Understanding the Form Transformation of Traditional Towns and Villages in China (1998-2021)

— a case study on the production of space in the cultural region of Huizhou

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Abstract

Not only Chinese cities have seen vast urban form transformations in the rapid urbanization process, the subordinate traditional towns and villages have also experienced profound form changes, but in a different mode compared to those in cities. This has been especially evident under waves of national policies promoting urbanization and rural development during the past two decades, such as 'Urban Housing System Reform', 'New-Type Urbanization', 'Building a New Socialist Countryside', 'Construction of Beautiful Village' and 'Rural Revitalization'. However, in this process designers (e.g., planners, architects and urban designers) have embraced partial understandings of the form issues and offered problematic approaches to them. To more comprehensively understand the form transformation in traditional towns and villages beyond conventional planning and architectural design arena, deeper research is needed to explain the underlying social-spatial factors especially their logics, involving policy, economy, culture, capital, design, and local people's 'everyday life' (Lefebvre, 1991a).

The research treats the form transformation as the result of 'production of space', (Lefebvre, 1991b) and particularly examines the context of traditional towns and villages to customize an analytical mode of the concept of 'production of space'. It aims to utilize the mode to more comprehensively explain the contextual form transformation with its underlying mechanisms against the backdrop of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics', so as to create a valuable reference for designers and decision-makers.

More specifically, inspired by Lefebvre's dialectical triad of social space (ibid.), the research builds the analytical mode upon three levels: the top-down driving forces (government power and public/nongovernment capital) are the supplier of space,

speaking of 'representation of space (conceived space)'; the bottom-up local people are the receiver and occupier of space, inhabiting 'representational space (lived space)'; the middle level designers should be the negotiator of space, who need to connect the conceived space and lived space through 'spatial practice (perceived space)'. The research then focuses on a specific field: the traditional towns and villages in the cultural region of Huizhou in south-east China, where relevant themes can provide vivid examples of form change. It hence moves the analytical mode to Huizhou to carry out a case study, explaining two trends of contextual form transformation through studying two sub-cases of space production, which all involves local people's living space. The two kinds of space production are: the space production for growth represented by local efforts of 'building new residential districts', and the space production in inventory represented by local causes of 'relocating and renovating dwellings and houses'.

The research argues that the 'production of space' in Huizhou has been in a compromised mode, being different from that in Chinese cities, and the built tradition has been diminished and fragmented. The logics, motivations and expectations of the three levels of stakeholders in the form transformation have been incredibly diverse — yet they have coexisted in the same process of space production and resulted in same form results. Also, the research suggests that designers in the context have not effectively connected the conceived space and lived space in playing their roles, and the position and significance of design have not been well recognized there. The research further recommends that the form change in Huizhou could be design-led growth or regeneration based on a mediating platform formed by urban design wisdoms, and the wisdoms should be carried out by integrated design efforts across urban and rural areas against the backdrop of the national cause of urban-rural integration, which could be implemented through potential regional design guides (e.g., Huizhou region) breaking current urban-rural separations regarding design. Upon this, designers should also hold right design values that not only conform with bigger logics from the space

suppliers, but also aim to put local people first, create places, and nurture wider social awareness of design in the context.

Key words:

Traditional Towns and Villages; Form Transformation; Production of Space; Design; Everyday Life

Acknowledgements

My interest in form problem in traditional towns and villages came from my study for the Master of Architecture in the Southeast University (2009 to 2012). I had been focusing on the design practices and ideas of Wang Shu before he came to be the first Chinese to win the Pritzker prize. My thesis mainly dealt with the 'local strategies' he promotes, and tried to find a rationale for the ambiguous processes from his discursive words to his poetical design. Although being less mature, my exploration did have offered a clearer view to see the trajectory of thoughts and actions from Wang Shu who kept relatively a low profile then. However, the discussion stopped in the scope of architectural form and space, not inquiring into his 'local strategies' for the form issue of 'Chinese cities'.

Like many other influential architects throwing their own prescriptions onto the form problem of a city, Wang Shu's ambitious thoughts on urban form issues follow his ideas of architecture, and are essentially a vague combination of structuralism, post structuralism, related linguistics, as well as semiology and typology. He has put them into his very theoretical inductions and deductions towards a utopian Chinese context which he has been deliberately trying to construct. Despite that his writings are extremely obscure and very problematic, he offers many inspiring concepts such as Texture Cities, Linguistic Cities, Labyrinthian Cities, under his personalised overarching concept of 'Fictionalizing City'.

Those thoughts had been lingering in my minds whilst working as an architectural designer for 5 years in the Architectural Design and Research Institute of Zhejiang University (UAD). However, the development of practical projects and the cooperation and coordination with various stakeholders have provided me a very different perspective of seeing the form problem regarding individual buildings and urban/rural

districts. Also, the recent political trend of revitalizing the rural areas of China has offered me another dimension to understand relevant form issues. I have begun to realize that Wang Shu's prescriptions on the form and space in Chinese cities, towns and villages are not very applicable when confronting multiple factors outside the design circle; and it is not always rational to deal with form transformations during urban and rural developments mainly through a conventional and self-referential architectural perspective as what he has been doing. Indeed, many architects see the form problems in urban and rural developments as extensions of form issues of architecture creations. Usually, what they can do is only doable in their own right of form interpretations, contributing little to the solutions of wider social issues underlying the physical form results. Hence their prescriptions seem to be very self-referential and territorial. The architects have not only largely neglected the 'urban' and 'rural' parts regarding social implications, but also seemed powerless in the "design" part regarding the comprehensive development processes of form and space in the real world. Thus, the merits and demerits from Wang Shu's theories and practices and my own practical experiences in the real world have prompted me to think about the form problem with a much broader view, especially when it faces the dynamic urbanization and rural development processes in contemporary China. This has become the starting point of my PhD research, for which I have dedicated myself for the past 4 years.

A lot of people have contributed to my research and this thesis. I want to thank all of them. I am extremely grateful to Professor Tim Heath, my supervisor, for years of patient encouragement, intellectual advice and generous support in both my research and life, which are invaluable. He has led me to understand the essence of PhD and hence to become an independent researcher. I am also very grateful to the University of Nottingham, for the scholarship, and for the continuous support during the COVID situation.

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More, my special respect goes to all the people fighting against the COVID, saving lives and bringing the world back to normal.

Last, I would like to dedicate this piece of work to my beloved motherland China, and those who love her.

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A vast world, the great achievements.

— Mao Zedong

Clear waters and green mountains are as good as mountains of gold and silver.

— Xi Jinping

Chapter 1: Background — The Development of Towns and Villages and the Responses from Designers

1.1 Introduction

Compared to cities, traditional towns and villages[1] in China have also experienced profound form transformation in the urbanization process (Figure 1.1), which has been a result of a series of national political policies promoting the urbanization and rural development. These causes have also struck a chord with designers, who have seen it as a great opportunity to support these areas outside cities through their design efforts. However, they have had partial (or even poor) understandings of and less influence on relevant form issues, and thus the form results have been very problematic, such as the irrational expansion of towns' built-up areas, the disappearance of traditional built environment in villages, the reappearance of modern settlements with monotonous form appearances, the alteration of existing buildings with anarchic form expressions, and the consequential loss of character, identity, public realm and social sustainability. The local people especially, have been not always carefully considered by designers.

Figure 1.1. The shrinking traditional settlements and expanding modern residential districts in Huizhou (source: Author).

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[1] In this thesis, traditional towns and villages refer to towns and villages having a more traditional built-environment (form and space) (see a detailed discussion in Sub-section 3.4.2).

The following discussion hence first reflects the development of towns and villages, especially the latter as the countryside, and then points out the designers' attitudes and behaviours in response to the development.

1.2 The development of Chinese towns and villages since 1949

Traditional towns and villages are a part of general towns and villages, and the development of them should be viewed from a historical and national perspective against the background of urbanization and rural development processes. Indeed, within the processes since the found of PRC, their developments have been strategically utilized and operated, with the town and village assigned different key roles. Their developments have fundamentally supported the whole country's development and progress.

1.2.1 Sacrifice as a practical strategy

The rural development of China has seen many ups and downs since 1949, but it has been situated in a very critical position recently. The recent headlines, especially relevant official discourses, have not only expressed their increasingly serious concerns, but also showed a growing strong mentality of 'compensating' the rural areas. Some examples are listed below:

> Building the new socialist countryside is a great historical mission in the modernization process of China.
>
> (16th CPC Central Committee, 2005)

> Time to repay the historical debt cities owe to the countryside.
>
> (China Daily, 2017)

> Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs: It is the time for the industry to feed the agriculture in return, and the city to support the countryside in return.

(The Paper, 2020)

To regard solving the problems related to agriculture, the rural areas and the farmers as the top priority of the party's work.

(People's Daily, 2021)

Wen Tiejun: the rural revitalization is the cornerstone for China to face the domestic and global challenges.

(Bao, 2021)

Why compensating?

It is because the development process of China had left a huge inequality between the urban and rural areas, with the countryside lagging far behind the cities. The newly built poor country then had an overwhelming ambition for achieving a quick and comprehensive industrialization, because it was crucial and urgent for consolidating its regime both domestically and internationally, for breaking the US-led blockade and embargo (Dong and Wen, 2019; Wen, 2012), and for catching up those developed countries in a shorter time. Hence in a thorough socialist system, the central state had overly prioritized the development of industry (heavy secondary industry), with most of the resources being poured into cities where most of such industries concentrated in. Within these resources, the surplus value from agriculture in the rural area had been one of the greatest contributors. The rural areas hence had kept being 'exploited' to support the industrialization (Wen and Pan, 2016; Wen, 2017; Niu, 2003). Also, the targets of urbanization and modernization that followed were closely connected with industrialization, but they were all started from cities, being emphasized within the urban domain only. Therefore, the rural areas, continuously, were left behind in the development process until recently. Indeed, in this sense the rural area of China has

been 'sacrificed' for developing the cities. 'Scissor Difference', 'Dual Track System', 'Urban-Rural Dichotomy', 'Hukou System' (registered permanent residence system), 'agricultural tax', 'temporary residential permit' and 'extracting rural value' are particular concepts involving the urban-rural relations, which all remain fresh today. They all contributed to a series of gloomy pictures of the rural area, such as the dying hollow village, the wandering migrant workers, the growing deserted farmland, and the left-behind children and elderly villagers.

"The farmers' life is very hard! The rural villages are so poor! The agriculture is in great danger!" This strong complaint came from Li Changping's letter to the then prime minister Zhu Rongji in 2002 (Li, 2001, pp.20-27). Li was the secretary of party committee of Qipan county in Hubei province. In the letter Li warned the deep problems in rural China then. For example, too many people rushed into cities without proper plans, leaving arable land abandoned, and the farming cost including tax, land rent, and fees for seeds and fertilizers, was too high (ibid.).[2] Also, according to Li, the 'Household Responsibility Contract System' that once extricated farmers from the mire of 'People's Commune' to raise the rural productivity, was then more like 'a shackle on neck', as it stipulated that one household can only keep its own portion of total farming income after handing in the required portion to the country and collective group (agricultural tax and land rent). However, the product price kept decreasing, whilst farming cost kept increasing and the tax and rent remained unchanged; farmer's net income was getting lower and lower, posing a growing burden on them (ibid.). This was exacerbated by the fact that some supporting policies from the central state were hardly implemented well

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[2] Li raised an example for then (ibid.): For a family of five farming 8 *mu* (1 *mu* = 666.67 m^2) land, the yearly invest would be 2500-3000 *yuan* (excluding the cost for watering, disaster preventing), yet the yields per *mu* were around 500 kg of unhusked rice, being sold at only 400 *yuan* (0.8 *yuan* per kg). Thus, the annual farming reward was around 3200 *yuan*, similar to the invest. But if counting in the labour, nearly 80% of them would definitely loss money. More, Li pointed out that the grassroots village collectives were always in debt. 85% of them had a deficit of 0.4 million *yuan* and 90% of them had taken out loans as much as 0.6 million *yuan*; they cannot keep functional in the rural management(ibid.).

at the local level. For example, there were few kinds of efficient loan service for farmers, and the local cadres would not usually tell relevant truths to the upper-level inspectors coming down (ibid., pp.22-23). Based on these problems, Li urged the state to immediately focus on *sannong wenti* (the three rural issues) (ibid., pp.23-37), namely the three faces of rural problem, relating to three aspects: the farmer, the rural region, and the agricultural industry.

After this event the term of *sannong wenti* was formally adopted by official discourses, yet it was Wen Tiejun, a rural economist, that first raised this in mid-1990s to describe the multi-faced rural problems (Zhen, 2018). Wen not only leads the research on *sannong wenti*, but further calls for a more strategic understanding of the rural development of China during the past 70 years. He suggests that the rural area, with its three aspects in a strong resilience, has continued to save the cities and even the whole nation for three times from difficult situations relating to economic crisis triggered by international factors (Dong and Wen, 2019).[3] This has all supported China to 'delink', as he quotes Samir Amin (1990 cited in Dong and Wen, 2019, p.4). China has been able to subject its "external relations to the logic of internal choices," (Amin, 1990, p.60) escaping crises brought by the global capitalist system, achieving an independent developing route controlled by itself.

'The rural area saving China for three times' is essentially a post-colonial understanding of the global situation and urban-rural relationship. China has succeeded in transforming itself from a poor semi-colonial and semi-feudal country, to a rising country walking towards a socialist modernization. Nevertheless, instead of similarly colonizing somewhere outside the country, it has had to turn to the vast rural areas inside its territory, which offers abundant resources — a kind of 'domestic colonization'. Therefore, the development strategy's logic behind these ups and downs seems

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[3] See a detailed discussion in Section 5.4.

consistent, which is to treat the rural area as a vast reservoir that can stabilize the whole nation in uncertainties. The rural area had been *sacrificed* to transfuse its blood into cities in past years. Now it is being *revitalized* to more widely open its resources to outside factors (e.g., capital), undertaking the crises transferred from cities to let them have soft landing, so as to defuse the risks. The long-fixed double track separating urban and rural development elements (e.g., people, land, money, infrastructure) has enabled this strategy.

Indeed, the *sannong wenti* within urban-rural interaction has an evolving significance. Li Changping's warning of *sannong wenti* indeed happened just before the large-scale compensation began, when the agricultural overproduction, the decrease of product price, and the loss of rural population had together created the difficult situation. His appeal was more situated in a single direction, like receiving 'hardship-relief' or 'resource-compensation' only from upper levels, still seeing the urban-rural relationship from a zero-sum perspective. Nevertheless, the *sannong wenti* during the Rural Revitalization (discussed later) is being considered from a more sustainable perspective with a multi-win prospect, with the rural area being both the beneficiary and saver. In treating the rural area, from *sacrificing* to *compensating*, and to *revitalizing*, these top-down strategies have been more likely a series of practical measures responding to different realities of China, which are not timely urgent remedies, but rather some situated 'strategies and scripts'.

1.2.2 Strategic policies compensating and revitalizing rural areas to achieve urban-rural integration

Since 2004, the No.1 Central Documents of every year have all focused on rural

development, seeing *sannong wenti* as the key.[4] Hence the political effort of compensation to lift the rural side has been systematically presented under an overarching principle — to achieve the urban-rural integration during the process of urbanization and rural development. Its start point could date back to around 1979, when the rural industry (township and village enterprise) started to take shape. The 'township and village enterprise' (TVE) was promoted by Fei Xiaotong, who foresaw more opportunities from the diversified rural industries than from merely agriculture. He believed TVE can bring prosperity to the countryside and richness to the rural people, as he suggested that "industry creating richness, business adding vitality, agriculture ensuring stabilization, and industry complementing agriculture." (Fei, 1988, p.35) He further pointed out that a proper industrialization process starting from the rural side and embracing the rural people could also contribute to a balance between cities and villages, which "has already introduced the budding of urban-rural integration." (Fei, 1999, p.229, cited in Shen, 2014, p.4)

The small town was seen as the key to realize such an industrialization and integration as it could link cities and act as more developed nodes to connect surrounding villages, hold rural labour, and concentrate and lead rural industries. As seen by Fei, the towns can help build economic centres in multiple levels, relieve the shock and vibration caused by the rapid modernization and urbanization process, and ensure the stabilization in the great social transformation (Fei, 2002, p.5). Also, the towns can be a new transitional area "transforming from traditional rural communities to modern cities." (Fei, 1996, p.3) They can play a key role in solving "the country's emerging problems of population, employment, commodity production and circulation," contributing to the "rationalization of the nation's economic and administrative

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[4] The documents are listed online by China Institute for Rural Studies, Tsinghua University, available at: http://www.cirs.tsinghua.edu.cn/document/. A summary of them was also made by Xinhuanet, available at: http://www.moa.gov.cn/ztzl/jj2021zyyhwj/tsyhwj_26482/202102/t20210222_6361875.htm

structure and the redivision of rural labour and trades."(Fei, 1986, p.7) The development of rural industry (TVE) was hoped to contribute a bottom-up urbanization at town level, which could be integrated into the urbanization started from cities to form the urban-rural integration.

'Building the small town' was followed by some official policies. For example, the *Decision of the CPC Central Committee on Several Big Issues on Agriculture and Rural Areas* (CPC Central Committee, 1998) officially recognized that developing small towns is a critical strategy to promote the development of rural economy and rural society, and the *Several Opinions of the CPC Central Committee and State Council on Promoting the Healthy Development of Small Towns* (CPC Central Committee and State Council, 2000) further offered detailed guidelines to improve the towns to and to connect them with the developing socialist market economy, like emphasizing the towns' quality, finding their features, making coordinated master plans, nurturing suitable economy foundations, and managing the land and registered residence.

Nevertheless, things did not really follow Fei's expectation. The structural transformation in the later development did not allow the town to effectively fulfil its mediate role, but had strengthened the polarization between city and village (Li, 2013). The cities became more dominant in the socialist market transition. The scale and advanced industries kept standing immobile around cities, especially those in coastal areas (He, 2007; Li, 2013; Qiao, 2020). With the TVE declining,[5] the rural population moving out to city factories, the middle level of town was overlooked, and the gap between urban and rural remained huge (Li, 2013; Qiao, 2020). The 'Scientific Outlook on Development', an overarching strategy raised in 2003 recognized related structural

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[5] TVE lost the competition with factories in cities especially coastal cities, which undertaken the industrial transfer from developed countries, and had heavier investment in industries with a more advanced management. See Qiao's discussion (2020).

problems like the extensive growth mode, the growing income gap, the still-weak agriculture (Xu, 2008), and it urged to 'put the people first', aiming for a comprehensive, balanced and sustainable development under an overall consideration, within which urban-rural balance and integration was again highlighted (Guang Ming Daily, 2010). However, the role of town was not specifically mentioned. The small-town strategy to achieve urban-rural integration had met its difficulties.

For the efforts specifically focusing on the rural side, although a series of policies had been enacted to solve *sannong wenti* since 1978 (Huang, 2018), there was still a lack of comprehensive policies integrating every aspect of rural issues, but a good trend actually emerged in the aforementioned *1998 decision*, as it set up a goal to build a new socialist countryside in three aspects: economy, politics and culture (op. cit., 1998). 'Building a New Socialist Countryside' (BNSC) as a concept was first mentioned. Later the 2006 No.1 central document *Several Opinions of CPC Central Committee and State Council on Promoting the Construction of New Socialist Countryside* (CPC Central Committee and State Council, 2006) further confirmed this concept and clarified its significance, lifting it to be the overarching rural policy. The 17th National Congress of CPC then consolidated this policy and connected it with the 'Scientific Outlook' highlighting urban-rural integration (Hu, 2007). The gravity in balancing the urban-rural development had then moved to the rural side.

Keeping focusing on *sannong wenti*, the BNSC raised five general requirements for rural development: (achieving) an advanced production, an improved livelihood, a civilized social atmosphere, a clean and tidy environment and a democratic management (op. cit., 2006). It comprehensively included eight detailed aspects to fulfil the task (ibid.):

    1. to integrate the economic and social development in the urban and rural

areas, to progress solidly;

2. to promote the modernization of agriculture, to strengthen the industrial support;

3. to ensure a sustained increase in agricultural output, to consolidate the economic base;

4. to reinforce the construction of rural infrastructure, to improve the material condition;

5. to accelerate the development of rural social programs, to nurture new farmers;

6. to deepen the rural reform, to perfect the ensuring system;

7. to enhance the rural democracy, to complete the rural governance; and

8. to strengthen the leadership, to mobilize the whole party and society to care, support and join 'Building a New Socialist Countryside'.

The first aspect is noteworthy, as it confirmed the major trend of 'compensating the rural' by stating that: "now, our country has entered a developmental stage of 'industry supporting agriculture and city helping village'; the capacity and condition of greatly aiding the three rural issues has been preliminarily ready."(ibid.) It also called for guaranteeing a stable financial inclination towards rural areas, turning the focus of infrastructural investment to there, offering a more relevant social security there, and ensuring a more equal employment between urban and rural sides (ibid.).

The fourth aspect detailed the requirements to develop the rural infrastructure and living environment being crucial to the form transformation. Besides issues like water conservancy facilities, farmland quality, electricity supply and transportation, the planning and design of villages and the management of built environment were firstly emphasized (ibid.). Some key points are quoted below:

…the rural people are keen to see improvements in the living environment and the appearance and landscape of village. Governments at all levels need to stress the planning of villages, to arrange financial support on preparing relevant village plans and to conduct pilot projects about rural governance;

...they need to strengthen the planning and management of house sites and to heavily promote optimal utilization of rural construction land, and to offer rural house design drawings that are economic, safe, suitable, efficient and sustainable for free...

...the characters of villages, local areas and ethnic areas need to be highlighted, and the ancient houses and settlements with historical and cultural value need to be protected. In the principle of making economies, the renovations of existing houses need to be promoted, in order to prevent large-scale demolitions and reconstructions...

(ibid.)

'Premier guarantees change in rural areas' — one headline from China Daily can demonstrate the determination of promoting BNSC from the very top level (China Daily, 2006):

He said China should always give priority to building a new countryside and promoting co-ordinated urban and rural development, which he described as long-term, arduous and complicated.

Wen vowed to boost the development of modern agriculture and the rural economy, giving priority to stabilizing grain production and increasing farmers' income in a sustained manner, while improving education, science

and technology, health and grass-roots democracy.

