake social studies. This question is still, if not more, strikingly alarming today. Becker argued that it is not possible to be neutral and conduct research that is technically correct and value free, by reflecting his own research experiences in studying social deviance. Becker’s explorations are of importance, not only because it aims at one of the core concerns in sociology or other social sciences – our bias in studying politically controversial issues, but also it is rooted in a much deeper ontological and epistemological debate that often serve as the background foundations to our political choices as individuals, as well as, theoretical perspective and methodological approaches as researchers. The academic works we produce may actively contribute to the understanding and public discussion regarding these issues, and sometimes alter the political framing and policy regime and cause real effects on certain groups of people or the societal structure – knowledge has impact on the world. The embeddedness of knowledge in value system underlines our responsibilities as researchers and knowledge producers. When we undertake research and make analysis, there is a limit to which we can detach ourselves from who we are and where we are; identity and contextuality seems unavoidable in the process. In many cases, values are the starting point when we enter upon an issue, a problem, or a scientific question.

It seems a lot simpler on an operational level if one is simply doing research as an outsider, disassociate oneself from the matter. But what if I am part of that practice? If others do not see a problem with gentrification and are asking me how to achieve this goal more effectively, what answer should I give as an expert, as their colleague, or as a professional there to provide a service? There is another dimension of “authenticity” is to be true to oneself or a commitment to self-values. I kept on thinking that: perhaps if I had not joined the project in October 2022, the designer-led CACP would have had more “impressive” deliverables. Perhaps the ‘lifelines’ would have been cleared, the environment would have been improved, and the unmanageable street vendors would have relocated to other corners of the city. And in other words, perhaps

gentrification would have been more rapid, and all levels of government will have achievements to publicise. But maybe this is just wishful thinking on my part and over-emphasising my role.

Doing ethnography is a dialectical process. It is “not the world of others, but the world between ourselves and others, our results are deeply marked by this ‘betweenness’, self and other involved in a dialectical process” (Van Maanen, 2011). All the members joined the project were asked to have an internal group name. I named my as “Social Non-Science” (shehui bu kexue) that can also be read as a phrase in Chinese as “society is not scientific”. I attempted to highlight the gap between theory and social reality, between concept and actions. I am deeply aware of the gap between theory and reality. This gap is not just that messy and complex social realities do not fit neat and abstract theories, or that Western-centred theories of urban studies do not fit Chinese society - we have known this for a long time. The gap, to put it simply, is that sociologists or researchers are not on the same page with the rest of the population. I feel useless as a sociologist in real practice or in responding to specific urban needs, with a constant sense of torment and powerlessness. The discussion of gentrification has long been a cliché among academia, but it is rarely discussed among urban professional practitioners in China's rapidly growing cities, let alone among the rest of the population. Few of these CACP members, as well as many of the new urban middle class, or citizens more broadly, actually have a grasp of the urban changes and the deeper socio-economic transformations that have taken place in China over the past few decades. I myself have only slowly come to understand this as a result of my study and research. But perhaps not all that effort was in vain. In one of the meetings, we proposed that there should be more seats for street vendors. This suggestion was eventually taken up. And in the latest official notice on the Community Fund, two of the eleven members of the Self-Governance Committee are street vendors.