China will allocate more resources to rural areas, including more public spending and improved public services. It will shift the focus of State infrastructure construction to rural areas, he added.

…

Wen said increased spending on education, public health and culture should be used mainly in the countryside, while the urban areas should support rural development through various channels.

Premier Wen's promotion of BNSC formally proved the transfer of the development gravity. A fundamental improvement of the rural areas fully began. Since then, the rural built environment along with the comprehensive improvement of rural infrastructure has seen an unprecedented transformation, so has the physical form there.

Another local case in Zhaoyuan city of Shandong province illustrated a vivid example of implementing BNSC, the content related to the built environment is quoted below (China Daily, 2006):

...

In building a new countryside, Zhaoyuan will stick to the principles of nurturing new industries, creating a new environment, cultivating a new image for the farmers and establishing new systems…

…

First of all, the city will work hard to give a face-lift of farmers' settlements through proper community planning and design. The city will set up 100 exemplary villages by the end of the year, in the hope to promote the practice throughout Zhaoyuan by 2010.

…

On the track of supporting the rural areas through BNSC, the state's top mind progressed to link rural improvement with Ecological Civilization — a long-term target which was first mentioned in 17th National People's Congress (NPC) and became a more explicit strategy afterwards, pointing to the harmonious relationship between human society and nature (Wei et al., 2021). Early in 2005, nearly at the same time when BNSC was launched, the theory of 'Two Kinds of Mountain' — 'clear waters and green mountains being as good as mountains of gold and silver' became a pioneering thought to guide the connection between the complex rural society and rich ecological meanings. [6] Its underlying meaning indicates the conviction that "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets," and advocates "harmonious coexistence between humans and nature" as well as "the path of green and sustainable development."(Xi, 2017) In this line, Anji county then pioneered the Construction of Beautiful Village in 2008, an updated concept not only adhering to the five requirements in BNSC, but also indicating the significance of Ecological Civilization across rural areas (Gongchan Dangyuan Wang, 2019). Anji's experience was then promoted nationwide, with the 2013 Central Conference on Rural Work further consolidating the concept of Beautiful Village (Economic Daily, 2013): "If China needs to be strong, then its agriculture needs to be strong; if China wants to be beautiful, then its rural area needs to be beautiful; if China wants to be rich, then its rural people need to be rich." From 'Two Kinds of Mountain' to 'Construction of Beautiful Village', these efforts have laid a foundation for the logics of Ecological Civilization in the following strategy of Rural Revitalization.

Whilst the BNSC continued to be implemented, the towns, cities and related urbanization efforts were actually not left behind. In 2014, the *National Plan on New-Type Urbanization (2014-2020)* (CPC Central Committee and State Council，2014)

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[6] This was mentioned by Xi Jinping in Anji county when he governed Zhejiang. See a report from Qiushi Wang (2020).

came out to deal with practical problems in there. For example, inadequate urban public service was offered to people migrated from countryside, which means 'urbanization of land' being much faster than 'urbanization of people'; urban space was in irrational scale and distribution with a poor management; and conservation of heritages was inefficient (ibid.). The 2014 plan followed the 2003 'Scientific Outlook' to put people first, acknowledging that numerous rural migrants wanted to fully settle in cities (ibid.), so it has aimed to offer them a fair access to urban life and service, through solving the problems of 'three hundred million people' in three aspects: to help one hundred million rural migrant people to really settle down in urban areas, to renovate the shanty areas and urban villages where one hundred million people live in, to lead one hundred million rural people to be urbanized locally in central and western regions (Wang, 2014).

In line with this, the small towns have been again raised as the key (CPC Central Committee and State Council, 2014). Because on the one hand, they can help to achieve a more coordinated development by undertaking relevant industries and providing suitable resources under a more rational distribution mode in a regional level, easing the pressure of big cities. On the other hand, the towns can help to settle, concentrate and divide the increasing newly urbanized people outside big cities, and could continue to attract and anchor more people coming out from countryside by offering them jobs and public services similar to those in cities. This 'local urbanization' actually does not necessarily cause a loss of rural population, as people can much more easily move between work places in towns and their homes in surrounding villages and take combined occupations like being farmer and worker at different times. Indeed, as mentioned by Li Tie (2021), "reducing the number of farmers can really enrich the farmers." Less rural population with more arable land per capita can raise the agricultural efficiency, optimize its structure, and increase the effect of 'compensation'(ibid.). Those urbanized people in towns can dynamically interact with villages, activating many other related industries in there. Thus, appropriately

urbanizing some rural people can help sharing the pressure of *sannong wenti* (ibid.) From this perspective, the small towns with industries, resources, talents, and close connections to both villages and cities are again highlighted by the 'New Type Urbanization' as critical nodes to help the rural development, and hence support the urban-rural integration (Guang Ming Daily, 2020; Xia, 2020). The integration is now formally under a driving mode of 'twin engine'. One is promoting rural development, and the other is promoting local urbanization.

On the rural side, after almost ten year's development under the strategy of BNSC, the 19th National Congress of CPC in 2017 lifted the overarching BNSC to a higher level called 'Rural Revitalization', which continues to emphasize *sannong wenti* and has upgraded the 'five requirements' in BNSC to 'industry prosperity, ecological liveability, civilized rural customs, effective governance and affluent life' (Xi, 2017). Later the *Strategic Plan for Rural Revitalization (2018－2022)* (CPC Central Committee and State Council，2018b) progressed to offer some detailed requirements lying in eight aspects, which are based on five major targets: the revitalization of rural industry, talents, culture, ecology and organization. It is a phased plan conforming with 'two centenary goals' (ibid.).[7] By 2020, relevant institutional framework and political system would be formed, and a moderately prosperous society in all aspects will be realized, with achievements seen in agriculture, industry, income, infrastructure, environment, public service, ecology, culture, organization and governance. By 2035, the cause will achieve decisive progress, and the agricultural modernization and even rural modernization will be largely realized. By 2050, the goal of Rural Revitalization will be fully achieved, with the rural industry being strong, the village will being beautiful, the people being rich.

The eight aspects are (ibid.):

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[7] The centenary of the founding of CPC in 2021 and the centenary of the founding of PRC in 2049.

1. constructing a new structure of rural revitalization;

2. accelerating the agricultural modernization;

3. enriching and expanding the rural industry;

4. building a beautiful countryside with ecological and pleasant living environment;

5. enriching the rural culture;

6. perfecting the modern rural governance;

7. ensuring and improving the rural livelihood; and

8. improving the policy system in urban-rural integration.

The specific upgrades from BNSC mainly lie in five aspects: poverty, land, people, finance, and ecology. The plan has determined to eliminate poverty in rural areas, building a base for further revitalization efforts (ibid.). It aims to deepen the rural land reform through activating the homestead land and rural profitable construction land (discussed in Sub-section 8.2.2), and it also tries to accelerate the reform of shareholding co-operative system of collective-operating assets by promoting 'Three Changes',[8] so as to explore new implementing modes and operating mechanisms of rural collective economy (ibid.).

It strives to attract talents, which are not only the people coming back to their hometowns, but also those more educated ones originating from cities. It aims "to let all kinds of talented people to show their abilities, to strut their stuff and to realize their dreams." (ibid.)

For the financial issues, it calls for a wider financial reform for rural areas by opening

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[8] This is discussed in Section 5.4, meaning resource becoming assets, capital becoming stock and farmers becoming shareholders.

more funding channels other than the transfer payment from upper levels. Government bonds, bank loans, private capitals, and other diversified yet suitable financial supports are welcomed. In addition, the allocation of land revenue from 'Land Finance' (discussed in Section 5.3) will prioritize the Rural Revitalization (ibid.).

It also stresses the importance of ecology, highlighting the significance of rural areas in supporting the Ecological Civilization, as a mean to further relieve the crises from urban areas (discussed in Section 5.4). It suggests that:

> …to insist that clear waters and green mountains are as good as mountains of gold and silver, to persist in respecting, complying with, protecting the nature, to integrate the governance of mountains, rivers, arable lands, forests, lakes, grass into a system, to accelerate the transformation of production and life, to push the ecology revitalization, to build a beautiful, ecological, liveable countryside ....
>
> (ibid.)

Three reports well show the vivid picture of implementing the Rural Revitalization. Relevant contents are quoted below:

> **Talent needed for rural revitalization**
>
> ...
>
> Wei Zaiping, Party chief of Meitan county, Guizhou province, said regions could achieve better and faster development with expert personnel, such as those in East China.
>
> …
>
> Wei cited the shortage of marketing talent as an example. 'Holiday resorts were built around picturesque tea plantations. But because of poor marketing

and management the guest rooms are hard to book during holidays and are forgotten on other days,' he said.

(Li, 2018)

Going rural: new trend for Chinese urbanites

GUIYANG - Having lived in a city for years, retiree Pi Yu wanted to escape the endless flow of cars, the concrete high-rises and the fast-paced life.

…

In 2018, she joined a program launched by a village tourism company that transforms decrepit rural houses into hotels.

…

'The people in the city have the money, the farmers have vacant houses and the company offers services in hotel management — a win-win-win situation,' said Xiao Jintao, vice-manager of Guizhou Shuidong Village Housing Tourism Co.

(China Daily, 2019)

Rural revitalization leads to prosperity in Jiading

…

After two years of renovation, the village has grown into a pastoral complex integrating beautiful countryside, modern agriculture and rural tourism, helping increase villagers' incomes and promote sustainable development.

Many Jiangnan-style homestay facilities are nearly completed, and will bring great benefits to local people once they start operating.

In addition, the village rolled out an array of measures to make land use more efficient and promote the integrated development of primary, secondary and

tertiary industries, creating hundreds of jobs for local residents, and helping them to earn higher incomes without having to leave their hometown for work.

(Administration of Jiading District of Shanghai, 2020)

In the Rural Revitalization era, the one-way 'compensation' mode operated from city to villages has strategically become a mutual beneficial one between the two sides. As a 'cornerstone' and 'historical mission', it is bringing the urban-rural integration to a new stage. Together with the 'New Type Urbanization', it has upgraded the 'twin engine' driving to the goal of rural modernization in fulfilling the 'Great Rejuvenation' (Xinhua News Agency, 2021).

1.3 Designers' responses and problems

The BNSC began the large-scale construction of rural infrastructures and buildings in villages; the New-Type Urbanization has created enormous new demands for residences and facilities around small towns; and the Rural Revitalization has ushered in fresh investments and new rural land reforms that would greatly change the existing form and space in the countryside, and potentially increase the scale and value of rural properties. All these strategic policies have resulted in a huge transformation of physical form in the built environment outside cities, including the built-up area of towns, townships, and villages that are administratively subordinate to towns and townships.

1.3.1 The responses

The related design knowledge and behaviours,[9] have been always actively involved in these form changes. In academic arenas there have been intense debates on related design issues, and in practical cases there have been diligent efforts towards the delivery and construction processes in the context,[10] especially in the countryside recently. These have all represent the designers' enthusiasm and responsibility towards the development of towns and villages.

According to Sun and Zhang (2017), the number of papers under the theme of rural planning has grown quickly since 2003, and the focus of the research has moved from 'small town development' to BNSC, and to 'urban-rural integration', with the content broadened as well, including rural economy, society, environment, culture, public

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[9] In this thesis these mainly refer to planning, architectural design and urban design.

[10] Before Chapter 6, the context means 'traditional towns and villages'; after Chapter 6, it specifically means 'traditional towns and villages' in Huizhou.

participation, and rural governance. And in *Jianzhu xuebao* (The Architectural Journal), the top architectural journal in China, there has also been a growing number of topics focusing on architectural design in villages since around 2005.[11]

The design practice in towns has grown quickly following the expansion of the built-up areas, being similar to that of cities regarding the regulations and procedures, yet with a smaller scale in each case. The design practice in villages has also expanded a lot since the launch of BNSC, but recently it has become increasingly intensive against the backdrop of Rural Revitalization. Many headlines can demonstrate this trend towards villages, as exemplified below:

> To Send the Design Drawings to Rural Areas, to Serve the Villagers, to Contribute the Task of 'Building a New Socialist Countryside'
>
> (Huang, 2006)

> Anhui Province Organizing 800 Architects to Design New Rural Houses for the Villagers
>
> (Xinhua News Agency, 2006)

> The Taiwan Architect Coming to the Mainland to Design Rural Houses
>
> (Dongfang Zaobao, 2012)

> FIELD STUDY—
>
> Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas hosts a marathon talk session on China's rur
>
> al development as part of the 2018 Wuzhen International Architecture Form.
>
> (Deng, 2018)

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[11] For example, relevant papers concentrated in the year of 2006 (11 papers), 2011 (18 papers), 2013(9 papers), 2015 (9 papers), 2016 (18 papers), 2017(17 papers), 2018(14 papers), and 2021(11 papers).

Chinese Pavilion at 2018 Venice Biennale to Investigate 'Building a Future Countryside'

(AD Editorial Team,2018)

Architects Practicing Rural Revitalization: Design is Changing the Countryside

(Wu, 2018)

Designers' active involvement in related form changes since the launch of BNSC has been widely described as the movement of 'design going down to the countryside'—an analogy with the historical movement of 'up to the mountains and down to the countryside' in Mao's era (Ye and Huang, 2017, p.98). According to Ye and Huang (2019), there have actually been four waves of 'design going down to the countryside' since 1949, with the latest two beginning after the launch of BNSC. The third wave just followed the BNSC and was more organized and centralized from top down; the latest fourth wave has been advocated by the Rural Revitalization, being more liberated, dynamic, diversified and intensive from bottom up (ibid.). The latter has been officially backed by the central government, exemplified by two notifications launched by then Ministry of Housing and Urban-rural Development (MOHURD) in 2018 to promote design in the countryside).

The *Notifications of the Ministry of Housing and Urban-rural Development on Conducting the Work to Lead and Promote Design Going Down to the Countryside* (MOHURD, 2018) aims to raise the quality of rural construction, by organizing design forces from all aspects to support relevant services for the rural areas, such as wisdoms from disciplines of planning, architecture, landscape, municipal engineering, artistic design, cultural planning…etc., and designer personnel made by individual designers,

designers from institutes, and students, teachers, professors or national academicians from colleges or schools. It calls for nurturing a group of people that know and love villages, and determine to serve them. The *Notifications of the Ministry of Housing and Urban-rural Development on further enhancing the planning and construction work of villages* (MOHURD, 2018) has further mentioned that by 2020, the planning or re-planning of relevant rural areas in the county (municipal) region should be comprehensively finished to guide rural construction, with the coercive revoking and merging of villages being prohibited. It has again highlighted the shared working mechanism between multiple roles, such as to think together, build together, manage together, assess together, and enjoy together. In addition, it seeks for better institutional supports to better manage the design and construction process. Under the top-down promotion, the fourth wave of design activities has started to boom in rural areas of China.

1.3.2 The problematic design interventions into the contextual form problem

However, for designers, no matter how comprehensive and complicated their professional knowledge and methods are, in the end their answers to problems must be certain grounded operations of physical form and space. To deliver the value of design through dealing with the forms could be the essence of their work. Nevertheless, such form operations towards the traditional towns and villages have been proved to be very problematic.

Seen from inside the design practice, there have been a juxtaposition of shortcomings from different approaches to the contextual form problems, being largely inherited from those to cities, and they entangle with each other.

For example, the vision of planning has been still macro and the standpoints have been political. The profession has continued its instrumental role (Zhao, 2013; Chen and Thwaites, 2013, p.158-159; Wu, 2015, p.76), holistically regulating the form development to serve economic and political goals rather than carefully reaching grounded and detailed form problems and related issues of tradition through a three-dimensional perspective that is more perceptible.

It has faced disparate land policies outside cities and exerted different influences on the form there. In towns that are administratively counted to be urban, where the built-up areas are constructed on state-owned land, planning has been no different from that in cities, like working from the master plan to detailed plan in fulfilling planning controls, being greatly influenced by the mode of Land Finance,[12] exemplified by the boom of commercial residential districts in town centres. In townships and villages that are rural, where constructions are organized on collective-owned land, the planning regulations and approaches have differed from place to place and no 'Land Finance' has existed. Indeed, not every village is entitled to have a 'plan', but for those who have one, the popular way has been to have the construction roughly guided by a simplified master plan and construction plan (mentioned in Sub-section 2.3.2), following the collective management of land, such as negotiation and allocation.

Nevertheless, interestingly, sometimes the disparities between land policies and planning measures have not caused different form results. From the beginning of BNSC, many new rural residential communities (rural concentrated living districts) have been built around outskirts of towns and set as model villages, being promoted by BNSC and New-Type Urbanization, and representing the achievements of them, like improved

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[12] "Land Finance" refers to the local government's effort of generating fiscal revenue through land leasing. See a detailed discussion in Section 5.3.

infrastructure and living environment, concentrated population, eliminated poverty, raised land-use efficiency and perfected social management (Zou, 2012; Yang, Chen and Yu, 2015; Jia, Shi and Zhao, 2020) (Figure 1.2). They have been built on either urban land or rural land (more of them are on rural land), yet they share similar appearances guided by planning, like regulated boundary, roads system, building layout and monotonous architectural style. For the ideal of bringing the rural area modernity and efficiency, planning has largely ignored the traditional built environment in a rejection of continuity, creating modern communities similar to those gated communities in cities and towns (see Section 7.6).

Figure 1.2. A promotion of concentrated living districts outside a town of Huizhou (source: Author).

Architectural design's standpoint has been less political and the vision has been much closer to the physical form. Its practices from towns to countryside have not been separated by the differences of land policies, but often architects seem to overly focus on their design issues in a self-referential status, ignoring factors in larger backgrounds. In towns, similar to architects in cities, they have less 'design enthusiasm' in ordinary residential projects (unless design fees), but have more interest in public buildings especially those relating to culture and tradition (for better earning fame). However,

most of the small towns cannot provided these opportunities. In comparison, in countryside there has been a more dynamic picture. Before the boom of rural construction, few architects practiced design in rural areas. Around 2000, some avant-garde architects started to explore the value of traditional built environment in rural areas or Chinese classical gardens and were sometimes dubbed as literatus architect, as they in spirit follow the classic Chinese literati loving to live in gardens and countryside and be close to the nature (e.g., Wang Shu, Dong Yugan, Liu Jiakun, Ge Ming). They have translated the design wisdoms from traditional form and space and employed them into their practices, ranging from concepts, forms, styles, to materials and constructions (Jin, 2006). They try to revive rural architectural tradition in modern architecture, yet without really practicing in the rural context. Wang Shu, with his slogan of "re-establishing a Chinese traditional architecture in contemporary era," (Feng, 2017) could be the most accomplished one of them.

Indeed, in the BNSC era architects tended to export technical supports to the countryside in the form of standard drawings, following governments' requirements (Ye and Huang, 2019, p.98). However, in the Rural Revitalization era, they are facing many more good opportunities and constitute the majority of the 'fourth design wave'. Nevertheless, the design behaviours have seemed to be more likely a combination of individualized realizations of design ideals and cooperative promotions of rural places. Architects have been actually projecting their professional aspirations to the rural backdrops with less regulatory restrictions and more traditional factors. A trend of diversification and personalization among them has been growing, easily bringing constructed and irrelevant problems and responsibilities into design — writing a song pretending sadness, which could even become a design fetish.

Wang Shu is also leading the architect's 'rural turn'. In the renovation of Wencun village of Hangzhou, he theoretically sets up a big goal of promoting "a social

experiment of rural urbanization" through his design, aiming at urban-rural integration (Wang, 2018), but realistically he has done no more than continuing his personal choices of architectural language and material, similar to those in his prestigious Xiangshan campus (Figure 1.3).[13]

Figure 1.3. The renovated house in Wencun village, similar to those in Xiangshan campus (source: Xu, 2019. Available at: http://www.nfpeople.com/article/9009).

Figure 1.4. The bamboo pavilion for publicness (source: Song and Sun, 2018, p.90).

In Shangcun village, Jixi county that was in Huizhou, a group of architects from

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[13] See a more detailed description and more images at: http://www.nfpeople.com/article/9009.

Tsinghua University designed and built a bamboo pavilion with the villagers (Figure 1.4). It was a start-up project of the holistic conservation of local traditional settlements, aiming to realize a sustainable and participatory design (Song and Sun, 2018), but the 'publicness' of this open structure as a key design object seems not compatible with the local climate at all, as Jixi is categorized in the climatic area with 'hot summer and cold winter'.[14] When the temperature is around zero, a 'public' lounge without climate boundaries will have little publicness.

Figure 1.5. Yuan's experiment of digital construction in rural Sichuan Province (source: Yuan et al., 2019, p.42).

Also, Yuan feng from Tongji University has pioneered a high-tech architectural experiment in rural Sichuan with two small blocks in alien shapes laid near a traditional settlement (Yuan et al., 2019) (Figure 1.5). The design and construction of the irregular roof were fulfilled by advanced digital methods and were based on traditional materials. "Human-machine collaboration" and "another possibility" in building the beautiful

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[14] A standard climate division can be found in the *Code for Thermal Design of Civil Building* (Ministry of Housing and Urban-rural Development and General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine of PRC, 2017).

countryside were what Yuan claimed for his innovation(ibid.). However, to what extent it can be realized in a scale in the context and the significance to the people is still questionable. It seems to be little more than a fashionable expression.

Dongziguan relocated community in rural Hangzhou is a recent project being widely praised (Figure 1.6). It is dubbed "the most beautiful relocated community", and "a classic case of BNSC", and has become a hot internet celebrity in the circle of rural architectural design helping promote the local tourism (Yin, 2017; Gao, 2017). The architects' exquisite operation of form and space through typology was largely achieved and accepted, like extracting form types from tradition, grouping form variants, and optimizing the layout and plan, aiming to suit the bottom-up demands (Gao, 2017). Nevertheless, what has not been widely reported is that the building quality is not good (Hangzhoushi Jiwei Jianwei, 2019), which the architects have not or cannot control, and the construction process was involved with corruption and power-abuse among some grassroots officials (ibid.).

Figure 1.6. A perspective view of Donziguan community (source: Gao, 2017. Available at: https://www.archiposition.com/items/20180525104540).

In the Rural Revitalization, the architectural approach to the form problem in villages is not in a same scale as planning; it has been more scattered, contingent yet will be more intensive and thorough. Indeed, in the form transformation process since the

launch of BNSC, the two design approaches have to a large extent excluded each other, lacking a coordination.[15] Rural planning does not offer any form control, not even a two-dimensional zoning ordinance like 'detailed development control plan' (DDCP, discussed in Sub-section 5.5.3), whilst architectural design pays little attention to planning contents, only busy finding proper places to insert a self-satisfying project. In addition, urban design, with an inclusive nature has been supposed to become a bridge to fill the gap, however it is only seen in cites and yet to be implemented in towns and villages.

Towards traditional towns and villages, designers have tended to keep their habitual understandings of contextual form problems and related issues of tradition, and been contented with their positions and stereotypes, resulting in anarchic form interpretations and operations. The different procedures they are following, have further brought contradictions, overlaps, and vacancies in the design process as a whole.

However, if seen from outside the design practice, there have been many external contradictions and difficulties caused by some other powerful stakeholders in the context, making the situation more challenging. Compared to designers, they have been proved to be much more influential to the form transformation.

Take planning as an example, not only the town expansion and related Land Finance mode have treated it as a tool, but some more covert and complicated political logics underlying the promotion of new rural residential communities (rural concentrated living districts) have made it more controversial. Besides being relevant achievements of rural development, many of these model communities have been also involved with a quota channel linking urban and rural land, offered by a policy called *Linking the Increase with Decrease in Land Use for Urban and Rural Construction* (Ren and Zhou,

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[15] A similar incoordination between the two approaches towards towns is discussed in Sub-section 5.5.2.

2013, cited in Lu and Dang, 2016). Under a principle that the arable land area cannot be reduced, the planning of model communities can help local authorities concentrate rural population from scattered villages, reclaiming the rural construction land (homestead) into arable land, so as to gain spare rural construction land quota that can be transformed into urban construction land quota, which can be realized into state-owned urban construction land that can be leased to developers. This channelled land quotas could be a by-product of building rural concentrated living districts, but when the channel allows the power logic to be too dominated by the demand of urban construction land quota, and when the logic is implemented by a bureaucratism, the promotion of such concentrated living districts would become an extremely negative issue.

In some rural areas of Shandong province, a policy named '*Hecun Bingju*' (merging villages and combining houses) started to become controversial around 2020. Some implementations of this top-down effort were like a coercive movement, sparking frustrations and anger among local communities and even conflicts between the residents and grassroots officials (Liu, 2020). The one-size-fit-all implementations forced rural people to relocate to larger concentrated communities, with little consideration for their real demands, the social sustainability and the value of the existing villages (ibid.), let alone the traditional built environment. The form and space of newly-built communities seemed only to be a demonstration of the political task. This movement was criticized for being motivated by the land quota channel involving the Land Finance (ibid.), with the bureaucratism distorting the political task that were originally to benefit rural people (Xu, 2020). Upon similarly offering criticism, the top-level leaders reiterated the original intentions of the policy (e.g., economizing the land use, improving the efficiency of infrastructure and public service), and re-stressed the standards for selecting villages to relocate (e.g., having harsh living condition, fragile ecological environment, frequent natural disasters, severe population loss), and in

hindsight raised planning as a key remedial measure for the problem (Zhang and Li, 2020). Ironically, however, this planning 'remedy' had earlier been employed as an instrument to cause the problem. It had been also neglected in the interactions during the event, and the planners seemed to have neither power nor interest to mediate this problem when it happened.

For local governments, they can promote or restrict development of built-up areas in towns through planning, and also guide constructions in BNSC through organizing public investment, but they are much less effective in controlling the form development in the countryside in the Rural Revitalization, as design approaches and investment are both diversified and related regulations are still loose. More likely, the form problem there is a burden and a source of anxiety for the officials. Their understandings and actions on the form have been based on an entanglement of responsibilities: the protection of tradition, the development of economy, the promotion of places, the revival of cultural confidence, etc. For example, the *Gai Hui* (changing to Hui style) movement in Huizhou was a shallow but extensive facial revival of Huizhou cultural identity in the building form — an awkward process of place branding, as discussed in Chapter 8.

More, following the loosening of rural land policies, the second circuits of capital[16] aiming for space is more extensively penetrating into villages and more thoroughly grabbing benefits there, and the top-down encouragement of diversifying the funding channel through lower thresholds would also allow immature and personalized investors with less experience to develop projects in the context, as exemplified by the Xixinan village in Chapter 8, in where a mix of professionals and novices all come to renovate a variety of properties, bringing more uncertainties to the form development.

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[16] This concept was raised by Harvey. See Sub-section 2.4.1.

For the local people, their understanding of form transformation has been trivial, subtle and individualised. Conceptually, they have not cared about the bigger logics (including design) behind the form problem very much, instead they seem to have a collective yet vague mentality of 'development' and 'scarcity' under official discourses of 'development', being reified in their personalized pursuits of a better life. In practice, their everyday behaviours have been wittingly or unwittingly interacting with the form changes, expressing special meanings relating to their notions. Nevertheless, the concepts and practices of local people have been largely neglected or misunderstood by other stakeholders, especially designers.

For designers, above external complexities and contradictions have seemed to be momentarily replaced by the continuous stream of golden opportunities. Whilst being projected to a fresh yet unfamiliar background, their minds have tended to float in shallow recognitions of form problem and related issues of tradition, generating anarchic design values: bearing full responsibility then becoming very cautious, criticizing with all the might then pointing to the 'right' direction, going with the main streams then giving tacit consents, or fishing for fame and credit whilst losing themselves. Designers have more or less contributed to a 'creative destruction' in traditional towns and villages, yet without being aware of it.

1.4 Reforming designers' epistemology of form problem — the research gap and purpose

Above discussions have suggested that the designer's problematic practices towards the contextual form transformation have been caused by both internal and external factors. The former is the professionally confined stereotypes and the latter is the influences from more complicated and powerful forces other than design, which indicates a wider range of social factors.

Indeed, for designers, if only staring inside their circle of theoretical and practical knowledge to seek a solution, the efforts would merely see more intrinsic problems and tend to be stuck in a dilemma of involution. Design knowledge itself would not have a breakthrough in the correction and improvement of its own problems. Therefore, to rightfully guide the form and space in traditional towns and villages, and to further bring positive socio-economic, socio-political, and socio-cultural implications, it is necessary to expand the vision to look outside, as there might be more constructive possibilities that can inspire the improvement of design, help it exit the dilemma, and make it more compatible with wider social factors. Thus, designers need to shelve the controversies over the anarchic understandings and operations of form problems inside design circle, and turn to focus on the more comprehensive transformation process that materializes the designed form, or other conceived form into real and tangible form.

In real situations in the context, indeed, the design work has usually been a short procedure of the form transformation process, which, as proved in the earlier examples, and indicated by many researchers, has been either instrumental (Zhao, 2013; Chen and Thwaites, 2013, p.158-159; Wu, 2015, p.76), or individualised (Zhou, 2015; Wang et al., 2019; Ye and Huang, 2019; Cuthbert, 2007). It is far from being a key decisive

strategy and sustained driving force towards the form change.

More, the major trends of form transformation there, together with the reasons, mechanism and results, often do not follow the design logics. Quite the opposite, it is design that largely follows them. Planners busily planning new residential communities has been a fast implementation of relevant political and economic goals in urbanization and rural development; and architects hurriedly creating distinctive renovation or new projects in villages has offered individualised responses to the further opening-up of countryside promoted by the Rural Revitalization. Ironically, what they claim are to support or even lead the local development through design, but what they do are not actually fulfil their claimed goals — not promoting design's wider social influence, not even leading the form change.

The external factors have been proved to be more crucial. To face the holistic reality, one need to ask some important questions for designers. What is the true big picture of such a form transformation? If not design, what are the dominant forces driving the form transformation and how have they driven it? How are these forces working with and against each other? What is the position and meaning of design in the process? and, how does the form transformation interact with the local people, who are now treated as the key in recent urban and rural policies?

To say the least, if designers do not have a full and deep understanding on the comprehensive process of form transformation to answer above questions, they would continue to be confined in their visions and contented with the status quo in their limited sphere of influence, and also would not fully recognize their positions and significances in the short design procedure during this process, let alone to comprehend and create design's social implications.

However, these question obviously have never been critically answered or even asked. This has been a huge gap in the design knowledge. The problematic design practices exposed earlier has naturally been a result of this gap, and the literature review in the next chapter has further located the gap within more theoretical considerations underlying the practices.

Therefore, to bridge the gap, it is necessary to see a reform of the epistemology of form problem among designers. That is, designers need to break with their stereotypes and radically engage with knowledge from outside. Before any design work commences, they should adopt an inclusive socio-spatial stance and recognize the form transformation as the outcome of the 'social production of space'[17] (Lefebvre, 1991b). Design of form is only one part in this process. A contextual analytical approach to the 'production of space' is thus essential for designers, because it helps clarify how underlying mechanisms are driven by related forces and how they interact with each other.

This thesis, then aims to achieve this goal by taking the debate over the transforming contextual forms as a point of departure, and by developing an analytical mode that seeks to understand the 'production of space' in there. It uses the cultural region of Huizhou in Anhui province as the research field to carry out a case study, where relevant themes offer vivid examples. To support the discussion, two trends of form development in Huizhou as sub-cases are explained in depth based on the analytical mode and field investigations conducted for archival materials, in-depth interviews, and on-site observations. However, before going to further discussion, the thesis structure is first introduced.

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[17] As a key concept of this thesis this is discussed later in Section 4.2.

1.5 The thesis structure

Based on a case study, this thesis presents an explanation of a phenomenon. It has a classical linear structure, with its subtopics sequentially covering the background, research gap, literature review, research questions, research findings from data and conclusions (Figure 1.7). It is organised into four interconnected parts to explain the form transformation in traditional towns and villages.

The first part acts as the introduction, outlining the research background and gap, as well as the relevant prior literature. Chapter 1 introduces the development of Chinese towns and villages and designers' problematic responses to the development having contributed to the form change, and thus identifies the research gap as an epistemological problem among designers' understandings of such a change. Chapter 2 includes a literature review, which further reflects the gap from a more theoretical perspective. It indicates a political understanding of form and space as a base to fill the gap.

Part two is the preparation of further detailed explanations towards the contextual phenomenon. Chapter 3 presents the research agenda, outlining the research questions and objectives. Also, important terms involving the special Chinese context are clarified, and the time range for this phenomenon targeted by this study is defined. Chapter 4 then largely deals with the research methodology. It builds the analytical mode on the concept of 'production of space' and the real conditions of the context, and it chooses the qualitative paradigm and case study approach, and hence outlines the research design principles. It then identifies two trends of form change as two sub-cases (form growth and form renovation) caused by two kinds of local space production, with a more detailed research design to suit each sub-case, together with the methods for data collection.

Part three of the thesis moves the focus into the context. Chapter 5 examines the form transformation in traditional towns and villages against a wider context at national level. As such, the feature of 'socialism with Chinese Characteristics' is described, and the role of government power as a major driving force of the form change is generally explained together with the design system that has been influenced by the power. Chapter 6 to 8 focus on the special context of the case study — the traditional towns and villages in Huizhou. Chapter 6 shows the particularities of Huizhou and the form development of this cultural region from federal age to present as a base to understand the current situation. Based on the analytical mode and field findings, Chapter 7 deals with the space production for growth represented by the construction of new residential districts (NRD), explaining the roles of the three levels of stakeholder defined by the analytical mode (space supplier, space designer and space receiver), with an emphasis on the local people as space receiver; Chapter 8 then focuses on the space production in inventory marked by the local efforts of preserving and revitalizing the traditional built environment (through practices of relocation and renovation), also explaining the roles of the three levels which are more entangled and complicated than those in the first case.

Part four is the conclusion and reflection. Chapter 9 first concludes the explanations presented in the previous two chapters and answers the research questions; it specifically discusses the role of design in this form change. It then makes some recommendations towards the contextual space production, which could help to achieve better form results that can contribute to producing better socio-economic outcomes in the development of traditional towns and villages. Finally, it reflects the study's limitations and contributions.
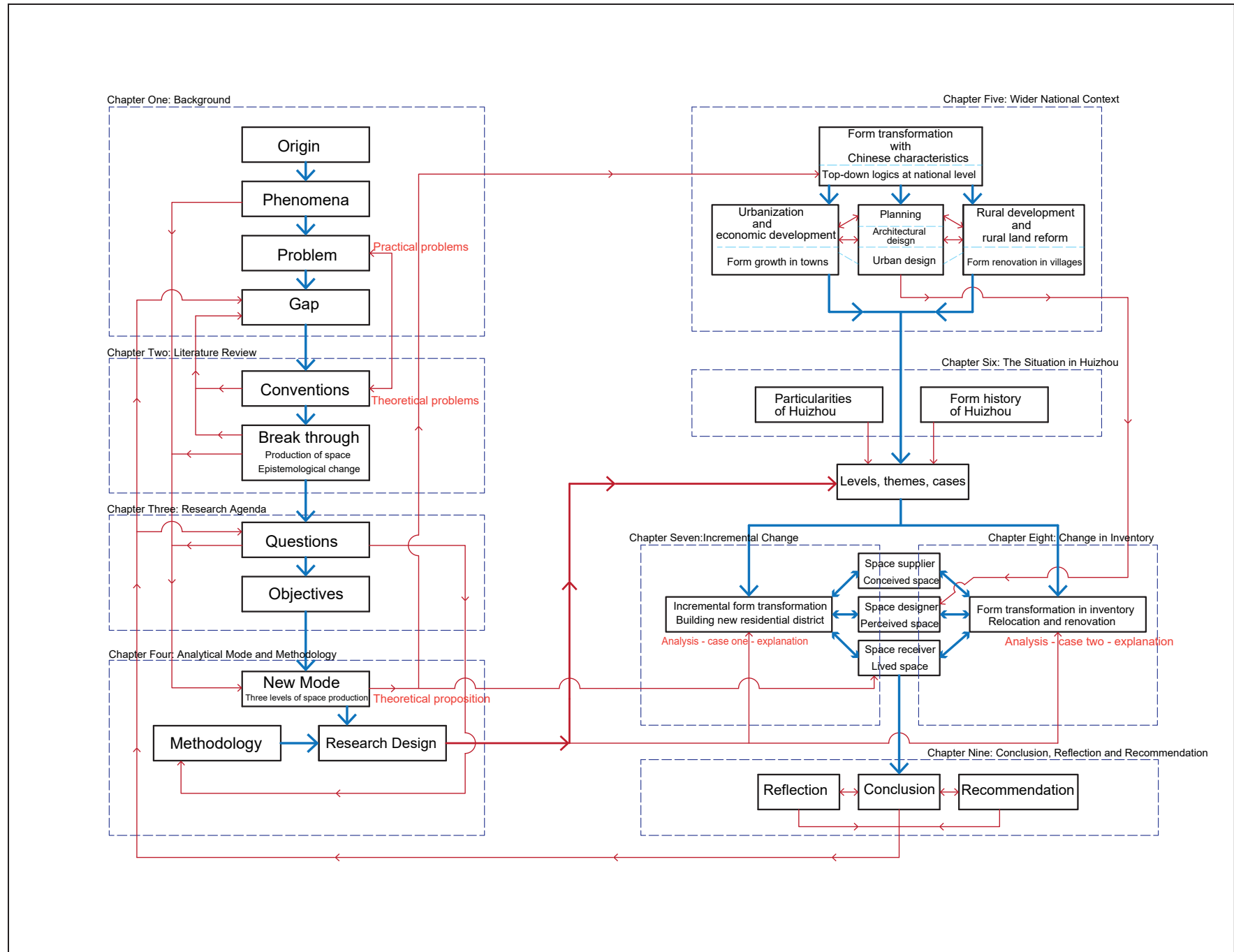
Figure 1.7. The diagram of thesis structure (source: Author).

Chapter 2: Rethinking the Approaches to Relevant Form Problems

2.1 Introduction

The research gap has been located in the previous chapter by revealing designers' problematic influences on the contextual form transformation. However, a mere reflection on the design practices is far from enough to fully expose the gap, to hence form a base to develop an analytical mode of 'production of space' to explain the 'bigger picture' so as to fill the gap.

Thus, before building the explanatory mode and applying it to the case study, one still need to have a more comprehensive and deeper examination of the thoughts and theories underlying relevant design practices, as a more theoretical reflection.

The following discussions thus try to categorize the design efforts towards solving form problem into three major directions, and link them with the conventional design knowledge and methods used towards traditional towns and villages, such as architecture, planning, urban design, typology and urban morphology. It reveals their merits and demerits in influencing the form changes, and calls for a more inclusive and rational 'reasoning of form' towards the context through introducing a socio-spatial perspective of 'production of space' and a humanistic view focusing more on the people at the bottom during the processes.[18]

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[18] This section mainly discusses the approaches from 'designers' influencing the form results. However, the design system and procedures formed in the institutional structure and controlled by the power (as a state-intervention), which utilizes, governs and limits the design activities have been more influential and decisive. Hence, the design system and design governance practice are also reflected in Chapter 5, as a national background of the specific space productions.

2.2 Description, reasoning and interpretation

For summarizing the approaches on form problems, Han (2013) has offered an inspiring example through reflecting the essence and approaches of urban design based on Chinese context. He closely relates urban design to the materiality of form, as he has stated:

> Urban design is a comprehensive design aiming at organizing and optimizing the urban physical spatial environment, which is to organize the morphological order and environmental elements against a specific space-time backdrop. Its essence is to analyse and create the structural relationship between the elements of physical space. It points not only to the realization of the physical space and form, but also to the design and suggestion relating to the potential growing process of form environment and the continuous decision-making process of related public policies…

> …Although urban design has been involved with professional knowledge from various disciplines, its autonomic core is always be the understanding and operation of 'form' of physical space and environment. This has been decided by its essential target. The urban design practice should always start" from the description of form, and passe through the reasoning and understanding of related backgrounds and problems, and reach the comprehensive design creation.

> (ibid., p.60)

Based on above discussion, Han has also indicated three groups of analysis towards the physical form: description, reasoning and interpretation of urban form, which are in a progressive order leading to urban design practice (ibid.).

According to Han, description of urban form aims to analyse the relationships between the part and whole of physical form and reveal the diachronic evolution process. The descriptive framework includes the analysis of urban structure, elements and related cognition issues (ibid.). For urban structure, structuralist methods exist in Team 10's challenge to CIAM's functionalist city model, Giambattista Nolli's figure-ground diagrams, and Bill Hillier's space syntax (a descriptive tool cooperating with GIS methods). For elements, the code mapping methods could be a key, whilst for urban cognition, Kevin Lynch's mental mapping and perceptual form are good answers. For the form's diachronic evolution, representative methods are typological approaches from Italy school and urban morphology led by M.R.G. Conzen from geography (ibid.).

Reasoning of urban form indicates to more intensive engagements with knowledge outside design realm, aiming at revealing the reasons underlying physical form by analysing the interrelationships between space and political, economic, and cultural factors (ibid.). The methods mainly come from urban history, urban sociology and cultural ecology, such as Chicago school's systematic works, Jane Jacobs' reflections on American cities, David Harvey's inquires to the Capitalism in urbanization and globalisation, and relevant research from Manuel Castells, Peter Marcuse, Sharon Zukin, etc. With this prerequisite knowledge structure for reasoning, design as an intervention can positively change people and society's attitude in facing the physical environment (ibid.).

Interpretation of urban form is more subjective, and it is based on designers' initiative towards the physical environment. Methods in this direction are likely to be personal understandings and deductions of physical form that are based on earlier descriptions and reasonings of such a form. It connects objective analysis and subjective operation, pointing to the creation of new form (ibid.). For example, interpretative mapping and

diagram can help urban design to be more practical; operational typology can explain the basic types underlying various historical forms (ibid.).

As further suggested by Han (ibid.), the description aims to present the form reality; the reasoning aims to reveal the underlying reasons to achieve a more rational understanding; and after reasoning, the interpretation is to transfer the form description into diagrammatic mechanisms for generating new forms, which is a kind of form assumption leading to practical form operations. Description, reasoning and interpretation make up an iterate chain in urban design.

Therefore, as drawing an analogy, the following discussion borrows Han's three categorizations to rethink a wider range of design knowledge and approaches towards the contextual form problem.

2.3 Conventional design approaches to the form problem

2.3.1 Architecture

Architecture from Chinese academic arena usually adopts descriptive approaches to the contextual form issue, as the works mainly focus on surveying, mapping and conservation of traditional/vernacular architecture or settlements across traditional towns and villages, especially in villages.

Rather than practicing design, these efforts are mainly seen in research conducted by architectural schools, focusing on the topic of 'vernacular architecture'. The vernacular built environment in Huizhou could be one of the hotspots, with researchers from Southeast University (SEU) leading the study on it. Liu pioneered the investigation of Huizhou as early as in 1950s (Chen, 2012); Zhang (1957) led to specifically focus on the ancient dwellings built in Ming dynasty; Gong leads a series of systematic mapping work towards historical villages (e.g., ed. Gong, 1996, 1999); and Duan et al. (2006, 2009) has further introduced in morphological knowledge in his description of Xidi village and Hongcun village. Recently, more contemporary perspectives have been brought into relevant research. For example, Li (2005) has been calling for a more interdisciplinary view to see the vernacular architecture. Shou, based on tectonics, has been conducting analyses of the environmental performance and regulation of those traditional form and space in Huizhou (Shou, Zhang and Liu, 2019; Shou, Liu and Zhang, 2021).

Marching a step forward to question the reason of form, some researchers have tried anthropological perspectives to understand the evolution of traditional form. Chen have explored the vernacular culture and customs in different places of China (Chen, 2021).

Chang (2008, 2013, 2017) has tried to establish a pedigree for the vernacular architecture across China based on anthropology, and have further applied relevant knowledge into heritage conservations. Ronald G. Knapp (1989) from the USA also made considerable contributions to this approach from an international perspective. However, their visions seem to be confined to a fixed historical account, failing to solve the form problems in contemporary realities.