人群和事物 people & things	现象和议题 phenomenon & issues	理论和 路径 theories & approaches
1: 街头摊贩 street vendor	18: 非正式经济 informal economy	40: 城市主义 urbanism
2: 休闲活动 leisure activities	19: 城中村 urban village	41: 街道眼 eyes on the street
3: 经济活动 economic activities	20: 拆迁 demolition&relocation	42: 灰空间 transitional space
4: 流动人口 floating population	21: 土地开发 land development	43: 地方与非地方 place and nonplace
5: 老龄人口 aged population	22: 土地金融 land financialization	44: 第三空间 third-space
6: 少数民族 ethnic minority	23: 城市更新 urban renewal	45: 士绅化 gentrification
7: 行人 pedestrian	24: 城市规划 urban planning	46: 土地政治 land politics
8: 车流 traffic flow	25: 用地性质 land use	47: 生命政治 biopolitics
9: 住房 housing	26: 城市化 urbanization	48: 文化资本 cultural capital
10: 城市基础设施 urban infrastructure	27: 城市农业 urban agriculture	49: 社会资本 social capital
11: 公共空间 public space	28: 新陈代谢 urban metabolism	50: 想象的共同体 imagined community
12: 城市垃圾 urban waste	29: 户籍制度 household registration	51: 参与式公民身份 participatory citizenship
13: 城市绿地 urban green space	30: 社会福利 social welfare	52: 策略城市主义 tactical urbanism
14: 城市废墟 urban ruins	31: 社会分层 social stratification	53: 公共熟悉感 public familiarity
15: 城市家具 urban furniture	32: 社会流动 social mobility	54: 行动者网络 actor network theory
16: 服务业 service sector	33: 社会融合 social integration	55: 人作为基础设施 people as infrastructure
17: 基层官僚 street-level bureaucrat	34: 社会偏差 social deviance	56: 宜居城市权利 the right to the city
	35: 污名 stigma	
	36: 性别角色 gender roles	
	37: 街头文化 street culture	
	38: 熟人社会 social network	
	39: 集体身份 collective identity	

Fig.6-17 “The Visible and the Non-Visible: A Limited List of Sociological Concepts relating to the Lane”, produced by the author as part of the exhibition

In terms of the project timeline (*appendix*), the entire project team was slowly assembled, which resulted in many people joining the project at different stages, with changing information, progress of the project, and the state of the alley. When I joined the project as a researcher, the project had already been underway for a few months and the residents had long since moved on to change the lane. This made it difficult to carry out the research that was supposed to be the background to the whole project and forced it to become a strand of a multidimensional project for which I proposed a framework to organise it. Time is another issue. The lane was changing too quickly for the CACP members who just entered the field; but it was changing too slowly for some of the residents, who have been waiting for years to turn it over overnight. They basically live in the rubble for the last decade.

More often than not the question is about who we are. To do research we need to report to and be recognized by the community. When the research started, the community gave each of us a stamped ID card (Fig.6-17). This badge seemed to give us ‘legitimacy’ to come to this alley. Some people, such as landlords, quickly recognised us and felt that we were going to help them to change the demolition status quo, while others, such as tenants or vendors, felt that we were

in league with the city authorities and that we were coming to evict them. The owner of a butcher's shop felt that I was a community representative and treated me with indifference and mixed malice, thinking that I had come to drive them away, despite I explained I was only a researcher and gather information. Some people were willing to talk to us because they think we can be their voice to solve their problems. Therefore, interviews were mainly done with landlords and tenants who were introduced by landlords. while informal conversations were done with other tenants and street vendors.

Conclusions and Reflections

When we enter the field, the field has changed. What is called 'society' is an ongoing social construct, not a fixed, objective entity. We entered the alley as outsiders because of its interest and complexity. But our arrival itself changes the alley. We seem to be doing what we ourselves objected to, which is to turn it step by step into what any ordinary normalised space in the city would look like, or even just gentrifying it.

However we have to avoid glorifying poverty and misery, the current state of Yulin Second Lane is definitely not satisfactory, it may be interesting, but this interest is limited to outsiders, whether they are architects, designers, researchers, and it would be extremely hypocritical of us to indulge in this kind of interest. The status quo needs to change, the environment in which people live and work needs to be improved. And what we need to discuss and explore is how to change it. Can we change, improve or regenerate a place without gentrifying it?

For a century, China has been rapidly transforming over and over. We have been looking beyond today to tomorrow, skipping over the end and launching into new beginnings. Leaving home and coming to a new city to see as a hometown, everything is changing rapidly, the houses the streets the way people dress and talk, to this day it has been completely transformed into a new trendy city. We, as dwellers in the city, are all floating, just as the city itself.

CHAPTER 7.