However, some others have better realized the reality, having spent years to accompany the contextual construction processes to interrogate the significance of form problem against the background of urbanization and rural development, such as Huang Yinwu's years-long effort in the traditional town of Shaxi for its slow yet sustainable revitalization (Wang, 2016), and Wang Zhu's continuous work in rural Zhejiang, helping locals to build rural industries being 'small but smart'(Wang et al., 2019). Although being confined in the architectural realm, their efforts can be a positive progress in reasoning the form**.**

Nevertheless, as interpretations of form architectural practices in villages were not absent before the boom of rural construction; indeed, they were in very limited number concentrating around rural scenic areas where there existed demands of new buildings, such as Xixi Villa from Ge Ruliang (Peng, Wang and Yao, 2007) and Wuyi Mountain Hotel from Qi Kang (Zhuang, 2010). Such designs tended to be researchers/designers' personal interpretations of respective understandings of vernacular features.

The expansion of towns and the boom of rural construction has introduced in unprecedented wave of architectural practices, with the architects consciously or unconsciously overlooking the reasoning of form in their hectic schedules and anxious mindsets, resulting in a prosperity of individualised interpretations and operations of form, yet which have often not solved genuine problems of local places and people.

The real or false dedications have been illustrated in the preceding chapter and will be further discussed in case studies.

Under the top-down promotion of design in the countryside, even researchers started to ride the wave to join the busy game, like academicians and students from architectural schools joining promotional and transient rural design events by offering quick schemes without necessary follow-ups. With the reasoning being skipped over, the critical boundary between research and practice has been blurred. Luckily, the design behaviour itself has also been put into the lens of theoretical study. For example, Ye and Huang (2019) has reflected this through a historical account, and Zhou (2015) has critically reviewed the architects' behaviours against the backdrop incorporating broader rural realities.

2.3.2 Planning

Earlier there was a lack of specific planning research towards towns and countryside, as planning had been long subordinate to architecture, [19] with research mainly conducted from architectural perspectives. Thus, planners' practices as form interpretations directly dominated planning approaches to the form change, and as mentioned before, the approaches were divided by the differences between urban and rural land policies.

In 1950s, planners (then architects) were sent to rural areas to modernize the villages by design, with an ideal fulfilling the socialist utopia in the People's Commune movement (Lu, 2006, pp.101-121; Ye and Huang, 2017). After 1978, the growth of construction in towns and villages created a large demand for planning. For example,

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[19] Planning had been a subordinate subject under architecture in design education in China. It was not until late 2000s that planning became a first-tier subject in design disciplines, being at the same level of architecture.

to the end of 1986, 33000 towns and 28 million villages had had their preliminary planning aiming at arranging the construction land, ending the unordered development (He, 2011). The later BNSC and Rural Revitalization have also triggered a more extensive planning intervention across towns and villages. For example, strong planning interventions were all required in Zhejiang's programme of 'Renovating Ten Thousand Villages and Demonstrating one Thousand of Them' (Xinhua News Agency, 2018) and Anhui's 'Demonstration Project of Ten Thousand Villages and One Hundred Towns' (CPC Anhui Provincial Committee and Anhui Provincial Government, 2006).

For planners, changing the place seems more important than describing it, allowing form description and reasoning to be easily replaced by a direct and macro form interpretation. So, their dictionary of form is full of practical terms like points, belts, districts, axes, circles and bubbles, and abstract concepts like concentrated or scattered form, regional form, culture form, social form and organizational form. Planners also seem reluctant to supervise the process of transferring abstract form to concrete form being more perceptible, especially in the countryside lacking effective planning control mechanisms. For example, in a general rural planning report the most grounded form interpretation could only be found in two 2D images: the settlement layout in village master plan and land use distribution in village construction plan.[20] In the latest design wave towards countryside, the growing opportunities are only like cumulating assignments for planners, who also have no similar mentalities to realize individual interests in the form creation compared to architects. The repercussion has been ironic, the role having least interest in perceptible and concrete form has in fact unwittingly helped to impose greatest influences on the form change, causing "the disappearance of natural villages and the abruption of texture that brought by the construction of

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[20] This is stipulated in the regulation of *Methods for Preparing Village and Town Planning* (Ministry of Construction, 2000). According to Sun and Zhang (2017), up to 2017, most of the rural planning work in China followed this regulation.

concentrated living districts," (Ye and Huang, 2019, p.98) exemplified by the event of promoting new rural communities mentioned earlier.

However, for planning towards towns, the reasoning of form started to grow following the promotion of 'small-town strategy', which was one important direction of those booming theoretical studies aiming at towns (Xu and Zhang, 2004). With an overarching thought regarding towns as a mediate role between cities and villages, the efforts have had a similar development trajectory to those towards cities, progressing from focusing on pure form issues to incorporating more theories and methods from outside (especially from economy, geography and sociology) to see broader issues like industry, transportation, governance, environmental engineering, and to paying more attentions to the theme of inventory rather than growth regarding form development (Yang, 2018). However, their languages of form have been macro all along. They have also closely followed new themes in policy inclinations, like 'Ecological Civilization', 'Sustainable Development', 'Heritage Conservation' and 'Characteristic Towns' (e.g., Jiao and Wen, 2020; Jiang, Ma and Chen, 2022; Wang, 2021; Lu, Zhu and Chen, 2021).

For rural planning, the reasoning of form only started to flourish around 2008 (when BNSC began and the *2008 Urban and Rural Area Planning Act was enacted*) (Sun and Zhang, 2017). But given its distance from 'concrete form', it has turned out to be a combination of 'reasoning the rural development' and 'reasoning the rural planning itself' that aims at better planning such a development. The reasoning of rural development has mainly fallen into three streams, according to Sun and Zhang (ibid.): the migration of rural population and its affects to rural areas, the functional transformation (the diversification of functions besides agriculture) and functional division and cooperation between rural regions, and the spatial evolution such as rural space (in abstract meaning) becoming more concentrate and monotonous.

For the reasoning of rural planning itself, also according to Sun and Zhang (ibid.), relevant researches have focused on its essence, feature, system, method and technique, and practice. Its essence is understood as a 'comprehensive development strategy' beyond physical environment guide, or a combination of informal local rules and agreements made from bottom up, or a governing platform organizing different stakeholders. Its feature is presented in considering rural social relations like respecting villagers' choices and promoting bottom-up and participatory mode. Its system is urged to be integrated with the holistic planning system, with its position and content in vertical hierarchies and its coordination with other planning methods being improved. Also, its methods are urged to be improved by establishing a unified rural planning standard across the country with suitable technical measures classifying villages, and various supporting quantitative tools like GIS and data simulations. The methods can also be benefited from nurturing public participation and transforming planners' role to a more assistant and meditate one. Regarding rural planning practice, the implementation of government-led planning goals and the balance of stakeholders' interests in 'participatory planning' are all questioned.

Compared to the architecture's perspective, planning's vision tends to be more macro, political and comprehensive in reasoning the form. As the more up-scaling 'National Territory Spatial Planning System' is emerging, planning will become increasingly like a public policy and hence more political, with description, reasoning and interpretation becoming key means of control to regulate form development to further serve economic and political goals.

2.3.3 Urban design

In terms of description, reasoning and interpretation of contextual form, there are considerable differences between planning and architectural design. This gap in

practice has similarities with that in cities, which has long been hoped to be bridged by urban design wisdom.[21] Urban design by its nature is more inclusive and compatible, being able to connect the abstract form from planning and the grounded form from architectural design, and mediate between various approaches and between stakeholders.

As mentioned in Section 2.2, urban design's three ideal intervention ways towards form problem in cities have been comprehensively concluded by Han (2013), who has further suggested relevant strategies for designing better cities, like using paradigms and variants, adopting backgrounds and mosaic implants, operating layers and overlays, all contributing to more viable form interpretations (ibid.).

Nevertheless, these proposed significances of urban design are only for Chinese cities. The towns and countryside have barely received its wisdoms and practices. Also, if only seeing urban design against Chinese cites, it has been actually very problematic and contested though, with the problems inherited and self-developed.

Born in 1950s in USA, urban design was initially seen as a bridge — "joint work of the architect, landscape architect, and city planner." (Jonathan Barnett, 2006) Later urban design developed to be more concerned with people and their relationship with physical public space (Carmona et al., 2010). This trend continues, showing a shared value of place making and public realm creating. The developing knowledge, as seen by Thwaites (2007), has been presented in language-like structures that are amenable to practice. He together with Chen have summarized the merits of this humanistic

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[21] 'Urban design wisdom' in this thesis means the knowledge and practice in the built environment profession that aim at creating places for people in the space production process. It forms the inclusive role of urban design to join up the different stakeholders and professions to generate better form results, upon which social, environment and economic value can be created. In the design system itself, as mentioned by Chen and White, it can inform planning policy, promote spatial quality and good design governance. See a detailed discussion in Sub-section 5.5.4 and 9.2.1.

awareness and its language-like expressions by reflecting a series of important ideas (Chen and Thwaites, 2013, pp.142-149), such as Lynch's five components in forming mental maps, Alexander's pattern language, Schulz's three sensations of place, Hiller and Hanson's social logic of space, Bentley's responsive environment, and Sergio Porta and John Renne's street indicators. From these ideas they find inspirations for their exploration of 'typo-morphology'.

Nevertheless, these self-conscious language-like expressions tend to be individualised prescriptions of urban design, which could easily become different primacy languages being territorial, insubstantial, self-referential and deterministic (Cuthbert, 2007), prioritizing outcomes over delivering process (Carmona et al., 2010, p.11). For this problem, the essence of urban design has been further questioned from broader perspectives. Madanipour (1996) sees it as a socio-spatial process. Carmona with his fellows call it an integrative activity as joining-up, and further offering its multiple contexts and dimensions (Carmona et al., 2010). The more practical *Urban Design Compendium* has also highlighted its inclusive features (Llewelyn-Davies, 2000, pp.7-12). Cuthbert urges urban design to exit self-reference, by turning to 'spatial political economy' which views urban design "as the outcome of the social production of urban form, which in turn is the outcome of the social production of space in its material and symbolic dimensions." (Cuthbert, 2007, p.219) — an appeal for more comprehensive understandings of form problem.

Urban design concept was introduced to China in 1980s mainly by architectural scholars. Zhong (1986) has pioneered the introduction of this new knowledge and connected it with relevant wisdom from Chinese traditional city-building. Wang (2011) in his classical textbook *Urban Design* has first systematically explained the concept from theories to methods, and to applications in Chinese context, which has been widely used in urban design education. Duan has seen urban design from a planning angle and

examined the relationship between the two (Duan, 2006; Zhongguo Chengshiguihua Wang, 2016), whilst Han (2014), in a very detailed level, has explored the significance of form and urban morphology in urban design. Nevertheless, their architectural backgrounds have more or less influenced their understandings of urban design, where there are still language-like, form-centred descriptions and interpretations lacking sufficient reasonings of other stronger factors. Take Wang's educational book for example (Wang, 2011), it mainly talks about how to 'design' relevant form and space without adequately emphasizing the social logics in the backgrounds. Even some later official explanations of urban design were also narrowed to be form only, as one suggests that "the urban physical form and its spatial environment are the basic elements to be considered by urban design." (Ministry of Construction, 1998). Reflections, however, do exist. As summarized by Duan and Liu (2018), the debates are mainly around the significance, the affiliation, and the statutory status of urban design, lying in four groups of thought seeing urban design as the design of form, the synthesis of designs, the control of designs, and the design of policies. It could be a good start to see its multi-dimensional attribute, yet it is only in academic arena.

When it comes to practice, there has been a far worse landscape. Urban design has had no statutory position in any of the previous or current planning system (discussed in Sub-section 5.5.3). For this reason, on one hand, many related professions all have come to claim their legitimacies in doing urban design with an exclusive manner, contributing to a chaos in its connection to the statutory planning system. On the other hand, not being statutory means it could be unlimitedly used, escaping formal planning censorships. With a more 3D attribute, urban design has been regarded a soft yet smart 'sub-planning' that is intensively used by local governments in place promotion during the rapid urban expansion drawn by the Land Finance mode. This has in fact triggered a boom of urban design without proper setting of values, with issues of public place and realm being largely replaced by calculations of land price and creations of exclusive

spatial concepts, and the urban design profession has been walking into an ethic crisis in facing the conflicting values between ideal and reality (Yang, 2016).

Actually, after all, in supporting the newest planning system, the contested urban design has been mentioned to face the rural area, and rightly so (discussed in Chapter 9). But whether there will be a counterpart concept like 'rural design' and how the merits and demerits of urban design's value and methods will be applied to there is yet to know.

2.3.4 Typology, urban morphology and typo-morphology

Some classic descriptive approaches have existed across architecture, urban planning and urban design, having greater potentials to analyse the form. These include typology, urban morphology and typo-morphology.

Typology is closer to architecture as it was developed from the concept of 'type' being a core issue in architectural history, aiming at classifying architectural forms relating to religious and aesthetic symbolism. A series of western scholars have contributed to its development, such as Krier (1979), Rossi (1984), Argan (1996) and Vidler (2003). More systematic research has been conducted by the school of Italian typology, led by Saverio Muratori and Gianfranco Caniggia.

As suggested by Chen and Thwaites (2013, 49-51), Muratori sees traditional towns as organisms and advocated the continuity within old and new buildings from cultural perspectives. Caniggia has developed his idea and applied it into the urban context. They propose that city is not only a collection of physical buildings, but also a construction process in which architectural forms keep evolving, with related cultural languages for continuing the forms hidden in local residents. This perspective could help designers to overcome the disorder of building languages through abstracting

architectural types to understand the 'typological process' (ibid., p.73). However, some of its hasty practical applications outside proper context have been problematic, which often relate to commercial developments.[22]

Outside architecture, urban morphologists originated from geography have also contributed greatly to form description (e.g., Conzen, 1969 and 1988; ed. Slater, 1990; ed. Whitehand,1987; Whitehand and Gu, 2006). They understand the morphological evolution of cities and towns by structurally describing the formation and recombination process of form elements based on historical maps, contributing to the subsequent preservation and design efforts. Conzen pioneered a systematic framework for morphological analysis, within which the town plan, built form and land utilization are three analytical levels for urban form (Conzen,1969). And useful concepts like morphological regions, morphological periods and fringe belt were also raised (Conzen, M.R.G., 1988; Conzen, M.P. 2009). His followers have formed British morphological school and pushed this method further, but it has also been criticized for being too descriptive, without enough reasonings of the underlying social, economic and cultural logics, and not well informing practitioners (Madanipour, 1996, p.56; Chen and Thwaites, 2013, p.56).

Typo-morphology, a relatively new concept as a marriage of typology and urban morphology has been mentioned by Castex and Panerai (1982). They lead the French Versailles school, seeing that type-morphology can be benefited from the reciprocity of the other two approaches. For example, urban morphology has a comprehensive and practical perspective seeing form issues, and typology offers closer views of relevant cultural, social and design issues (Chen and Thwaites, 2013). And this school also embraces both form analysis and design interpretation (Paneral et al. 2004 cited in Chen

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[22] The criticism of the New Urbanists' typological approach can be an example. See, for example, Grant, 2006.

and Thwaites, 2013). Typo-morphology has been further developed by Chen, Thwaites and Romice through being applied into Chinese contexts by them (Chen and Thwaites, 2013; Chen and Romice, 2009).

Typology was introduced into China decades ago with many architectural researchers developing and applying it to study the traditional built environment (e.g., Wei, 1990, Wang, 2005; Shen, 2010; Li, Lu and Wang, 2020), and it has been frequently utilized as an allegedly good method by architects facing traditional form issues (e.g., Dongziguan case in Sub-section 1.3.2). Urban morphology and typo-morphology were taken in later, having been tentatively tried towards different areas, with the latter being a newer experimental account in analysing urban forms and guiding design interpretations (e.g., Whitehand and Gu, 2007; Tian, Gu and Tao, 2010; Chen, 2009; Chen and Gu, 2009). Nevertheless, these two approaches seem to mostly aim at traditional or historical districts/fragments in urban contexts of China, as very few of them have systematically examined the form problem in rural areas.

More, urban morphology and typo-morphology by their nature may only be applicable to such traditional or historical districts, often being fragmental and isolated as residues hiding clues from stable evolutions. One major reason for this limitation can be traced back to Conzen's urban ontology (Samuels, 2005) showing the rationale of his morphological theory. His diagram of 'the four-dimensionality of the town as a geographical phenomenon' shows that the change of physical form elements is the projection of the change of socio-economic elements, and this form change will eventually bring about the location change (Figure 2.1). The trajectory of 'change through time' has demonstrated a typical evolutionary feature of a geographical phenomenon, which is an ideally stable and orderly process. This can also be proved by Conzen and his followers' research fields such as Alnwick and Newcastle upon Tyne — all having stable form histories (Conzen 1969, 1981).
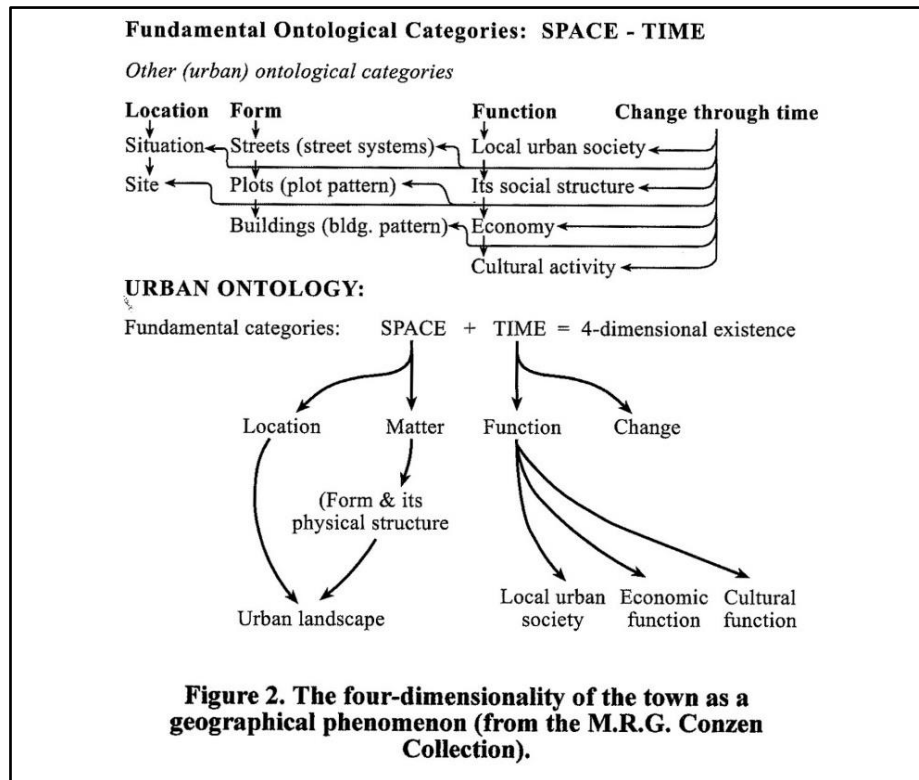
Figure 2.1. M.R.G. Conzen's urban ontology (source: Samuels, 2005, p.139).

Yet in China, it is not always the case. If only for historical districts as specimens, a morphological reading would be successful. Even for developments inside or surrounding them that need new designs, typology can also help after the morphological description, as indicated by typo-morphology. For example, in a renovation or expansion project in Hongcun village of Huizhou, ideally, the original forms at different scales should be first read by urban morphology and continued by typology, and then hopefully, the new form results can appropriately represent the contributing socio-economic factors and affect the human practices there, and will further survive as residuals or be altered as acceptable mutations following the transformation of socio-economic factors leading to the successive period of form evolution. This is typically regarded as a 'typological process' or 'morphological period' (Chen and Thwaites, 2013; Conzen,1988). However, what about a general part of urban or rural areas in China? Such as a whole town or half a city which only have some sporadic historical

districts in fragments, surrounded by districts formed by much larger residential communities, commercial blocks or industrial zones that are mainly driven by the Land Finance, or some ordinary traditional villages at urban fringes, being about to be demolished, relocated and combined? In these scenarios there are no such continuous typological processes or morphological periods; instead, there are sudden juxtapositions of these processes or periods in a dramatical "time-space compression." (Harvey, 1990, p.147) Thus, if in ideal either typology or urban morphology come to control the form development, then which period or process will they choose to be the base for future form evolutions? Or in other words which form tradition are they going to pass down? In reality, these methods can barely control the trend of form change, as many random, deterministic or even personal factors are widely controlling, exemplified by the aforementioned '*Hecun Bingju*' movement in villages, and more common irrational planning changes in cities. It is difficult for typology, urban morphology and typo-morphology to describe and prescribe form issues in more general traditional context in China, as they are facing radical form transformations rather than orderly evolutions.

2.4 A break through in reasoning of form

2.4.1 The social production of Space 一 an epistemological reform

It seems that description and reasoning of form in conventional design approaches have failed to fully explain the contextual form problem. Therefore, as this thesis argues, the reasoning of form should break through the knowledge circle of design to welcome a socio-spatial proposition seeing the form transformation as an outcome of the social production of space that happen within the Chinese social context. This is a political understanding of form and space being the foundation to answer the research questions.

The term 'production of space' originated from Lefebvre's criticism on the town planning theory in France. He stated that "there is still no epistemology of urban planning" and the lack of an epistemology has resulted in "peculiar divergencies in the elaboration and interpretation of facts." (Lefebvre, 2009a, p.169) Thus, he called for a political understanding of space, arguing that the space is a social and political production, as he suggests that:

…But now it appears that space is political. Space is not a *scientific object* removed from ideology or politics; it has always been political and strategic…Space has been fashioned and molded from historical and natural elements, but in a political way. Space is political and ideological…

…Because space, which seems homogeneous, which appears given as a whole in its objectivity, in its pure form, such as we determine it, is a social product. The production of space cannot be likened to the production of any particular object or commodity. Nonetheless, there are relations between the

production of things and that of space. The latter accrues to private groups

who appropriate space in order to manage and exploit it.