Conclusion

Urban regeneration has become a hegemonic project in Chinese cities. On the national level, in 2021, "The 14th Five-Year Plan for the National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China and the Outline of the Long-term Goals for 2035" clearly put forward the implementation of urban renewal actions in China. On the municipal level, Chengdu implements 'organic' and 'micro' regeneration with emphasis on the revitalization of old and dilapidated residential courtyards and small-scaled community regeneration. However different patterns of practices emerge from different cities. For example, while Chengdu implements 'organic' and 'micro' regeneration, Shanghai compensated all residents and emptied historic areas in the name of improving residents' quality of life and preserving heritage. The state plays a dominant role in the process of urban regeneration. How does the Chinese local state approach / think about urban regeneration? What are the logics that drive the different regenerations?

As society changes, the planned economy declines, and market forces are becoming stronger and stronger; at the same time, urban society is becoming more and more diverse, complex and mobile, and more and more people are becoming "social beings" instead of being organised in work-units that used to be the basic urban population organisation system. This also poses new challenges to effective state governance and requires continuous adjustment of management systems to be more refined, effective and economically efficient. The so-called urban "community" has changed from managing the minority to managing the majority, gradually replacing work-units as the new urban organisation system. If one thinks about urban regeneration at this level, especially small-scaled neighbourhood regeneration, one can see that it is not, at least not only, a transformation of the physical space of the city, but also a social engineering project aimed at the transformation of the population, and how to effectively manage the fast-changing urban society.

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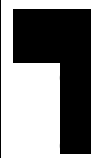
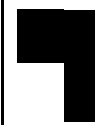








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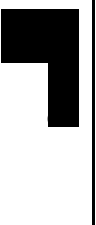

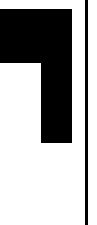
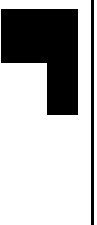


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Annexes

Annex 1: List of Interviews

No.	Date	Name	Title/Institution	projects involved	City/Case	Category
01	10/05 1.5h	[REDACTED]	Architect and founder of Jiakun Architects Co.	Several regeneration projects in Chengdu and other cities since 2000s; rural regeneration projects	Chengdu - Y	Architect
02	11/05 1h	[REDACTED]	Architect and co-founder of Amass Studio	Regeneration project outside of Chengdu (Qionglai Town) and spatial design in historic area of Chengdu	Chengdu - S	Architect
03	13/05 1h	[REDACTED]	Architect and project manager at Sichuan Provincial Architectural Design and Research Institute Co., Ltd. (SOE)	Regeneration project in small cities near Chengdu and recent projects in High-tech zone/new financial CBD of Chengdu	Chengdu - Y	Architect
04	17/05 2h	[REDACTED]	Architect and Director of Urban Regeneration Division at JZfZ Architectural Design Co. Ltd. Before 2016 East China Architectural Design & Research Institute (SOE)	Regeneration projects in east industrial area of Chengdu (industrial sites and danwei buildings); before worked on preserving historic buildings in Shanghai	Chengdu - M	Architect
05	17/05 1h	[REDACTED]	Architect and Founder of Rel. Architecture Studio	Regeneration project in historic area of Chengdu since early 2010s	Chengdu - S	Architect
06	18/05 1h	[REDACTED]	Architect and Co-founder of Menkou Architectural Atelier	Regeneration projects of former Danwei buildings in Chengdu	Chengdu - M	Architect
07	27/05 1.5h	[REDACTED]	Landscape Designer and general manager of Landscape Division at	Regeneration project in historic area of Chengdu since 2016	Chengdu - S	Architect

			ZFZ Architectural Design Co. Ltd.			
08	28/05 1.5h		Architect and Co-founder of Yijie Studio	Community regeneration in Chengdu	Chengdu - Y	Architect
09	21/08 1h		Project manager at Chengdu Smart City	TOD projects in Chengdu	Chengdu	Urban planner
10	31/05 1h		Founder of Yiwei Independent Bookshop	Community regeneration in Chengdu	Chengdu - Y	Cultural expert
11	03/06 1.5h		Vice General Manager of Chengdu XingGuangHua City CONstruction Co., Ltd. (Chengdu Qingyang District SOE land developer)	Regeneration project in historic area of Chengdu	Chengdu - S	Developer
12	09/06 1.5h		Project manager at China Resources Land (Chengdu) Development Co., Ltd. (SOE land developer)	Land redevelopment projects in east industrial area of Chengdu	Chengdu	Developer
13	10/06 1.5h		Architect and Founder of Rel. Architecture Studio	Regeneration project in historic area of Chengdu since early 2010s	Chengdu - S	Architect
14	11/06 2h		Former senior manager at Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL) Incorporated Chengdu Branch	Commercial real estate (re) development in Hi-tech zone of Chengdu	Chengdu	Consultant
15	15/06		Project Manager at China Vanke Co., Ltd. (Chengdu branch)	Project manager of Mengzhuwan urban regeneration project	Chengdu - M	Developer
16	04/06 1.5h		Party Secretary of Yudong Community in Chengdu	Community regeneration in Chengdu	Chengdu - Y	Bureaucrat
17	16/06 1h		Director of Chengdu Community Development Governance Committee	Key policy-maker of community regeneration in Chengdu	Chengdu	Bureaucrat

18	18/06 2h		Architect and founder of JHAL Lab	Platform of urban regeneration research and cultural communication in Chengdu	Chengdu - M	Architect
19	23/06 1h		Founder of Mingtang Youth Cultural and Creative Center	Culture-led regeneration in historic area of Chengdu	Chengdu - S	Consultant
20	24/06 1h		Yitopia Dayu Community Construction Development Center (NGO)	Community regeneration in Chengdu	Chengdu - Y	Architect
21	28/06 2h		Researcher at Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences	Urban planning projects in different cities	Shanghai	Consultant
22	29/06 1h		Professor at Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences	Urban planning projects in Shanghai	Shanghai	Academic
23	03/07 2h		Yitopia Dayu Community Construction Development Center (NGO)	Community regeneration in Shanghai	Shanghai	Architect
24	05/07 1h		Professor and architect at Tongji University	Brownfield regeneration project in Shanghai	Shanghai	Architect
24	06/07 1.5h		Vice-director of Tongji Architectural Design and Research Institute Co., Ltd.	Regeneration in historic area in Shanghai, and urban planning projects in Chengdu	Shanghai, Chengdu	Urban planner
25	07/07 2h		Independent designer and bookstore owner	Community revitalization in Shanghai	Shanghai	Consultant
26	15/07 1.5h		Party Secretary of Fudun West South Street Community, Jinniu District	Community revitalization in Chengdu	Chengdu - F	Bureaucrat
27	16/07 1.5h		Civil servant at Chengdu Community Development and Management	Community revitalization in Chengdu	Chengdu	Bureaucrat

			Committee			
28	27/07 1h		Artist and Organizer of Yard Cultural Creative Park	Culture-led community regeneration in Chengdu	Chengdu - Y	Artist
29	28/07 1h		Residents and active participants in Fudqin regeneration project	Community revitalization in Chengdu	Chengdu - F	Resident
30	03/08 1h		Residents and active participants in Fudqin regeneration project	Community revitalization in Chengdu	Chengdu - F	Resident
31	05/08 1h		Residents and active participants in Fudqin regeneration project	Community revitalization in Chengdu	Chengdu - F	Resident
32	06/08 1h		Former/retired party secretary of Fudqin West South Street Community	Community revitalization in Chengdu	Chengdu - F	Bureaucrat
33	06/08 15mins		Party Secretary of Fudqin Jiedao Community	Community revitalization in Chengdu	Chengdu - F	Bureaucrat
34	10/08 1.5h		Party Secretary of Fudqin Jiedao Community	Community revitalization in Chengdu	Chengdu - F	Bureaucrat
35	12/08 2h		Party Secretary of Fudqin West South Street Community, Jinniu District	Community revitalization in Chengdu	Chengdu - F	Bureaucrat
36	26/08 1h		Consultant of urban projects	Urban regeneration projects in Chengdu	Chengdu - M	Consultant