(ibid., pp.170-171)

Also, in his monumental work *The Production of Space* Lefebvre had a same proposition claiming "(social) space is a (social) product." (Lefebvre,1991b, p.28) For him, space is no longer an innocent and neutral backdrop, but it comes to be "a fundamental component of the capitalist mode of production and social domination," like "any other sort of commodity." (Lu, 2006, p.11). The focus on space as a subject alone should be shifted to the process of its production — a change from "production of things in space" to "production of space itself." (Lefebvre, 2009b, p.186) This produced space is a "social space," which is not a pure "mental space" defined by "philosophers and mathematicians" and not a pure "physical space" defined by "practico-sensory activity and the perception of 'nature'，" as it contains the "social relations of reproduction" and the "relations of production." (Lefebvre, 1991b, pp. 27-32）

 Lefebvre's concept of social production of space is closely related to Marx's critique of political economy that is based on the historical materialism. This vision assumes that "human consciousness and all forms of human relations emerge from the mode of production of any society, the means by which its material life is reproduced," which includes "the production of space, architecture and the specific formal arrangement of places." (Cuthbert, 2007, p.212). In this line, many others have also contributed significantly to the interrelationships between political economy and urban problems (e.g., Castells,1978; Scot, 1980; Harvey,1985; Gottdiener, 1985; Soja,1989).

Among them, Harvey is noteworthy. Inspired by Lefebvre, he has intensively discussed the production of space in contemporary western capitalist societies, yet Harvey has

more deeply dug into the issue of capitalist circulation to see the commercialization of physical space, with 'the second circuit of capital' being an inspiring concept. He has revealed that the surplus capital from the primary circuit of commodity production has flowed out to become fixed capital through being invested to create physical built environment as 'space', which can be produced, sold and consumed as another kind of commodity (Harvey, 1985). This process forms the second circuit, with which the capital can continue to profit and grow, as a means to avoid its intrinsic crisis caused by overproduction and overaccumulation. Consequently, the space's exchange value would easily surpass its use-value — a fundamental problem of capitalism.

In design arena there have been also such reasonings of form issue, but being less intensive. For example, only three articles offering relevant opinions was identified by Cuthbert from 160 articles from *The Journal of Urban Design* (Cuthbert, 2007). As the authors, according to Cuthbert, Inam has pointed out the economic functioning of the city, Gospodini has stated that urban design has been consciously used as an instrument of economic development of cities facing competitions, and Aravot has suspected that localities are becoming commodification results of history, as decorations of consumption and entertainment (Inam, 2002; Gospodini, 2002; Aravot, 2002; all cited in Cuthbert, 2007).

Towards Chinese context, Hsia, Lu and Yang from design background have been all exploring in this direction. Hsia holds a Marxist view in seeing urbanization and space production, and considering transformations of cities at larger scales in local, regional and global contexts (e.g., Hsia, 1993). Lu has offered more detailed explorations of the Chinese urban form, by adapting Lefebvre and Harvey's ideas to the socialist context of China, presenting a vivid picture of the history of space production starting from 1949 (Lu, 2006). She has demonstrated a socialist mode of production of space differing from the capitalist one by arguing that "spatial production in Maoist China was not only

due to the socialist mode of production, but also due to the historical condition of scarcity and weak planning power within a peculiar socialist/Third World national context." (ibid., p.11). Comprehensively facing the urbanization picture extending from cities to towns and villages against the backdrop of globalization, Yang (2016) has offered credible inquiries into what he calls "spatialization of capital" by adding more roles into analysis, such as the power relations between central states and local governments, the spatial relations between regions, cities and villages, and the engagements between capital and local demands. Yang has opened an urban-rural vision to see the problem, presenting a concept called "space therapy," which indicates the geographical and spatial transfer of financial crisis from cities to villages (Yang, 2016, pp.46-56). It is in line with 'the second circuit of capital', meaning that the production of space in towns and villages can diffuse and fix the over-accumulation of domestic and international capitals.

In addition, Zhu (2010) has questioned the political economy approaches to urban space by stating that they are still too macro, having "little to offer for a concrete, sustained and detailed analysis of 'real space'." Thus, he turns to Foucault's thoughts being "more precise, analytical, with an interest in the micro practices of institutions in which power, knowledge, space and the body intertwine." (ibid., pp.106-125). His analysis of the city and palace of imperial Beijing, as an example has been carried out in such a way (Zhu, 2004).

The abovementioned views of production of space are all aim at urban areas in China, with traditional towns and villages left un-questioned. Also, they have not developed a way to clearly explain the real mechanisms of such a spatial production, as a mean to inspire the design and decision-making process.

2.4.2 The everyday life — a bottom-up yet humanistic view

The description and interpretation of form have been questioned in above discussions for their inclination of being either too individualised, self-referential, or too political and conceptual. Nevertheless, indeed, the reasonings of form tend to be similarly canonical and situated in an elitist position, such as the perspective of 'production of space', as all relevant discussions have mainly aimed at the political and economic logics at the top only, without carefully considering the roles at the bottom. Space production cannot be understood purely from top down; a view from the bottom up is necessary. Indeed, from a humanistic perspective the people inhabiting in the built environment as receivers of these form transformation also play a key role in shaping and interacting with the form results. Also, recent policies towards towns and villages have highly stressed the need to 'put people first'. Therefore, the significance of people from bottom up must not be neglected. The full understanding of space production should include a proper reading of the responsive change of local people's mindsets and practices happened in their everyday life. A satisfying form results need to meet people's everyday demands.

Actually, some design-related scholars have already begun to borrow an 'everyday life' view to challenge and complement the conventional top-down visions in examining the form and design problems (e.g., Siu, 2001; Wang, 2004; Stanek, 2011; ed. Chase, Crawford and Kaliski, 2008). As a bottom-up perspective, 'everyday life' was first raised by sociologists like Henri Lefebvre, Guy Debord and Michel de Certeau (Crawford, 2008a, p.7). Lefebvre again, exemplified by his 'critique of everyday life', played a key role in studying this concept. He criticized structuralism and semiology for dominating the understanding of urban space and reducing it to pure descriptive texts, with the reading or decoding of real world becoming an escape from history, reality and experience (Wang, 2004). This was in the same vein with his political

understanding of space. For him, the modern space is always "political and strategic" (Lefebvre, 2009a, p.170) rather than a pure form, which is inhabited, heterogeneous, and filled with the logic of capitalism bringing exploitation, domination and subjection (Lu, 2003, p.260), yet is completely opposite to the freedom of everyday life. The modern is "the always new and constantly changing habits that are shaped by technology and worldliness," whilst the everyday, or quotidian, is the "timeless, humble, repetitive rhythms of life," (Crawford, 2008a, p.7) representing "the ethics underlying routine and the aesthetics of familiar settings." (Lefebvre, 1971, p.24) However, as suggested by Lu (2003, p.260), Lefebvre thought the richness and diversity of everyday life had been in the shadow of modern space, because the modern rationalization's colonization of everyday life was relentless, to an extent that "the sterile, repetitious office blocks; the antiseptic supermarche; and the endless proliferation of suburban pavilions across the hillsides like 'hundreds of dead chicken in an immense shop window' ,"(McLeod, 1997, p.15) with the 'everyday' becoming "a product, the most general of products in an era where production engenders consumption, and where consumption is manipulated by producers...."(Lefebvre, 1997, p.34) However, according to Lu (2003, p.261), Lefebvre thought that everyday life can escape from the bureaucratic regimentation, as he believed the leisure and liberty of everydayness can be found in the 'moments' of everyday life, like a festival with freedom, with nature, love, simple domestic pleasures, celebrations, desires and needs that can erode "any prospect of total, static systematization." (McLeod, 1997, pp.15-16)

Lefebvre's conceptualization of everyday life has indeed inspired his proponents in art and design. For example, the situationists has tried to bridge architectural design and the critique of everyday life (Lu, 2003, p.263), through replacing the economy of commodity exchange with the mode of exchange as gift (Saddler 1998 cited in Lu, 2003, p.263), but this kind of efforts has seemed too impractical. More grounded utilization of 'everyday life' can be found in the concept of 'everyday urbanism' proposed by

Chase and his fellows (ed. Chase, Crawford and kaliski, 2008). They see urbanism as a broader discursive arena combining all disciplines considering the city, and response to Lefebvre by highlighting 'everyday life' as the lived experience shared by human residents, being ordinary and routine, often overlooked by designers, yet full of social, spatial and aesthetic meanings (Crawford, 2008a, pp.6-7). For them, the trivial everyday life "constitutes the basis of social experience and the true realm of political contestation" and the everyday urban space, as the physical domain of everyday life, should stand in contrast to the carefully planned and designated public space, which is "banal and repetitive, everywhere and nowhere, obvious yet invisible," and is "ambiguous like all in-between space." (ibid.). Thus, they regard 'everyday urbanism' as an alternative urban design concept to relink urban design or research with ordinary human and social meanings, which "put urban residents and their daily experience at the center of the enterprise, encouraged a more ethnographic mode of urban research, and emphasized specificity and material reality." (Crawford, 2008b, p.12) They think it "needs to work both from the bottom up (in terms of subject and sympathy) and from the top down (utilizing sophisticated knowledge and techniques)." (ibid., p.15).

Facing Chinese context, Wang has continuously introduced Lefebvre's thoughts into architecture and urban design and led his students to experiment 'everyday urbanism' strategies during their design courses in (Wang, 2009). Lu has raised more critical questions of Lefebvre's everyday life (Lu, 2003, p.262). She has discovered that whilst Lefebvre kept rejecting abstractions, he failed to offer a framework for everyday life to evade being abstracted, and the role of human agency had totally disappeared from his discussions. She has further indicated a way to overcome the abstraction by adopting Dell Upton's opinion, which stresses the necessity to consider the inescapable materiality of everyday landscape together with its makers and users, and to make human confrontation with ordinary material environment in doing relevant research (Upton, 2003 cited in Lu, 2003, p.262).

Hence in her field research on the Chinese work unit, she not only took a top-down view but also deliberately tried to confront local residents 'on site', to document their everyday practices, to understand their daily experiences and underlying concepts, meanings and implications through interview and observation (ibid., pp.264-287) implying an ethnographical approach.

However, in reality people may not always consciously know the meanings and implications of their everyday behaviours (Liu, 2000, p. xii), thus the reading of them as a bottom-up complement for the reasoning of form should more properly discover and translate the genuine significance of these daily, trivial, momentary, and natural practices happening 'on site' than the people do. For this, ethnography from anthropology that specifically focuses on people could be helpful.

Although ethnography has been widely used in urban research, the application of it to design is not thick. There are some reflections about the relationship between anthropology and architecture (e.g., ed. Pardo and Prato, 2012; Stender, 2017; Chang, 2008), and some explorations linking it with the design process such as 'semantic ethnography' (Cranz, 2016). However, to highlight ethnography in this research is not to find a direct bridge connecting 'everyday life' and design, but to consider its implications for the research methods, such as employing its basic approach — to positively and actively explore the notions and meanings of practices 'on site' through observation, interview and documentation, so as to achieve a better understanding of how people at the bottom are influenced by or contribute to the form transformation. Nevertheless, this research gives up passive observations and surveys of a phenomenon, which are common in conventional design investigations, such as Gehl's approach to the field and the life there (Gehl and Svarre, 2013). Although Gehl's distant observation has its own merit, it is still after all an outsider's mapping, counting, documenting of

passive reactions of public without actively understanding the individually or collectively embraced concepts and meanings underlying these surface phenomena from an insider's perspective. For example, such an approach cannot answer questions like why do people move out from or come back to towns and villages, why did they accept the form changes and modify them and how have they done it. The production of space is not only the production of physical space; it is also producing the social relations therein.

2.5 Conclusion

The literature review reflects the conventional design knowledge and methods used towards the contextual form problem through categorizing them into three groups of design analysis: description of form, reasoning of form and interpretation of form. This categorization is borrowed from Han (2013), who used this to reflect the essence and approaches of urban design dealing with the urban form.

The review first suggests that architectural research towards the form issues has been mainly descriptive, with some anthropological reasonings of form not facing the contemporary background, and some researchers not keeping the critical boundary between research and practice. However, it admits that a small group of researchers' patient reasonings of form facing the realities in urbanization and rural development is inspiring.

The review then moves to examine planning, indicating that there was a lack of description and reasoning efforts in planning towards the contextual form problems, with form interpretation (practice) dominated the approach not caring the concrete and perceptible form. It also reveals that the belated reasoning of form in planning does contribute to connections with wider knowledge other than design, but they have been still too macro and distant from the grounded form problems.

The reflection then points out that urban design could be a better mediating role linking these approaches and stakeholders, but it reveals the problems of urban design's localization and development in China, which includes its absence in towns and villages, its inherited self-referential attitude and language-like convention which all lack sufficient reasonings, and more importantly its lack of statutory status in planning systems which allows urban design to be anarchically applied without appropriate

professional values.

To incorporate some classic descriptive approaches from design knowledge into discussion, the review sequentially examines typology, urban morphology and typo-morphology (being an innovative synthesis of the former two). By reflecting their theoretical origins and the problems of their current applications towards the Chinese context, it argues that these methods are not very applicable in facing the form problem against more general socio-political backgrounds which have many discontinuous, contingent and deterministic factors driving the form change.

Hence, the review turns to support the reasoning of form based on a socio-political stance seeing the form change as an outcome of social production of space. It thus traces the theoretical origin of this concept and outlined its applications in Chinese context and points out that this perspective has yet to reach towns and villages with relevant mechanisms of space production explained, and lacks a bottom-up view. So, in line with the political understanding of space it further introduces the concept of 'everyday life' so as to support the bottom-up view having more humanistic concerns. It reflects the development and application of 'everyday life' and reveals its problem of being abstract and hence stresses the significance of confronting people's everyday life 'on site' in studying form problems, which is to know the everyday practice and the underlying genuine meanings. It then turns to employ ethnographic methods, as a mean to better understand people's notions and behaviours.

Chapter 3: Research Agenda

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research questions and objectives, and clarified some key terms and concepts specially for this thesis. The main question responds to the thesis title, and relevant detailed questions are related to the potential stakeholders, which indicates the structure of the analytical mode discussed in Chapter 4. Then, through the examination of relevant contexts, regulations and existing definitions, the key terms and concepts are carefully explained and defined, such as the Chinese administrative division, the meaning of 'traditional towns and village', the meaning of 'form' of 'traditional towns and village', and the time range of the 'form transformation' this research aims at.

3.2 Research questions

Based on the preliminary questions asked in the background introduction and the literature review, a series of formal research questions are asked below. As shown in the thesis title, the goal of 'understanding a phenomenon' indicates that these questions have a more explanatory style, so they are mainly started by asking 'how'.

The major research question is:

How has the form in traditional towns and villages been transformed in a certain period (1998-2021)?

The more detailed research questions are:

1. *How have the dominant forces driven the form transformation in traditional towns and villages?*

Sub-questions: What kind of driving forces can be identified as dominant ones? How have these dominant forces contributed to or been affected by the contextual form transformation? How have they worked with or against each other?

2. *How have the local people responded to and influenced on the form transformation in traditional towns and villages through their everyday life?*

Sub-questions: What is the essence of 'everyday life' in this process? How have the local people's everyday life been adjusted to the contextual form transformation, as a response? How have the change of their everyday life appropriated and modified the form results, as a bottom-up influence?

3. *How have designers influenced on the form transformation in traditional towns and villages?*

Sub-questions: How important are the designers in this process? How have the

designers contributed to or been affected by the contextual form transformation? How can designers do in the future process of such a form transformation?

4. *How have these above stakeholders interacted with each other during the process of influencing on the form transformation in traditional towns and villages?*

As the form transformation is a result of space production, to answer these questions, the roles of these stakeholders need to be explained through analysing the contextual processes of space production under an analytical mode built to suit the conditions of traditional towns and villages. This mode is inspired by the research questions and responses to the stakeholders (see Sub-section 4.2.2), and is moved to the special context of traditional towns and villages in Huizhou, to explain the roles of these stakeholders in detail so as to understand the form transformation in there, as a case study to answer the research questions.

3.3 Research objectives

Based the research questions asked above, the research objectives can be defined to form the fundamental goals of this study.

The key objective of this research is:

To explain the contextual form transformation through understanding the contextual production of space.

Specifically, the detailed objectives are:

1. *To identify and explain the roles of major stakeholders having contributed to or been affected by the production of space in traditional towns and villages against the background of local urbanization and rural development.*

2. *To reflect the role of designer, its relations with other stakeholders and its wider social implications in this process.*

3. *To provide references and recommendations for related designers and decision-makers, so as to help achieve better form results in the space production.*

The stakeholders' logics, behaviours and reactions involving the form change will be examined and explained through the case study in Huizhou. The stakeholders include the dominant driving forces, the designers, and the people, as mentioned in the research questions.

3.4 Terms and concepts

Before making further discussions, some terms and concepts need to be clarified, as they relate to the specific Chinese context.

3.4.1 The administrative division of China

The constitution of China has defined the country's administrative division as a system with three tiers: the provincial level, the county level and the township level.[23] However, around 1982, a prefectural level was added between provincial level and county level. It was to highlight the significance of city in the economic development, by lifting some cities in county level to prefectural level to become prefectural cities to lead and manage their surrounding counties, so as to achieve a more coordinated and efficient regional relationship (Zhang and Li, 2021). Thus, practically, the current Chinese administrative division is a four-tier system:

Provincial level (1st): including provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities, and special administrative regions;

Prefectural level (2nd): including prefectural-level cities, prefectures, autonomous prefectures and leagues;

County level (3rd): including districts, county-level cities, counties, autonomous counties, banners, autonomous banners, special districts, and forestry districts; and

Township level (4th): including sub-districts, designated towns, townships, county-controlled districts, ethnic townships, sum, and ethnic sum.

In addition, a very basic and grassroots level (5th) having an autonomy follows the

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[23] See an official description at: http://www.gov.cn/test/2009-04/17/content_1288030.htm.

above four levels, but having no statutory status and political power. It usually includes residential committee and village committee, with the latter closely connecting with the village collective. Village collective is officially called 'Rural Collective Economic Organization', organizing the economy in rural areas, and in this organization all the villagers collectively owned the rural land (Song, 2021).

The most common division from top down is the one starting from a province, going down to a prefecture-level city, then to a district or county, finally to a subdistrict or town or township. For the research field of Huizhou, which now largely belongs to Huangshan city, it just falls into this division: Anhui province — Huangshan city — Huangshan city's subordinate districts or counties — relevant towns or townships — relevant residential committees or village committees. However, in this thesis, the administrative division cannot be simply used to represent the geographical relationship between built-up areas of different administrative units.

3.4.2 The rural area and the traditional towns and villages

The following discussion tries to give a clear definition to the research field — traditional towns and villages through examining the meaning of rural and urban area and their relationship in terms of administrative division and planning system.

In general official discourse the rural area refers to townships and villages (*xiang* and *cun*), which are often called countryside, whilst the urban area means cities and designated towns (*chengshi* and *jianzhizhen*). Nevertheless, there are mainly two different relationships between the rural and urban area. In the administrative division, generally, a rural unit at lower levels must be within the jurisdiction of an urban unit at upper levels. For example, a village, a smallest rural unit, must either belong to a town or township, and the town or township must belong to a county or district, which

belongs to a city. To be brief, a village administratively belongs to a town and a city.
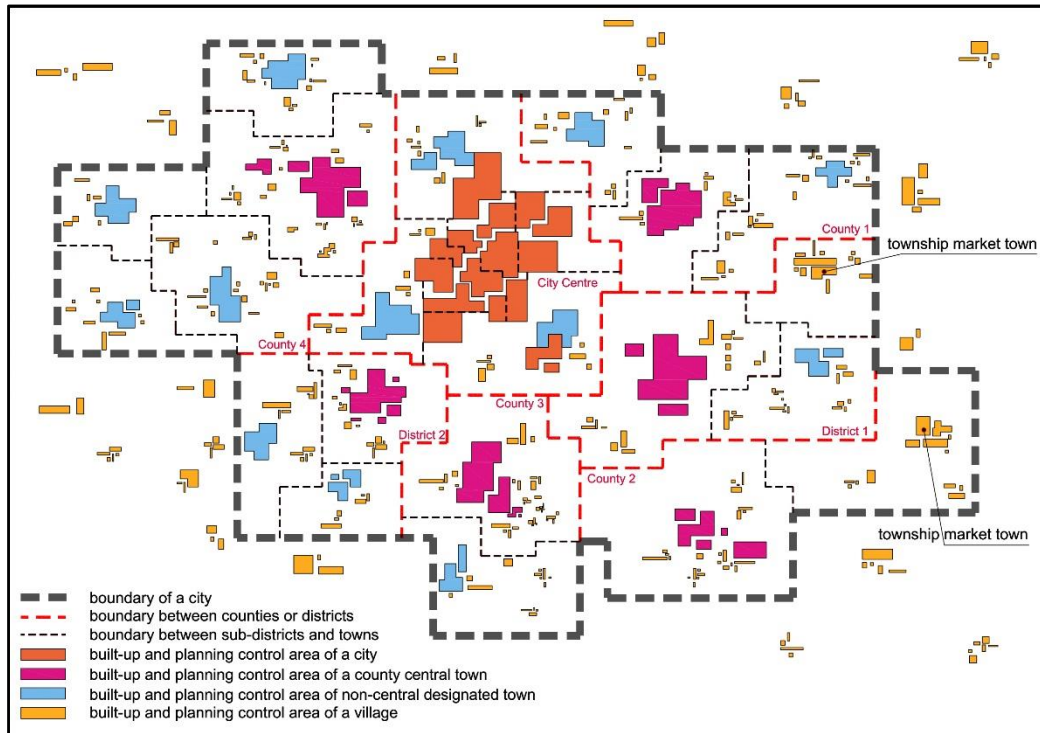
Figure 3.1. The spatial and administrative relations between village, town, township, county, district and city (source: Author).

However, in respect of planning that mainly targets the built-up areas, the rural area and urban area are usually recognized as spatial neighbours. There is a juxtaposition of the two different territories, which are geographically and spatially separated from each other (Figure 3.1). This relationship was actually implied by the *2008 Urban and Rural Area Planning Act of PRC* (NPC Standing Committee, 2007), which had put the city and designated town on urban side whilst placing the village and township on rural side. It further defined its target — the planning area for both sides as: the built-up area and the area that needs planning control due to the demand for development and construction (the planning control area). Naturally in default planning language, the urban area thus equals the built-up and planning control area in cities and designated towns, whilst the rural area means the built-up and planning control area in villages and townships. This classification also conforms with the disparate attributes of land in the two sides. The urban construction land is largely state-owned and can be transferred on

market, whilst the rural construction land is largely collective-owned and cannot be transferred on market (also discussed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 8).