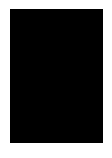


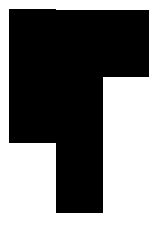




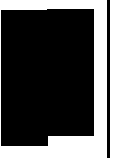
37	27/08 30mins	[REDACTED]	Project manager of Chengdu Wuhou Community Development Foundation	Community revitalization in Chengdu	Chengdu - Y	NGO
38	27/08 20mins	[REDACTED]	Co-founder of Gengxin Community Organization (NGO)	Community revitalization in Chengdu	Chengdu - Y	NGO
40	26/08 30mins	[REDACTED]	Founder of Mapping Workshop	Community revitalization in Chengdu and Guangzhou	Guangzhou	Architect
41	06/09 1h	[REDACTED]	Party Secretary of Wangping Community	Large area regeneration led by local government and Vanke	Chengdu - M	Bureaucrat
42	07/09 30mins	[REDACTED]	Resident in Chenghua district	Food market regeneration workshop	Chengdu	Resident
43	08/09 1h	[REDACTED]	Social worker at Local NGO	Community revitalization in Chengdu	Chengdu - M	NGO
44	09/09 1.5h	[REDACTED]	Project manager of co-working company	Regeneration program aiming at regenerate government-owned property in central city	Chengdu - S	Developer
45	27/08 2h	[REDACTED]	Co-founder of Gengxin Community Organization (NGO)	Community revitalization in Chengdu	Chengdu - Y	NGO
46	16/09 1h	[REDACTED]	Wuhou District Community Development Foundation	Small-scaled regeneration projects in Wuhou district	Chengdu - Y	Bureaucrat
47	16/09 1h	[REDACTED]	Director of Wuhou District Community Development Foundation	Small-scaled regeneration projects in Wuhou district	Chengdu - Y	Bureaucrat
48	23/09 1h	[REDACTED]	Architect in Chengdu	Food market regeneration workshop	Chengdu	Architect

49	24/09 1h	[REDACTED]	Writer and expert in Chengdu cultural studies		Chengdu	Academic
50	25/09 1.5h	[REDACTED]	Retired scholar in policy analysis at Sichuan Academy of Social Sciences; consultant for community-building at Luhu, Chengdu	Community revitalization in Chengdu	Chengdu - Y	Academic
51	26/09 1.5h	[REDACTED]	Scholar and expert practitioner in rural regeneration	Rural regeneration projects across China		Academic
52	27/09	[REDACTED]	Architect in rural regeneration near Chengdu	rural regeneration in Chengdu	Chengdu	Architect
53	12/10	[REDACTED]	Project manager of Moon village regeneration	rural regeneration in Chengdu	Chengdu	Consultant
54	15/10	[REDACTED]	Space operation manager at Vanke	Urban regeneration in Chengdu	Chengdu - M	Professional
55	15/10	[REDACTED]	Owner of Teahouse	Urban regeneration in Chengdu	Chengdu - M	Resident
56	17/10	[REDACTED]	Artist and manager of cultural events at Luhu Community	Community revitalization in Chengdu	Chengdu	Artist
57	19/10	[REDACTED]	Director of Social organization Ai-You-Xi	Community revitalization in Chengdu		Social worker
58	20/10	[REDACTED]	Space operation manager at Vanke	Urban regeneration of historical area in Chengdu	Chengdu - H	Professional
59	27/10	[REDACTED]	Shop owner of bakery	Urban regeneration of historical area in Chengdu	Chengdu - H	Resident

60	03/11		CEO of Taikoo Li	Urban regeneration of historical area in Chengdu	Chengdu	Developer	
61	03/11		Shop owner of optical	Urban regeneration of historical area in Chengdu	Chengdu - H	Resident	
62	11/11		Manager of Boyu long-term rental housing	Urban regeneration in Chengdu	Chengdu - M		
63	29/11		Project manager of regeneration project	Urban regeneration of historical area in Chengdu	Chengdu - S	Professional	
64	30/11		Project manager of regeneration project		Chengdu - S	Professional	
65	3/12		Artist in community revitalization		Chengdu	Artist	
66	4/12		Editor of a digital magazine named as the New Location-Oriented People-Community	Project manager of Dachuan Alley		Consultant	
67	9/12		Artist in community revitalization; chief manager of Art&Society Experiment Lab		Chengdu	Artist	
68	9/12		Project manager of regeneration project in Yulin	Urban regeneration in Chengdu	Chengdu - Y	Developer	
69	10/12		Shop owner in regeneration area		Chengdu - Y	Resident	

70	16/12		Project manager of community regeneration projects Chengzhan	Community revitalization in Chengdu	Chengdu - Y	Consultant	
71	16/12		Shop owner in regeneration area	Urban regeneration in Chengdu	Chengdu - Y	Resident	
72	17/12		Big City Small Village	Urban and rural regeneration in Chengdu	Chengdu - Y	Urban planner	
73	24/12		Architect in regeneration project	Urban and rural regeneration in Chengdu	Chengdu - Y	Architect	
74	30/12		Artist in regeneration project	Community revitalization in Chengdu	Chengdu	Artist	
75	6/1		NGO of Xiajiancao community - community revitalization project "neighbourhood platform"	Urban Regeneration of former industrial area	Chengdu	Social worker	
76	6/1		Resident of a former industrial area	Urban Regeneration of former industrial area	Chengdu	Resident	
78	6/1		Party secretary of Xiajiancao community	Urban Regeneration of former industrial area	Chengdu	Bureaucrat	
79	10/1				Chengdu - Y	Resident	
80	14/1		Resident at Shuangnan		Chengdu	Resident	
81	19/1		Architect and project manager of Yulin	Urban regeneration in Chengdu	Chengdu - Y	Architect	

			East St.			
82	22/1		Vanke Architect	Urban regeneration in Chengdu	Chengdu - M	Architect
83	24/1		Vanke Architect	Urban regeneration in Chengdu	Chengdu - H	Architect
84	1/3		Manager of a renovated community creative space	Community revitalization in Chengdu	Chengdu - Y	Professional
85	2/3		Artist of a renovated community creative space	Community revitalization in Chengdu	Chengdu - Y	Artist
86	2/3		Musician of a renovated community creative space	Community revitalization in Chengdu	Chengdu - Y	Artist
87	5/3		Project manager of a social organisation focusing on suburb community projects	Community revitalization in Chengdu	Chengdu	Social worker
88	15/3		Manager of a famous bar/café that recently relocated to a renewed neighbourhood	Urban regeneration in Chengdu	Chengdu - S	Professional
89	20/3		Manager of a shanghai-based company focusing on urban regeneration projects	Urban regeneration in Chengdu	Chengdu - Y	Consultant
90	21/3		Cultural consultant of urban regeneration in historical neighbourhood	Urban regeneration of historical area in Chengdu	Chengdu - S	Academic

91	23/3		General manager of Ben Hotel and relevant restaurants and former employee of SOE	Urban regeneration in Chengdu	Chengdu - M	Professional
92	23/3		Owner of a teahouse	Urban regeneration in Chengdu	Chengdu - M	Resident
93	25/4		Founder of a cultural and communication company and former employee of SOE	Project manager of several regeneration projects	Chengdu - Y	Consultant
94	2/9/2022		Party secretary at Supo Street Office and former party secretary at Qingbo Community	Urban regeneration in Chengdu	Chengdu	Bureaucrat
95	1/11/2022		Resident and business owner at Yulin 2 nd lane	CACP	Chengdu - CACP	Resident
96	2/11/2022		Resident at Yulin 2 nd lane	CACP	Chengdu - CACP	Resident
97	4/11/2022		Resident and business owner at Yulin 2 nd lane	CACP	Chengdu - CACP	Resident
98	5/11/2022		Resident/ tenant at Yulin 2 nd lane	CACP	Chengdu - CACP	Resident
99	5/11/2022		Resident at Yulin 2 nd lane	CACP	Chengdu - CACP	Resident