For the city, the built-up and planning control area mainly comprises sub-districts (*jiedao*), which are usually very concentrated and developed, mainly inhabited by non-rural population, and full of modern industries and commerce; for the designated town, it usually means the more concentrated and developed districts around the town centre where its government premises are situated. For the township that is not on the urban side yet sometimes has a smaller 'market town'[24] (*jizhen*) as its centre, similarly, it comprises the built-up districts around the 'market town' centre, where its government premises are built. For village, it simply means the built-up area mainly comprising people's homesteads, houses and collective properties.

The '2019 National Territory Spatial Planning System' (see Sub-section 5.5.3) has further clarified the meaning of 'urban area' through introducing the concept of 'urban development boundary'. It has been defined as the boundary within which, in a certain period, the development and construction of cities and towns can be concentratedly implemented for the development demand, for the improvement of their function and spatial quality. This boundary is for cities, designated towns and various kinds of development zones, and it comprises the concentrated construction zone, resilient development zone and special function zone (see Figure 5.5 in Sub-section 5.5.3). However, it seems that the areas within the boundary are all counted to be urban area rather than rural area.

This research adopts the planning's perspective to see relevant relations and definitions,

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[24] A more concentrated and developed district in a township (in rural side), which acts as the economic, cultural and political centre of the township. It usually developed from a rural market place and is not officially admitted as an administrative unit. It is more rural, and the scale is usually much smaller than a designated town.

so it defines 'traditional towns and villages' as: the planning area outside cities which has a more traditional built environment. It points to the planning area other than the built-up and planning control area of cities. In other words, it is the built-up and planning control area of designated towns[25] and villages, and the area is formed by a more traditional built environment, including a series of traditional or historical villages or town districts.[26]

The targeted area in this research is the place where the traditional characters carried by the built environment are still being lost and also the built environment has not been appropriately improved in the urbanization and rural development, where design knowledge and methods that conventionally deal with city development may not be fully applicable, where especially the urban design wisdom has not reached yet, where people's mindset is not as modern as that in cities, where there are more issues of tradition, where the capital and industry are not as sophisticated as those in cities yet they are growing and concentrating, and where the governance and management are not as advanced as those in cities.

To include the traditional towns into the targeted area has inevitably mixed the urban and rural area and complicated the discussion, but the reason to do so is that this research thinks that not only these towns at the mediate level have a more reciprocal relationship with the traditional villages, for example as the key knots they have more efficient connections with these smaller villages rather than these more modern and bigger cities, but also in terms of every aspect listed above, the traditional towns are more similar to the traditional villages rather than the cities.

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[25] To avoid confusion, market town is excluded in this research, as it is much smaller and less influential, and also the majority of the built environment in a township is made up by villages.

[26] For example, the traditional towns and villages in Huizhou differ a lot from some modern towns and villages in more developed Zhejiang province in terms of built environment, as the built environment of the latter is not traditional at all, and is not dissimilar to that in cities.

3.4.3 The form of traditional towns and villages

The definition of form of the targeted area draws an analogy with the definition of urban form. Urban form is actually a form system that can be understood in different scales and elements, as suggested by Živković. She quotes Williams to describe urban form as "morphological attributes of an urban area at all scales," (Williams et al., 2000 cited in Živković, 2019, p.2) with the scales including individual building, street, urban block, neighbourhood, and city (ibid.). For the elements used to describe urban form, other than conventional ones like streets, blocks, plots, and buildings, she (ibid.) has also mentioned people's activities and the supporting physical facilities through referring to Lynch (1984) and Kolhass and Mau (1997). Another classification of elements is also mentioned by Živković (2019, p.2), which is based on a number of physical features and nonphysical characteristics like "size, shape, scale, density, land uses, building types, urban block layout, and distribution of green space." More, urban form can be understood by defining elements in scales from macro to micro (ibid.), as exemplified in the *Creating Places for People – An Urban Design Protocol for Australian Cities* (Department of Infrastructure and Transport, 2011 cited in Živković, 2019, p.2), with elements defined (in scales) as urban structure, urban grain, density and height, streetscape, façade and details, public realm, and socio-economic fabric.

In line with this, the form targeted by this research also means a form system within the targeted area defined above, but having a smaller range of scales. So similarly, the form in traditional towns and villages includes tangible form elements (with morphological attributes) of an area there at relevant scales, such as details, façades, individual buildings, village/town streets, settlement/residential blocks, communities, neighbourhoods, village/town structures and layouts. The form system also closely relates to some intangible elements such as the public realm, the people's activities

supported by tangible elements, and broader social fabrics.

3.4.4 The time range of the studied phenomenon

The time range of the targeted phenomenon is defined between 1998 and 2021 when the data collection for case study ended. It is because the year of 1998 was a key time point, when the 'urban housing reform' was formally launched, which began to greatly contribute to the production of living space in towns and consequently caused the huge form transformation there.[27] Also, around 1998 the BNSC that started the enormous amounts of rural construction was also formally mentioned. From 1998 onwards, the villages have also seen a huge space production and form transformation.

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[27] The 'urban housing reform' is discussed in Section 5.3 and the concept of 'living space' is discussed in Section 4.2.

Chapter 4: Analytical Mode and Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the analytical mode, the methodology and the research design. First, the building of analytical mode is based on the reflection of research gap, and is in line with Lefebvre's political understanding of space and the realities of urbanization and rural development within the context. This mode also responds to the research questions. Second, for the methodology, the qualitative paradigm has been adopted, and 'case study' as the detailed qualitative approach has been chosen. Also, the convention of writing a linear form history has been avoid; instead, the research breaks the linear history into representative themes, which can be sub-cases in the case study. Third, for the research design, a clear 'question-data-method' mode is raised and hence connected to the analytical mode, then the combined mode is planned to be related to the sub-cases to help better gather data. The themes as sub-cases are then selected, with detailed research design for each of them and data collection method explained.

4.2 New research mode: the three levels

The analytical mode has three levels, which accords with the real conditions of space production in the context of traditional towns and villages in China and is also inspired by Lefebvre's dialectical triad of social space (Lefebvre, 1991b, pp.33-46).

4.2.1 The dialectically linked triad in production of space

Upon pointing out that social space is a social product, Lefebvre further mentioned that every society, with each mode of production produces its own social space. He stated:

> Each society is born within the framework of a given mode of production, with the inherent perculiarities to this framework molding its space. Spatial practice defines its pace, it poses it and presupposes it in a dialectical interaction.

(Lefebvre, 2009b, p.187)

The term 'spatial practice' comes from Lefebvre's dialectically linked triad that is a key to understand the social production of space: *spatial practice (perceived space), representations of space (conceived space), representational space (lived space)* (Lefebvre,1991b, p.33).

Spatial practice (perceived space) is close to a process creating material existence that can be perceived. It "embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation," ensuring "continuity and some degree of cohesion" that "implies a guaranteed level of competence and a specific level of performance." (Lefebvre 1991b, p.33) As seen by Soja (Soja, 1996, p.66), it is "the process of producing the material form of social spatiality, being presented as both

medium and outcome of human activity, behavior, and experience." Being materialized and empirical, the perceived space is "directly sensible and open' and is the 'traditional focus of attention in all the spatial disciplines."

Representations of space (conceived space) is a kind of "conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent — all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived." (Lefebvre, 1991b, p.38) It is the "dominant space in any society." (ibid.) As "a storehouse of epistemological power," with "regulatory and ruly discourse," (Soja, 1996, p.67) it is the "representations of power and ideology, of control and surveillance," and the "primary space of utopian thought and vision, of the semiotician or decoder, and of the purely creative imagination of some artists and poets." (ibid.)

Representational space (lived space) is "directly lived through its associated images and symbols," being "the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users'," and the "dominated — and hence passively experienced — space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate." (Lefebvre, 1991b, p.39). However, as mentioned by Sojia, it is the terrain for generating "'counterspaces', spaces of resistance to the dominant order arising precisely from their subordinate, peripheral or marginalized positioning."(Soja 1996, p.68) Representational space is alive and it speaks, embracing "the loci of passion, of action, of lived situation" and being "directional, situational, or relational" as it is "essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic."(Lefebvre, 1991b, p.42) These descriptions are very close to Lefebvre's conceptualization of 'everyday life', or more accurately, as defined by himself, everyday life forms the representational spaces (Lefebvre, 1991b, p.116).

In line with Lefebvre's thought of social production of space, in Chinese context, or

more precisely the traditional towns and villages, there must be a specific mode of production that producing its specific social space that is in a dialectical triad, within which the 'spatial practice' as a process forming material reality results in the physical form transformation.

4.2.2 The analytical mode — 'production of space' with three levels

To apply this view to the traditional towns and villages of China and establish the analytical mode requires understanding some changed conditions and the general processes and procedures of space production in the context.

The changes lie in several aspects. First, the production mode is not a capitalist one, it was born and has particularly grown during the urbanization and rural development process against the backdrop of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' (discussed in Section 5.2), within which the role of government is much more powerful. Second, the production area has moved from cities to towns and villages. Third, more attention has been put on the people at the bottom in the official discourses, implying the growing importance of lived space and the everyday life.

Hence, upon the changed conditions, taking into account the related stakeholders and dissecting the general interrelationships between them based on wider phenomena of such a spatial practice, this thesis assumes the production process towards the physical form results operates mainly in one direction. That is, it is directed by local government from the top down, with public funds, private capital, or sometimes a mix of the two being invested into the contextual built environment. Through the operation of Land Finance as a business mode of the socialist market economy (discussed in Section 5.3), or through other actions by local government to fulfil relevant political responsibilities,

the result is the production and supply of physical space. From the bottom-up, local people and community then receive or consume the produced form results, adjusting their everyday life to these top-down changes. The designer, meanwhile, is situated in the 'middle', being either employed by a larger entity or self-employed, limited by regulatory frameworks or liberated to pursue an individual vision, offering instrumental knowledge to help creating the physical form and space.

This structure is also inspired by and conformed to the triad of social space articulated by Lefebvre. The top (governmental power and government/nongovernment capital) speaks of representation of space (conceived space); the bottom (local people) inhabits representational space (lived space); and the middle (designers) are the negotiators, who should connect the conceived space and lived space through spatial practice (perceived space) causing the physical results and form transformation, but they usually stand for the conceived space or just conceive the space themselves through spatial practice, neglecting the lived space.

As a result, an analytical mode with three levels can be constructed. The top-down driving forces are the supplier of space that is first conceived and then materialized; the bottom-up local people and community are the receiver and occupier of spatial reality (perceived space) having gone through the conceiving and materializing process, who then make it lived space yet being dominated; the middle level as the designer of space that is first perceived, but also conceived and lived in (Figure 4.1).

As a perceived phenomenon, the form transformation means the change of spatial practice, being one direct result of the social production of space. To understand the form transformation is to understand the production process as a whole, which means to understand the logics and behaviours of key stakeholders in each of the three levels.[28]

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[28] As mentioned earlier, the three levels also conform with the research questions.
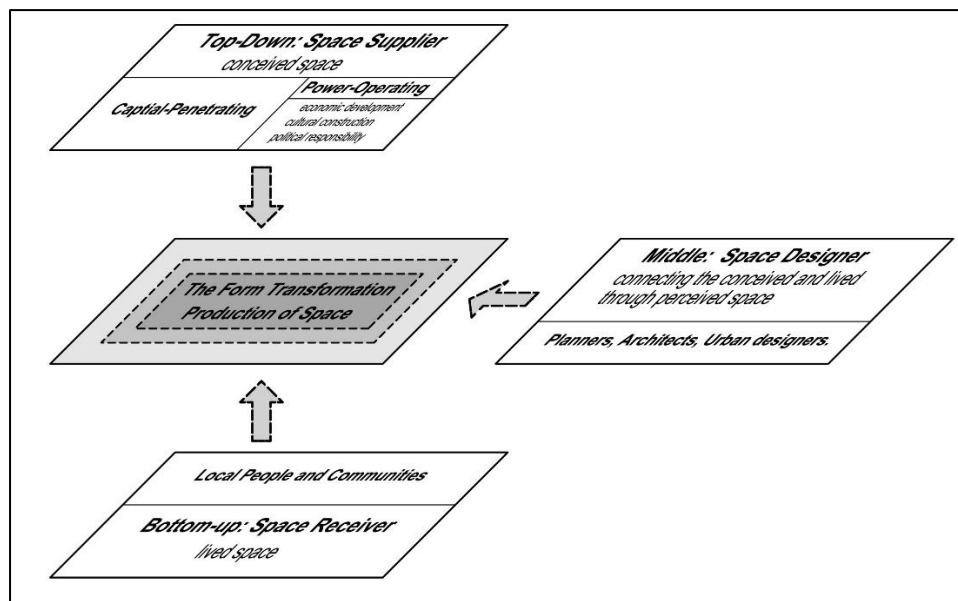
Figure 4.1. The analytical mode of three levels (source: Author).

In addition, for the lived space, Lefebvre saw an antagonism between it and the conceived space, pointing out how the former has often been crushed by the latter (Lefebvre, 1991b, p.51), like the modern space colonizing the everyday life. However, in line with Lu criticism on this view (Lu, 2003, p.262), this thesis argues that lived space is not purely what Lefebvre saw from everyday life which elusively and innocently exists in the festival-like moments, eroding regimentation systematization (Mcleod, 1997, pp.15-16). The lived space in the context should not be as elusive and innocent as Lefebvre's; it is actually close to human agency, being formed in their silent response to the conceived space and spatial practice through acceptance, adjustment and modification. It is associated with experiences, reasons and meanings, which are created and limited by historical conditions and future expectations.[29] The lived space in this research is based on the local people's living space. The living space includes but is not limited by their apartments and houses in traditional towns and villages. Usually, the realm of their living space also includes the built environment surrounding

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[29] The case study chapters reveal that with the antagonism not formally recognized by the inhabitants, the lived space is not immediately crushed, it is actually reshaped in every possible place by everyday life.

their homes, holding their everyday life, largely overlapping with the residential districts or villages they live in.

Whilst space receiver and space designer have relatively onefold meaning respectively, space supplier is recognized by this thesis as the 'power and capital'. This is indicated by the reality in China that stronger intervention of government power exists in the market economy, correlating with the capital as a general driving force of development and production. It has been further supported by Yang's discussion (2016) relating their relations to space against the backdrop of Chinese urbanization. As seen by him, on the one hand, the appreciation of capital needs a stabilized space which needs the power to guarantee its realization, and on the other hand, the power can further consolidate its legitimacy by offering a managed and controlled space being conducive to the capital circulation and accumulation (ibid., p.7-11). This accumulation naturally includes the capital accumulation in the form of physical space as the 'second circuit of capital'.

For the power, a more detailed categorization of it can be built based on the official discourses and efforts towards development. It follows the three basic aspects of official logics that can be concluded from a series of overarching reports delivered in the National Congress of CPC (Hu, 2007, 2012; Xi, 2017), which guide the nation's development path. That is the development and perfection of economy, culture and politics. Taking into account current conditions of traditional towns and villages' development, the power logics in the production of space thus can be divided as the economic development, the cultural construction and the political responsibility (Figure 4.1). The first is mainly represented by the increase of government revenue made through space production; the second is mainly embodied in the development and protection of local traditional culture and identity borne by the built-environment, responding to the greater discourses on revitalizing Chinese culture to gain a stronger cultural confidence; the third mainly speaks of an increasingly stronger political trend

of compensating the towns and villages as relatively inferior areas (especially villages) and of supporting their developments and the well-being of people there against the backdrop of urban-rural integration. However, this division is not a direct reflection of the power structure, as in fact, the three aspects are correlated or entangled with each other under many dynamic circumstances. For the research purpose, only in this static dissection can we have a relatively clear view of them.

The analytical mode is also inspired by some other discussions aiming at the transformation of form or space. For example, Lu (2003, pp.111-115) has established three levels as the nation, planner, and work unit, to discuss the mode of production of space in Chinese cities in socialist era by examining their relationships. Heath (2002) in his research on the role of post-war office to residential conversions in the UK has looked into both the supply and demand side of the product of conversions. Peng (2013) has concluded the mode of production of space in new city districts in China, seeing the capital, government, and new residents as space producers co-producing the new space.

Unless being specifically mentioned, the term 'space' in the following discussion will still directly refer to the result of spatial practice — the perceived phenomenon and the physical reality of social space, to avoid confusions.

4.3 Methodology

4.3.1 Choosing qualitative paradigm

Based on the research questions and literature review, the research has chosen the qualitative paradigm, which is defined by J.W. Creswell and J.D. Creswell (2018, p.4) as below:

> Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data….

The choice comes from reviewing the philosophical assumptions (Creswell and Poth, 2018, p.20) of this research. From ontological point of view, as the research is to understand a phenomenon from varies roles, it believes there are multiple realities in this process; from epistemological point of view, the study thinks the evidence is from the objective side being studied, such as from the space receivers; from the axiological side, the interest of the author from the background of architectural and urban design can influence the research and may result in bias; from the methodological side, the study itself has an emerging feature and the questions may be revised in the data-gathering process. Compared to the philosophical assumptions of classical qualitative paradigm (ibid.), all the above aspects support the choice of qualitative paradigm (Figure 4.2). In addition, for the choice of interpretive frameworks (ibid., pp.24-26), the research tends to take social constructive perspective, which is also a classical characteristic of qualitative method.

TABLE 2.1 ● Philosophical Assumptions With Implications for Practice			
Assumption	**Questions**	**Characteristics**	**Implications for Practice (Examples)**
Ontological	What is the nature of reality?	Reality is multiple as seen through many views.	The researcher reports different perspectives as themes develop in the findings.
Epistemological	What counts as knowledge? How are knowledge claims justified? What is the relationship between the researcher and that being researched?	Subjective evidence is obtained from participants; the researcher attempts to lessen the distance between himself or herself and that being researched.	The researcher relies on quotes as evidence from the participant as well as collaborates, spends time in field with participants, and becomes an "insider."
Axiological	What is the role of values?	The researcher acknowledges that research is value-laden and that biases are present in relation to their role in the study context.	The researcher openly discusses values that shape the narrative and includes his or her own interpretation in conjunction with those of participants.
Methodological	What is the process of research? What is the language of research?	The researcher uses inductive logic, studies the topic within its context, and uses an emerging design.	The researcher works with particulars (details) before generalizations, describes in detail the context of the study, and continually revises questions from experiences in the field.

Figure 4.2. Philosophical assumptions of qualitative paradigm (source: Creswell and Poth, 2018, p.20).

Foundational Considerations	Narrative Research	Phenomenology	Grounded Theory	Ethnography	Case Study
Research focus of approach	Exploring the life of an individual	Understanding the essence of the experience	Developing a theory grounded in data from the field	Describing and interpreting a culture-sharing group	Developing an in-depth description and analysis of a case or multiple cases
Unit of analysis	Studying one or more individuals	Studying several individuals who have shared the experience	Studying a process, an action, or an interaction involving many individuals	Studying a group that shares the same culture	Studying an event, a program, an activity, or more than one individual
Type of research problem best suited for approach	Needing to tell stories of individual experiences	Needing to describe the essence of a lived phenomenon	Grounding a theory in the views of participants	Describing and interpreting the shared patterns of culture of a group	Providing an in-depth understanding of a case or cases
Nature of disciplinary origins	Drawing from the humanities including anthropology, literature, history, psychology, and sociology	Drawing from philosophy, psychology, and education	Drawing from sociology	Drawing from anthropology and sociology	Drawing from psychology, law, political science, and medicine

Figure 4.3. Five recognized approaches in qualitative paradigm (source: Creswell and Poth, 2018, p.104).

4.3.2 Case study as a qualitative approach

According to Creswell and Poth (2018, p.104), there are mainly five recognized approaches in qualitative paradigm: narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study (Figure 4.3). After carefully examining the similarities and differences among the five, this research has chosen to rely on the approach of 'case study', which is specially carried out in the context of Huizhou. There are several reasons to do so:

4.3.2.1 The research object fits with the feature of 'case study'.

As Yin (2018, p.5) has concluded,

> …the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena…allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events — such as individual life cycles, small group behaviour, organizational and managerial processes…

He further offers a clearer twofold definition of case study (ibid., p.15):

> 1. A case study is an empirical inquiry that:
> ● investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in depth and within its real-life context, especially when
> ● the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident.

> 2. The case study inquiry
> ● copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many

more variables of interest than data points, and as one result

● benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide date design, data collection, and analysis, and as another result

● relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulation fashion.

The research objective of this thesis is to understand the form transformation as a social phenomenon/process with design implications in a bounded real-life context, with the traditional towns and villages in Huizhou chosen to represent this context. The relations between the phenomenon of form change and the context of Huizhou still needs to be explained. So, the research fits the first fold of the definition. The research mode includes three levels of stakeholders in the phenomenon, which would offer at least three sources of evidence and these data can converge to be triangulated. Also, the concept of 'production of space' is the main theoretical proposition in this inquiry to guide the data collection. Therefore, the second fold of the definition can be matched.

4.3.2.2 The research questions align with the characteristic of 'case study'.

Still seen in Yin's discussion (ibid., p.9-13), whilst 'what' and 'who' and 'how many' questions may favour survey methods or archival data, 'how' and 'why' questions with more explanatory attributes are more likely to use case studies, histories and experiments as preferred research methods. Furthermore, whilst in an experiment the researcher can "manipulate behaviour directly, precisely, and systematically," (ibid., p.12) and in a history the investigator mainly deals with the 'dead' past, in a case study, researchers tend to face contemporary events with relevant behaviours that cannot be manipulated by them, resulting in an addition of two methods: interview and direct observation (ibid.). The research questions of this study are mostly 'how' style (see

Chapter 3) and for having an in-depth explanation of the phenomenon, these 'how' questions are asked and answered in facing the contemporary situation in the context. So, choosing 'case study' as a research method is more appropriate.