100	10/7/2023	[REDACTED]	Graphic designer and co-founder of a graphic design company	CACP	Chengdu - CACP	Designer
101	15/7/2023	[REDACTED]	Graphic designer and co-founder of a graphic design company	CACP	Chengdu - CACP	Designer
102	3/8/2023	[REDACTED]	Fashion designer and founder of a fashion design atelier	CACP	Chengdu - CACP	Designer
103	5/8/2023	[REDACTED]	Architect	CACP	Chengdu - CACP	Architect
104	5/8/2023	[REDACTED]	Architect	CACP	Chengdu - CACP	Architect
105	11/8/2023	[REDACTED]	Project manager	CACP	Chengdu - CACP	Professional
106	12/8/2023	[REDACTED]	Project manager and space manager	CACP	Chengdu - CACP	Professional
107	12/8/2023	[REDACTED]	Graphic designer	CACP	Chengdu - CACP	Designer
108	25/8/2023	[REDACTED]	Volunteers (focus group with four) in CACP	CACP	Chengdu - CACP	NA

CACP PROJECT TIMELINE 项目进程简表

no.	类别	2022					2023													
		6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6						
1	项目 project management	项目统筹	23	项目启动及非正式策划																
		项目会议	1	项目策划——方案筹备	8	多学科核心小组初步组建	18	完成执行方案策划	1	项目执行期间统筹	26	核心小组会议:项目后续计划	23	核心小组会议:项目最新进展及后续安排	26	核心小组会议:时间节点安排				
		correspondence	8	一介&庭发散性讨论会:讨论项目目标及主题思路理解	18	核心小组会议:初期讨论会:同步调研思路和阶段成果	26	核心小组会议:方案汇报会:项目露出方式:调研计划;项目后续计划	18	核心小组会议:初期讨论会:同步调研思路和阶段成果	2	全体会议:项目最新进展及后续安排	1	核心小组会议:片区量取及展陈	7	核心小组会议:开放日分工细化				
2	社区 community collaboration	团队人员	30	怪鸟设计讨论	26	刘澧社会学小组初步讨论	8	OD小组开放研修第一阶段招募开始,4名大学生及青年加入共创调研工作	10	OD小组开放研修第二阶段招募开始,1名青年加入社会学调研工作	12	未授课视频小组加入	24	MMWW Design团队加入	11	与心社视频小组加入	10	OD小组开放研修第三阶段招募开始,2名大学生加入中期执行阶段工作		
		社区	26	与玉东社区沟通空间点位	12	社区居民代表碰头会:了解了居民代表的意见,双方初步认识了项目,建立微信沟通群	25	社区夜话:分享近期调研成果,讨论后续工作安排	1	社区夜话:杨书记与居民讨论进一步的居民自治机制;玉东二巷街区共治委员会:火锅聚餐	26	与玉东社区沟通项目进展及社区花园	26	与玉东社区沟通项目进展及社区花园	26	与玉东社区沟通项目进展及社区花园				
		shared garden	22	社区夜话:核心小组与社区杨金惠书记进行第一次正式讨论,补充了解项目背景,同步项目初步想法,补足社区视角开渠思路	13	二巷居民联合调研群成立	1	二巷下水道维修及街台硬化工程:摊位初期整理	27	社区夜话:社区杨书记分享了近期与居民的沟通情况,一介参与了部分内容讨论	31	二巷摊位工作证及共治规范管理条例初版	29	(玉林二巷5-18栋街区共治管理公约(初版)):发布公约及共治金收取及工作证领取通知	26	内部初步提出社区花园想法	29	探访吴奶奶,并整理记录集132盆植物		
3	调研 fieldwork research	调研	26	社区空间点位初步调研	22	安全隐患视觉设计调研	11	各组分工调研:初期讨论沟通	26	提出多重二巷分析框架:调研计划基本确定及调研任务分配	17	社会学调研小组成立,初期成员4人:拟定为期两个月工作计划	4	安装小组问卷调研	30	平面设计切片实地调研	21	植物切片调研开始发现蔬菜地	24	植物切片调研得知天台菜园
		architecture	8	社区空间点位第二次调研:确定点位	11	SNS内部会议讨论资料梳理分工和实地调研计划	6	SNS内部会议讨论资料梳理分工和实地调研计划	27	SNS小组内部会议目前调研内容讨论:摊位信息电子化	28	SNS实地调研	28	实地调研拍摄视频记录摆摊现状;加入玉林二巷规范管理群当时人数58人	23	第一阶段调研内容梳理	5	调研内容梳理		
		sociology	1	安装小组问卷调研	4	服装调研2	20	SNS内部会议:文献数据报道内容梳理初版	22	SNS小组内部会议:文献数据梳理初版	23	第一阶段调研内容梳理	5	调研内容梳理						
4	空间 space	概念	1	空间选址及确认	30	空间选址及确认	18	原场地拆除工程报价	25	轻钢结构报价、生产(常民建筑)	17	透明瓦面采购	6	建筑地埋施工周期三周	25	建筑室内面台结构定制及安装				
		concept	30	与社区讨论车棚改造概念方案	19	与社区讨论车棚改造初步方案,及了解空间所在二巷街区情况	27	与居民沟通场地管理安全问题:原场地拆除	9	场地拆除:主体结构基础放线	26	过路居民打望新空间,闲聚空间未来功能	7	与居民沟通顶面反光墙解决办法	13	建筑室内面台结构安装				
		scheme	1	车棚改造方案设计(包括主体结构结构设计)	27	与社区讨论车棚改造初步方案,及了解空间所在二巷街区情况	26	与社区讨论车棚改造初步方案,及了解空间所在二巷街区情况	29	与居民沟通场地管理安全问题:原场地拆除	9	场地拆除:主体结构基础放线	26	过路居民打望新空间,闲聚空间未来功能	7	与居民沟通顶面反光墙解决办法				
5	内容 programme	切片	31	各小组地图切片mapping初步提案	11	SNS小组初步讨论切片形式	28	SNS切片内容完善	8	《看见的和看不见的》切片完成	14	建筑地埋施工报价	13	建筑室内面台结构安装						
		mapping	12	植物切片概念通过	25	SNS小组提出(社会学问题意识地图)切片	8	(切莫之物)切片完成	13	SNS内部会议进一步深化切片内容和形式:补充变量照片	19	“修修修”工坊4:实际操作	20	CACP周边产品设计概念及打样						
		workshop	1	实践组提出实践日记切片	7	植物切片统计完81种所有植物种类,并开始整理植物科普信息	20	实践组资料整理	20	24	实践组(实践日记1.0)切片完成	19	“修修修”工坊3:方案讨论	20	CACP周边产品设计概念及打样					
6	媒体 media	设计	15	怪鸟CACP视觉标识设计草图	1	针织地图设计相关服饰产品设计	20	针织地图制作服饰打样完成	22	编辑植物小书文字	4	16	《植物小书》制作完成	20	CACP周边产品设计概念及打样					
		design	15	怪鸟CACP视觉标识设计草图	15	怪鸟根据调研重新设计CACP logo	20	完善针织地图	31	CACP周边研发	30	14	《植物小书》上海高露书店参编(真药治愈城市)							
		video	12	未授课小组视频方案	12	未授课小组视频持续记录及制作	31	天府文创云微信公众号(玉林的故事,会被讲完吧)	8	YOU成都独立书店市集“一介在街上”书展及“我不知道做什么”书论坛	11	YOU成都公众号《为什么越来越多研究者来成都做田野调查》	12	YOU成都公众号《我在高定中心打毛线》						