4.3.2.3 The research has multiple methods.

Data Procedures	Narrative Research	Phenomenology	Grounded Theory	Ethnography	Case Study
Forms of data collection	Using primarily interviews and documents	Using primarily interviews with individuals, although documents, observations, and art may also be considered	Using primarily interviews with 20 to 60 individuals	Using primarily observations and interviews but perhaps collecting other sources during extended time in field	Using multiple sources, such as interviews, observations, documents, and artifacts
Strategies of data analysis	Analyzing data for stories, "restorying" stories, and developing themes, often using a chronology	Analyzing data for significant statements, meaning units, textual and structural description, and description of the "essence"	Analyzing data through open coding, axial coding, and selective coding	Analyzing data through description of the culture-sharing group and themes about the group	Analyzing data through description of the case and themes of the case as well as cross-case themes

Figure 4.4. Data Procedures in the five recognized approaches in qualitative paradigm (source: Creswell and Poth, 2018, p.105).

This study starts from the discipline of design and tries to step into a broader theoretical arena of social science. However, the study has by no means become a pure social investigation with a focused single method because such a way is against the research interest originated from design. 'Case study' fits with this inquiry as it naturally incorporates multi-methods (Figure 4.4). In comparison, narrative research dealing with life histories does not match the study on the comprehensive phenomenon; phenomenology is to investigate the essence of some special experience, which is also inappropriate; grounded theory aiming at developing a theory is also not relevant; ethnography specifically focused on the 'culture-sharing' group, which can only help to collecting data in one level of the space production — the people.

4.2.3.4 The generalisation of the conclusion will be an analytical style.

The answers of this research's questions are more likely to form theoretically constructive references for making decisions and design in future scenarios, but not a prediction of a trend of development. Also, these references can be further challenged and modified. Therefore, this conforms with what being embraced by 'case study': to "expand and generalise theories (analytic generalisations) and not to extrapolate probabilities (statistical generalisations)." (Yin, 2018, p.20-21)

Therefore, the research will adopt 'case study' as the main method.

4.3.3 From linear history to relevant themes
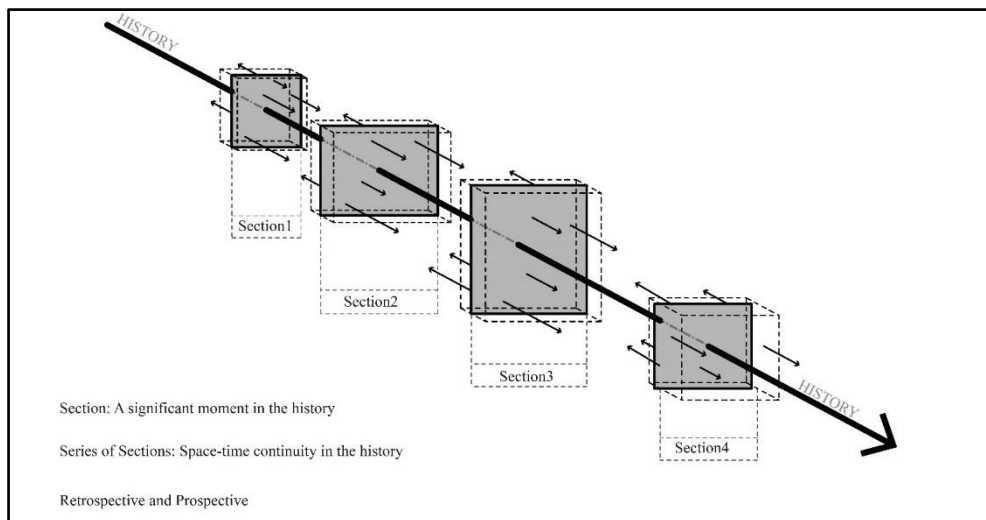
Figure 4.5. A linear history and series of time sections (source: Author).

However, an explanatory approach on a phenomenon may still easily fall into the dilemma of inappropriately writing a linear contemporary history (Figure 4.5) of a space-time continuity (Xie, 2015), with every occurred event relating to the form problem in context organized into a chronological order. These events vary a lot in their features and truths, with the underlying reasons similarly dispersing. Due to the

limitation of time and funding, the research would not be satisfying if being conducted in this way as a comprehensive historical account.
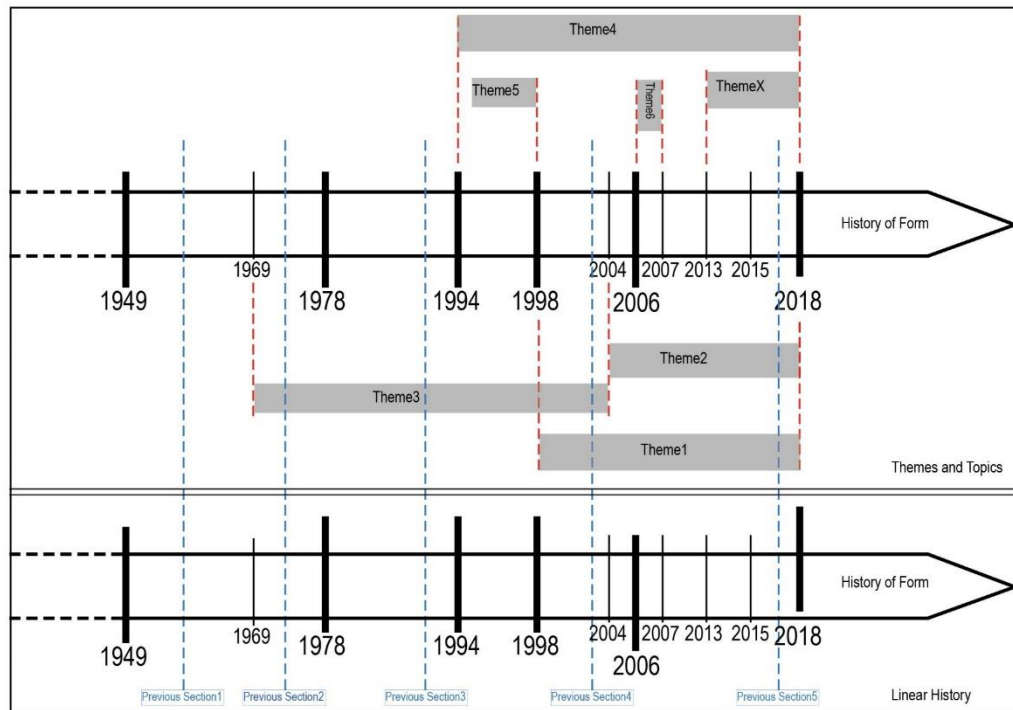
Figure 4.6. Themes in history of form (source: Author).

Instead, the study breaks the linear history into representative themes which can be sub-cases of the main phenomenon of form development. It sees every theme as a relatively independent event in a certain period, and it looks into the thematic development of each event whilst still concerning its contemporary situation, and then allows these themes to converge into the historical river of the form transformation (Figure 4.6).[30] It moves the mode of 'production of space' into the 'themes' to dissect the phenomena as a whole.

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[30] The themes of this research are discussed in Section 4.5.

4.4 Research design

As mentioned before, the form transformation as a phenomenon in traditional towns and villages in Huizhou is the main case, and themes within this phenomenon can be the sub-cases. The field research design hence is simple and clear: to collect satisfying data within each sub-case, so as to analyse them to answer relevant research questions.

4.4.1 The 'question-data-method' mode

The design has thus built a clear 'question-data-method' mode, through putting research questions (and sub-questions), potential supporting data, and possible data-collecting method in a line, and then the different linear modes aligning to different questions are developed into an analytical matrix (Figure 4.7).
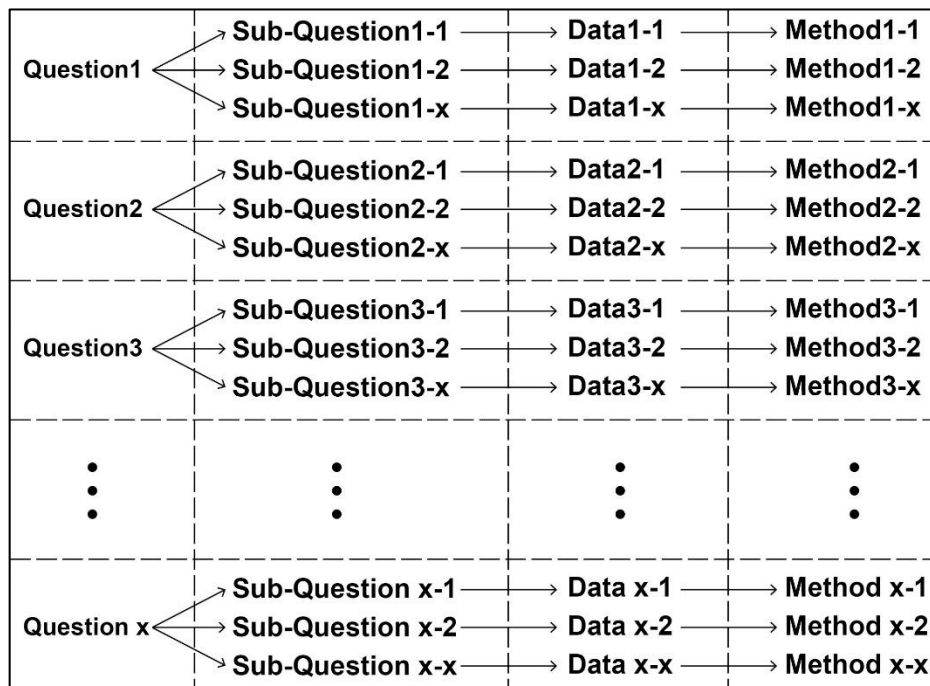
Figure 4.7. Question-data- method matrix (source: Author).

4.4.2 Linking the 'question-data-method' mode to the research mode

The design then further adds the matrix on the analytical mode (Figure 4.8). In so doing, the data and method for the three levels can be clearly differentiated and compared so as to better guide the actual data gathering processes.
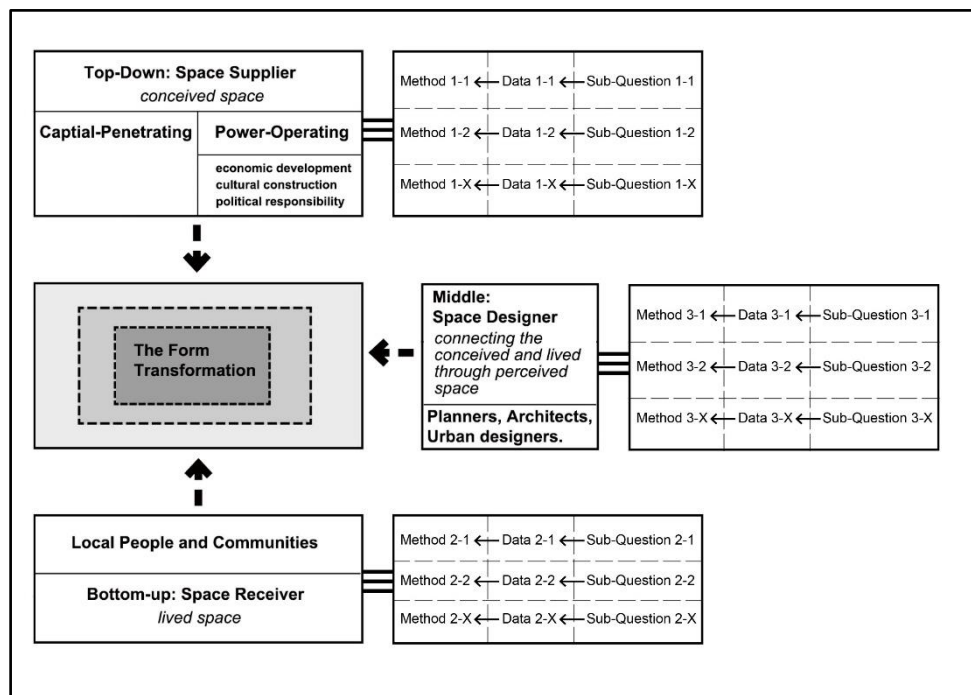
Figure 4.8. Question-data-method matrix added on the analytical mode (source: Author).

4.4.3 Relating the combined mode to each sub-case

This combined mode is then related to each sub-case, with the questions, data and methods in sub-cases customized to be more suitable. The themes as sub-cases are hence identified in the following discussion, and the detailed research design for each sub-case and strategies for sampling interviewees and conducting observations are specified as well.

4.5 Themes, cases and detailed research design

4.5.1 Two themes as two sub-cases[31]

For discussing the form transformation in the field of Huizhou after 1998, the research does not divide its towns and villages into two different sides, but it tries to treat the towns and villages as an integrated space-time continuity. It thus further chooses two trends of form change (form growth and form renovation) across this space-time continuity as two themes, and focuses on two kinds of local production of space (space production for growth and space production in inventory) underlying these two themes. The two themes thus are identified as two sub-cases contributing to the main phenomenon. Both sub-cases are related to local people's living space — the part of built environment that has experienced the most fundamental change, with the produced living space having the most significant impact on people's everyday life. One involves the growing development of new residential districts within or around (on the periphery of) Huizhou' towns (Figure 4.9); the other involves relocation and renovation practices that have altered the existing inventory of form and space of dwellings and houses across Huizhou's towns and villages (Figure 4.10). Admittedly, other aspects of form transformation, such as the development of new industrial zones and commercial complexes, have also had an impact. But in Huizhou towns and villages these have not proven to be as significant drivers of change as they have been in cities.

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[31] For the purpose of ensuring the consistency of methodology discussion, the two special themes have been raised in advance here, however, the more general situation of space production at the national level and the form development in local Huizhou level are introduced in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 respectively, which are the background to support such a selection of themes. The rationale of this selection should be related to the discussions in Chapter 5 and 6.

Figure 4.9. A case showing growing development of new residential districts (source: Author).

Figure 4.10. A case showing relocation and renovation practices that have altered the existing inventory of form and space of dwellings and houses (source: Gooood, 2020. Available at: https://www.gooood.cn/t-roof-nan-cafe-in-taoyuan-village-qimen-china-by-atelier-lai.htm).

4.5.2 Detailed research design and data collection

As the sub-cased has been identified, the combined research design mode (the combination of 'question-data-method' mode and 'three-level' analytical mode) is then move to suit each of them. The research design framework can be seen in the following two tables (Figure 4.11-4.12).

For the methods to collect data for the top-down level (power and capital), documents and texts are the main resources, and interviews with key persons are a supplement. For collecting data for bottom-up level (local people), in-depth narrative interviews with representative persons are essential, which can be supplemented by focus group interview and direct/participant observations. For collecting data for the middle level (designers), documents and design reports are the key resources, and possible interviews are necessary as well.

For collecting data, the research design adopts a 'purposive sampling' strategy, with the collecting process closely following the research questions and analytical mode, and targeting each group of stakeholders in this analytical mode. The investigation was planned into two stages, with each stage collecting data for each sub-case. The first stage of field work mainly took place between 03/07/2019 to 27/28/2019. The second stage of such work was initially planned between 07/2020 to 09/2020, but due to the travel restriction during COVID-19, it was not implemented 'on site'. Instead, the data collection was modified to rely on online interviews (mainly through wechat), online information (website and social media) and some second-hand materials (from other researchers), and also on the authors' personal experience as the author had lived in a town of Huizhou as a local people for more than 20 years. The results of data collection from the field work are presented below, and the protocols of interview and observation are provided in the appendices.

Theme	Research Questions		Supporting data	Methods
	Top-down: Space Supplier	Sub-questions		
	QUESTION.1: During the growing production of new residential districts, how have the dominant forces driven the form transformation in traditional towns and villages?	**QUESTION.1-1:** What kind of driving forces can be identified as dominant ones?	**DATA.1-1:** question answered by the analytical mode, which is: power (local governments authorities with economic, cultural and political logics) and capital (developers).	**Method.1-1:** induction and deduction, documentation and archival records
		QUESTION.1-2: How have these dominant forces contributed to or been affected by the contextual form transformation?	**DATA.1-2:** evidence showing the influence from power and capital on the development of new residential districts, such as local policies and regulations, official discourses, developer's attitudes, behavirours and reactions.	**Method.1-2:** documentation, archival records, interviews
		QUESTION.1-3: How have they worked with or against each other?	**DATA.1-3:** evidence showing their relations, which is between the economic, cultural and political logics, and between power and capital.	**Method.1-3:** documentation, archival records, interviews
	Bottom-up: Space Receiver	Sub-questions		
	QUESTION.2: During the growing production of new residential districts, how have the local people responded to and influenced on the form transformation in traditional towns and villages through their everyday life?	**QUESTION.2-1:** What is the essence of 'everyday life' in this process?	**DATA.2-1:** evidence showing the meanings and practices underlying the everyday life in receiving the new residential districts as the new living space.	**Method.2-1:** induction and deduction, narrative interviews, life history, focus group, direct observation, participant observation
		QUESTION.2-2: How have the local people's everyday life been adjusted to the contextual form transformation, as a response?	**DATA.2-2:** evidence showing the change of everyday life-the change of notions, meanings and practices, behaviours- after receiving the new residential districts as the new living space.	**Method.2-2:** narrative interviews, life history, focus group, direct observation, participant observation
		QUESTION.2-3: How have the change of their everyday life appropriated and modified the form results, as a bottom-up influence?	**DATA.2-3:** evidence showing the influence brought by the changing everyday life on the new living space produced, such as the daily and routine practices made by the residents moved in towards the built environment they live in.	**Method.2-3:** narrative interviews, life history, focus group, direct observation, participant observation
Growing Production of New Residential Districts as a Form Growth	**Middle: Space Designer**	Sub-questions		
	QUESTION.3: During the growing production of new residential districts, how have designers influenced on the form transformation in traditional towns and villages?	**QUESTION.3-1:** How important are the designers in this process?	**DATA.3-1:** the situation designers have been facing to, and the position designers have taken during the development of new residential districts.	**Method.3-1:** documentation, archival records, interviews
		QUESTION.3-2: How have the designers contributed to or been affected by the contextual form transformation?	**DATA.3-2:** evidence showing the influence from designers on the production of new living space, and the process of design work made in the process.	**Method.3-2:** documentation, archival records, interviews
		QUESTION.3-3: How can designers do in the future process of such a form transformation?	**DATA.3-3:** the position of design disciplines and knowledge in the design system, the development of the design system, especially the aspects facing the traditional towns and villages, and the attitudes from other stakeholders towards designers in the development of new residential districts.	**Method.3-3:** documentation, archival records, interviews
	Relationship Between the Three	Sub-questions		
	QUESTION.4: During the growing production of new residential districts, how have these above stakeholders interacted with each other in the process of influencing on the form transformation in traditional towns and villages?	No sub-questions	**DATA.4:** the attitudes and opinions from each stakeholders towards other stakeholders, the relations between them, the influence they have put on each other in the process of form development.	**Method.4:** documentation, archival records, induction and deduction, narrative interviews, life history, focus group, direct observation, participant observation

Figure 4.11. Research design framework of sub-case one (source: Author).

Theme	Research Questions		Supporting data	Methods
	Top-down: Space Supplier	Sub-questions		
	QUESTION.1: During the relocation and renovation of dwellings and houses in inventory, how have the dominant forces driven the form transformation in traditional towns and villages?	**QUESTION.1-1:** What kind of driving forces can be identified as dominant ones?	**DATA.1-1:** question answered by the analytical mode, which is: power (local governments authorities with economic, cultural and political logics) and capital (developers).	**Method.1-1:** induction and deduction, documentation and archival records
		QUESTION.1-2: How have these dominant forces contributed to or been affected by the contextual form transformation?	**DATA.1-2:** evidence showing the influence from power and capital on the existing inventory of form and space of dwellings and houses, such as local policies and regulations, campaigns, official discourses, developer's attitudes and behavirours and reactions.	**Method.1-2:** documentation, archival records, interviews
		QUESTION.1-3: How have they worked with or against each other?	**DATA.1-3:** evidence showing their relations, which is between the economic, cultural and political logics, and between power and capital.	**Method.1-3:** documentation, archival records, interviews
Relocation and Renovation of Dwellings and Houses in Inventory as a Form Renovationh	**Bottom-up: Space Receiver**	Sub-questions		
	QUESTION.2: During the relocation and renovation of dwellings and houses in inventory, how have the local people responded to and influenced on the form transformation in traditional towns and villages through their everyday life?	**QUESTION.2-1:** What is the essence of 'everyday life' in this process?	**DATA.2-1:** evidence showing the meanings and practices underlying the everyday life in receiving and utilizing the changes of form and space in the living environment.	**Method.2-1:** induction and deduction, narrative interviews, life history, focus group, direct observation, participant observation
		QUESTION.2-2: How have the local people's everyday life been adjusted to the contextual form transformation, as a response?	**DATA.2-2:** evidence showing the change of everyday life-the change of notions, meanings and practices, behaviours- after receiving the changes in inventory and during the utilization of them.	**Method.2-2:** narrative interviews, life history, focus group, direct observation, participant observation
		QUESTION.2-3: How have the change of their everyday life appropriated and modified the form results, as a bottom-up influence?	**DATA.2-3:** evidence showing the influence brought by the changing everyday life on the new form and space produced in inventory, such as the daily and routine practices made by the villagers and residents towards the built environment they inhabit.	**Method.2-3:** narrative interviews, life history, focus group, direct observation, participant observation
	Middle: Space Designer	Sub-questions		
	QUESTION.3: During the relocation and renovation of dwellings and houses in inventory, how have designers influenced on the form transformation in traditional towns and villages?	**QUESTION.3-1:** How important are the designers in this process?	**DATA.3-1:** the situation designers have been facing to, and the position designers have taken during the relocation and renovation efforts towards the existing inventory of form and space of dwellings and houses.	**Method.3-1:** documentation, archival records, interviews
		QUESTION.3-2: How have the designers contributed to or been affected by the contextual form transformation?	**DATA.3-2:** evidence showing the influence from designers on the production of new living space in inventory, and the process of design work made in the process.	**Method.3-2:** documentation, archival records, interviews
		QUESTION.3-3: How can designers do in the future process of such a form transformation?	**DATA.3-3:** the position of design disciplines and knowledge in the design system, the development of the design system, especially the aspects facing the traditional towns and villages, and the attitudes from other stakeholders towards designers in the development of form in the existing inventory of dwellings and houses.	**Method.3-3:** documentation, archival records, interviews
	Relationship Between the Three	Sub-questions		
	QUESTION.4: During the relocation and renovation of dwellings and houses in inventory, how have these above stakeholders interacted with each other in the process of influencing on the form transformation in traditional towns and villages?	No sub-questions	**DATA.4:** the attitues and opinions from each stakeholders towards other stakeholders, the relations between them, the influence they have put on each other in the process of form development.	**Method.4:** documentation, archival records, induction and deduction, narrative interviews, life history, focus group, direct observation, participant observation

Figure 4.12. Research design framework of sub-case two (source: Author).

4.5.2.1 Case 1: Growing production of new residential districts

Documents and texts:

1. local official documents involving the development of NRD, which was mainly collected from the archive centre in She county and the archive office in this county's construction bureau, and from relevant websites online;

2. reports from local newspapers, which was mainly taken from Huangshan daily;

3. design texts provided by local design institutes, local developers and designers, and academicians from Huangshan college; and

4. other valuable information from relevant local government departments, and relevant books, journals and websites.

Observations:

1. Three local new residential districts (M, H, P, as mentioned in Chapter 7) were chosen for conducting the observations, which mainly taken place from 05/07/2019 to 25/07/2019 (Figure 4.13-4.15). A small work unit (mentioned in Sub-Section 7.5.4) nearby was chosen as well, with the observation taking half a day on 25/07/2019. And there were several informal visits back to above places during the whole period of field work.

2. A rural concentrated living district in the town of XG was chosen for conducting a four-day observation (13/08/2019-14/08/2019 and 19/08/2019-20/08/2019) (Figure 4.16).

Interviews (four groups of people from the three levels respectively):

1. Government side:

    Four local government officials involving the construction of new residential districts were interviewed during the field work between 07/07/2019 and 20/08/2019, among which one is involved with the new concentrated living district of XG (the real name was replaced by XG, mentioned in Section 7.6). Also, two of them were interviewed through wechat respectively on 05/09/2020

and 30/03/2021 as supplements.

2. Developer side:

   One developer developing commercial gated communities were interviewed on 01/08/2019 (mentioned as Mr. Z in Section 7.3).

3. Designer side:

   a) Three designers, with two having academic background were interviewed respectively on 13/08/2019, 16/08/2019 and 16/08/2019.

   b) Another designer was interviewed through wechat on 11/03/2021 (as a supplement).

4. People side:

   a) Thirteen people accepted to attend the narrative interview organized from 14/07/2019 to 24/07/2019. Most of them originally came from the traditional settlements in villages and currently live in residential districts in towns, having experienced this form transformation. More, 8 of them further accepted the invitation to join in a focus group discussion about this space production on 02/08/2019.

   b) 4 people moved into the concentrated living district of XG was interviewed whilst observation was conducting there.

   c) Relevant people in the residential district of M, H and P were also interviewed in casual conversations whilst observation was conducting there.

Site Plan	Geographic Location
	Name M
	Construction Year 2008-2014
	Size (m^2) 162000
	Development Mode Commercial
	Rough Composition of Resident 2/3 originated from villages
	Land Attribute State-owned (Paid transfer)
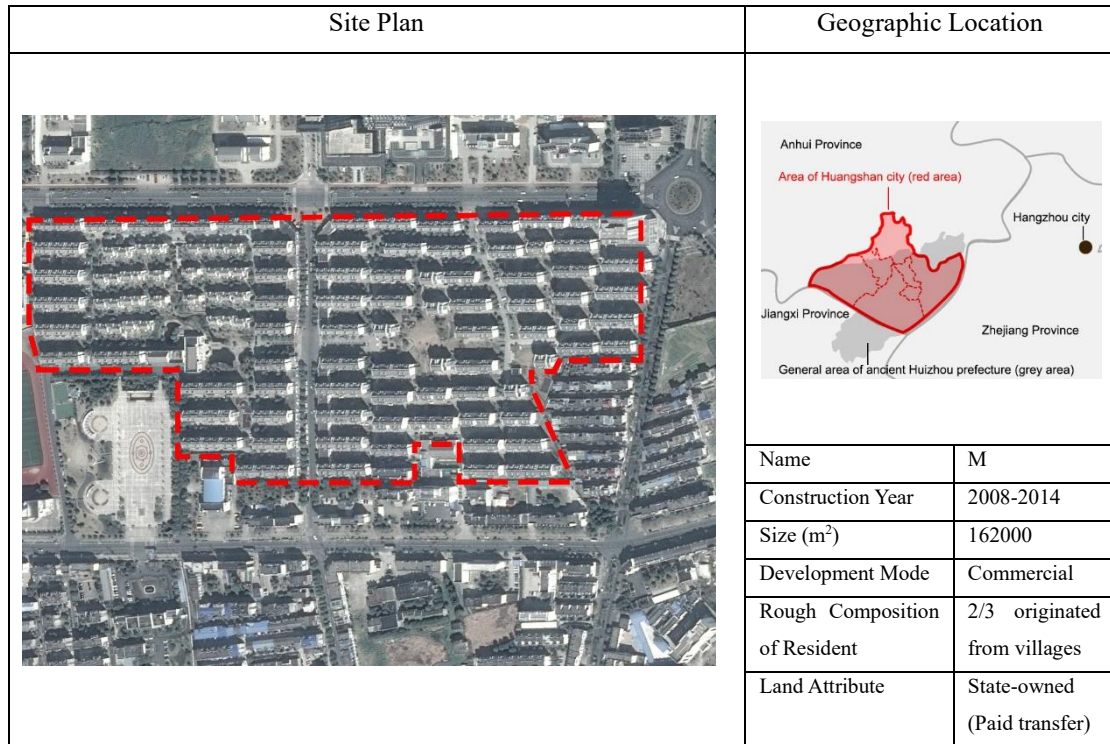
Figure 4.13. Basic information of M (source: Author).

Site Plan	Geographic Location
	Name H
	Construction Year 2010-2014
	Size (m^2) 126000
	Development Mode Indemnificatory
	Rough Composition of Resident Most relocated from villages
	Land Attribute State-owned (non-paid transfer)

Figure 4.14. Basic information of H (source: Author).

Site Plan	Geographic Location	
	Name	P
	Construction Year	Around 2000
	Size (m^2)	16800
	Development Mode	Commercial
	Rough Composition of Resident	Most urbanites (early-in-system)
	Land Attribute	State-owned (Paid transfer)

Figure 4.15. Basic information of P (source: Author).

Site Plan	Geographic Location	
	Name	XG new district
	Construction Year	2010-present
	Size (m^2)	76000
	Development Mode	BNSC
	Listed Status	Not listed
	Rough Composition of Resident	Villagers
	Land Attribute	Collective (rural construction)

Figure 4.16. Basic information of XG new district (source: Author).

4.5.2.2 Case 2: Relocation and renovation of dwellings and houses in inventory

Documents and texts:

1. local official documents involving the relocation and renovation of dwellings and houses, which was mainly collected from the archive centre in She county and the archive office in this county's construction bureau, and from relevant websites online;

2. reports from local newspapers, which was mainly taken from Huangshan daily;

3. design texts provided by local design institutes and designers; and

4. other valuable information from relevant local government departments, and relevant books, journals and websites.

Observations:

No on‑site participant observation was organized. The targeted places in this thesis are mainly the historical villages of Xixinan (core village of Xixinan town), Tangmo, Chengkan (core village of Chengkan town), Hongcun, Xucun, Xiongcun; historical districts of Tunxi Old Street and Huizhou Ancient City (Figure 4.17-4.22);[32] and some newly built 'traditional' districts (including sites for relocation cases) such as Qiankou Historical Dwelling Measures, *Xi Yuan* (Huizhou Merchants' Grand Mansion), *Hui Yuan* (Huizhou Garden) (in Huizhou Ancient City), Hubian Ancient Village and Liyang Street. Relevant scenes described in the thesis were reconstructed based on the author's personal experience and memories, as the author has visited all the above areas for more than one times before the COVID-19 situation happened (but not seriously conducing observation), and were also quoted from other researchers' work.

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[32] The basic information of some villages or districts raised here are not presented here as it is presented later in Figures in Chapter 8.

Interviews (four groups of people from the three levels respectively):

1. Government side:

   Five officials involving the relocation and renovation of dwellings and houses were interviewed between 22/04/2021 and 15/05/2021. They were from the tourist department of a county, the towns' governments, and villages' party branch and self-governance committee.

2. Developer side: four developers were found.

   a) One coming from outside Huizhou and operating a *minsu* (homestay/guesthouse) called *Deiweier* Café (German Flavour Café) in Yangchan village in She county was interviewed on 17/04/2021.

   b) One from inside Huizhou running a *minsu* called *Banshan Xianke* (Hillside Comfortable Guesthouse) in Shuyuan village in Huizhou district was interviewed on 14/05/2021.

   c) One from a tourist company operating a historical village and involving with relocation cases was interviewed on 07/05/2021.

   d) One as a designer investing a *minsu* called *Mengxi Fanghui* (Dream Brook Club) was interviewed on 06/08/2019.

3. Designer side: three designers were interviewed.

   a) One is the abovementioned designer investing his own project.

   b) One from local design institute (with a government background) involving relocation cases was interviewed on 06/05/2021.

   c) One running his own design company was interviewed on 25/04/2021.

4. People side:

   4 people accepted to attend the narrative interview through wechat and telephone call, which was organized between 18/04/2021 to 07/05/2021. They have all lived in historical villages, having experienced this space production in inventory. No focus group discussion was organized.

Site Plan	Geographic Location
	Name: Tangmo village
	Located in: Huizhou district
	Age (years): ＞1000
	Size (m²): 154000
	Listed Status: Listed
	Rough Composition of Resident: Villagers and outsiders
	Land Attribute: Collective (rural construction)
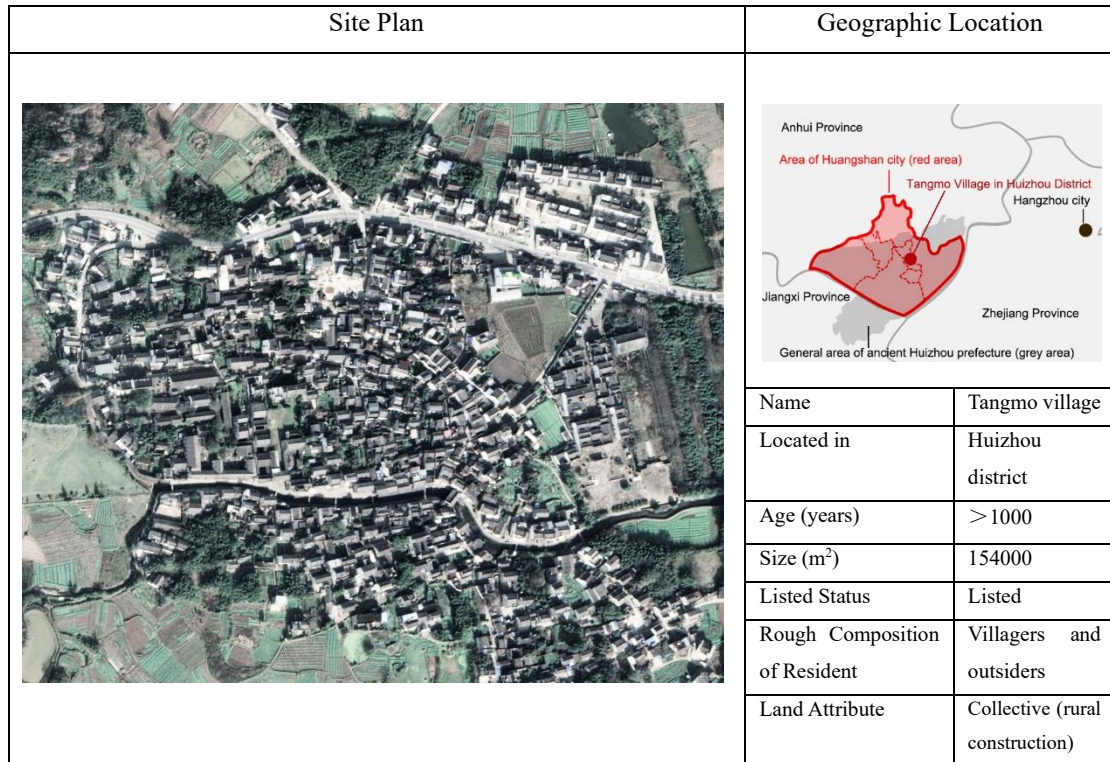
Figure 4.17. Basic information of Tangmo village (source: Author).

Site Plan	Geographic Location
	Name: Xixinan village
	Located in: Huizhou District
	Age (years): ＞1200
	Size (m²): 920000
	Listed Status: Listed
	Rough Composition of Resident: Villagers and outsiders
	Land Attribute: Mixed (state-owned and collective)
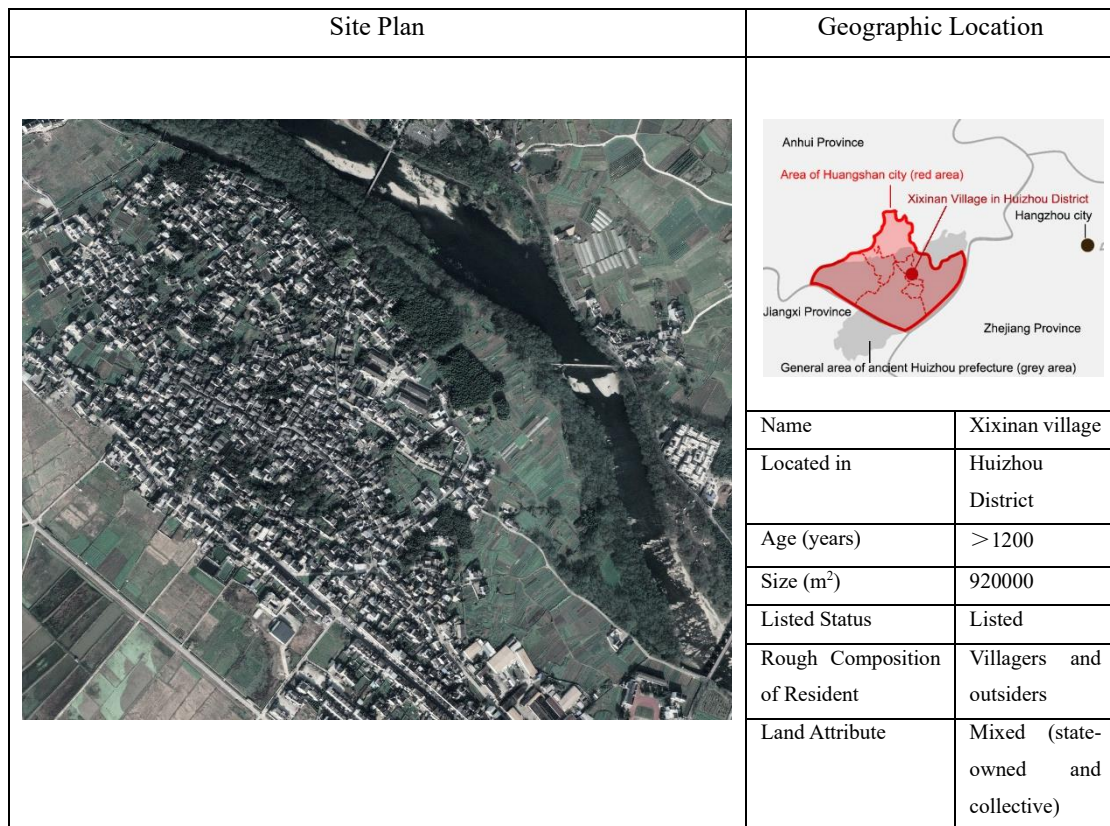
Figure 4.18. Basic information of Xixinan village (source: Author).

Site Plan	Geographic Location	
	Name	Chengkan village
	Located in	Huizhou District
	Age (years)	Around 1800
	Size (m^2)	312000
	Listed Status	Listed
	Rough Composition of Resident	Villagers and outsiders
	Land Attribute	Collective (rural construction)
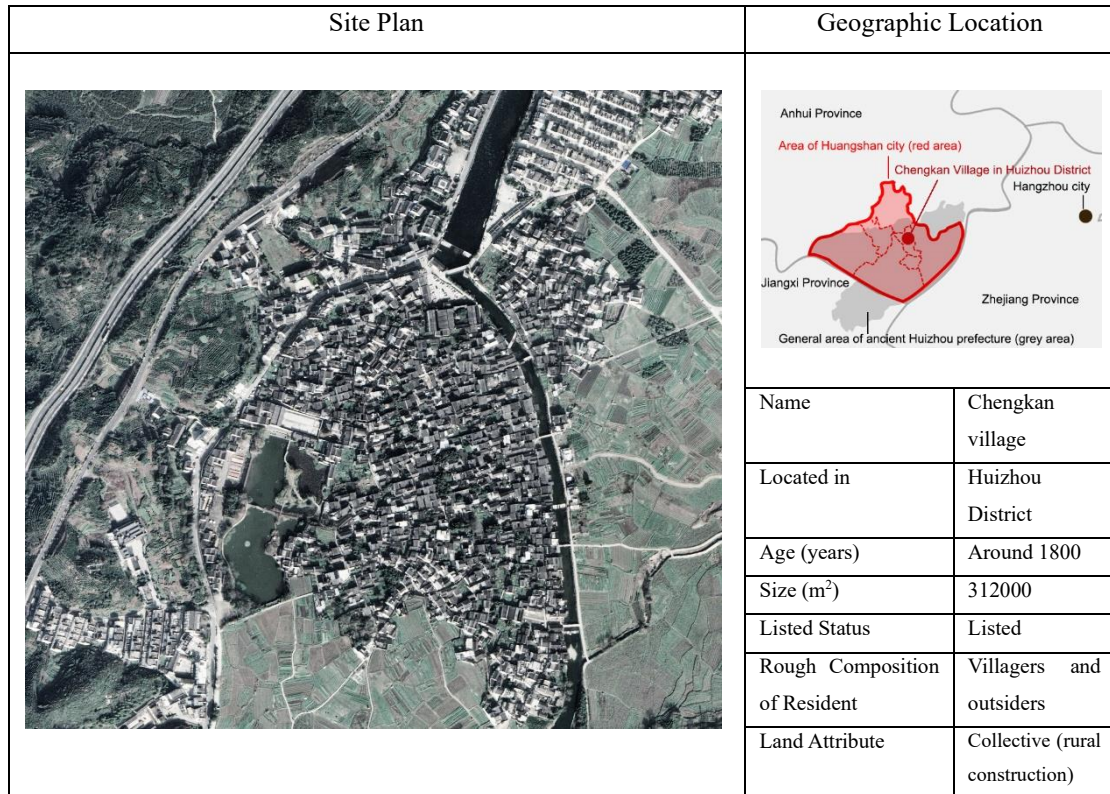
Figure 4.19. Basic information of Chengkan village (source: Author).

Site Plan	Geographic Location	
	Name	Hongcun village
	Located in	Yi County
	Age (years)	Around 900
	Size (m^2)	203000
	Listed Status	Listed
	Rough Composition of Resident	Villagers and outsiders
	Land Attribute	Collective (rural construction)
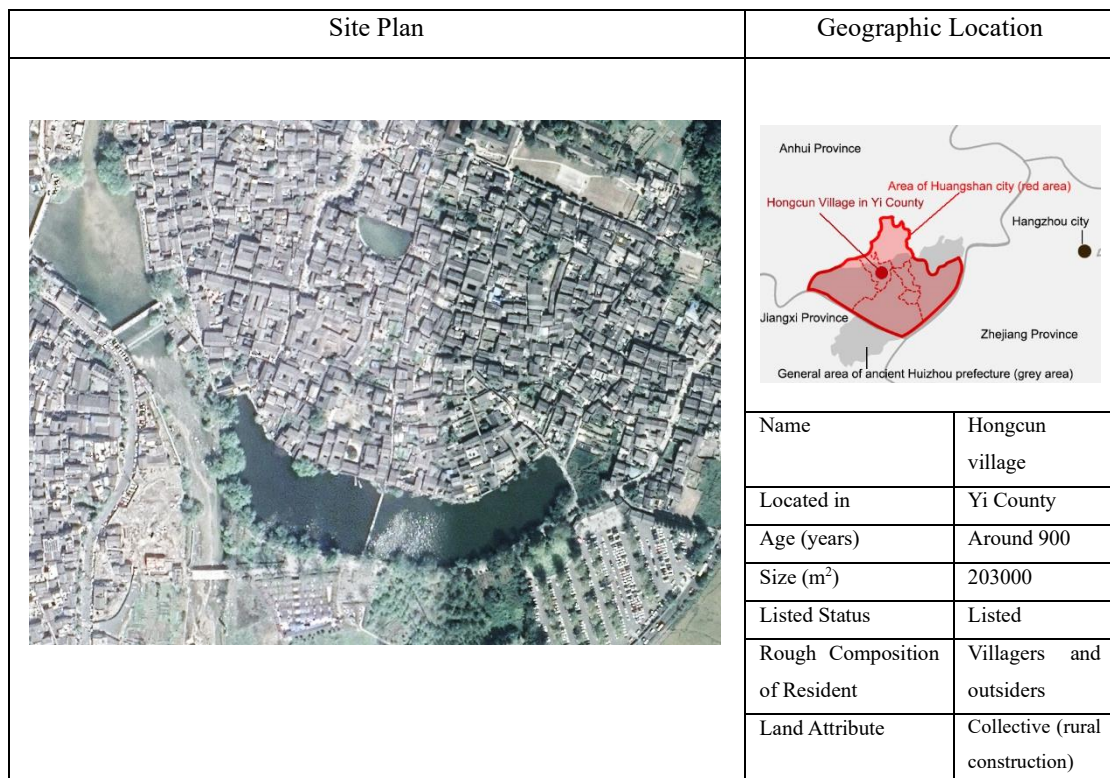
Figure 4.20. Basic information of Hongcun village (source: Author).

Site Plan	Geographic Location

Name	Tunxi old street
Located in	Tunxi district
Age (years)	Around 700
Size (m²)	130000
Listed Status	Listed
Rough Composition of resident	Urbanites and outsiders
Land Attribute	Stated-owned
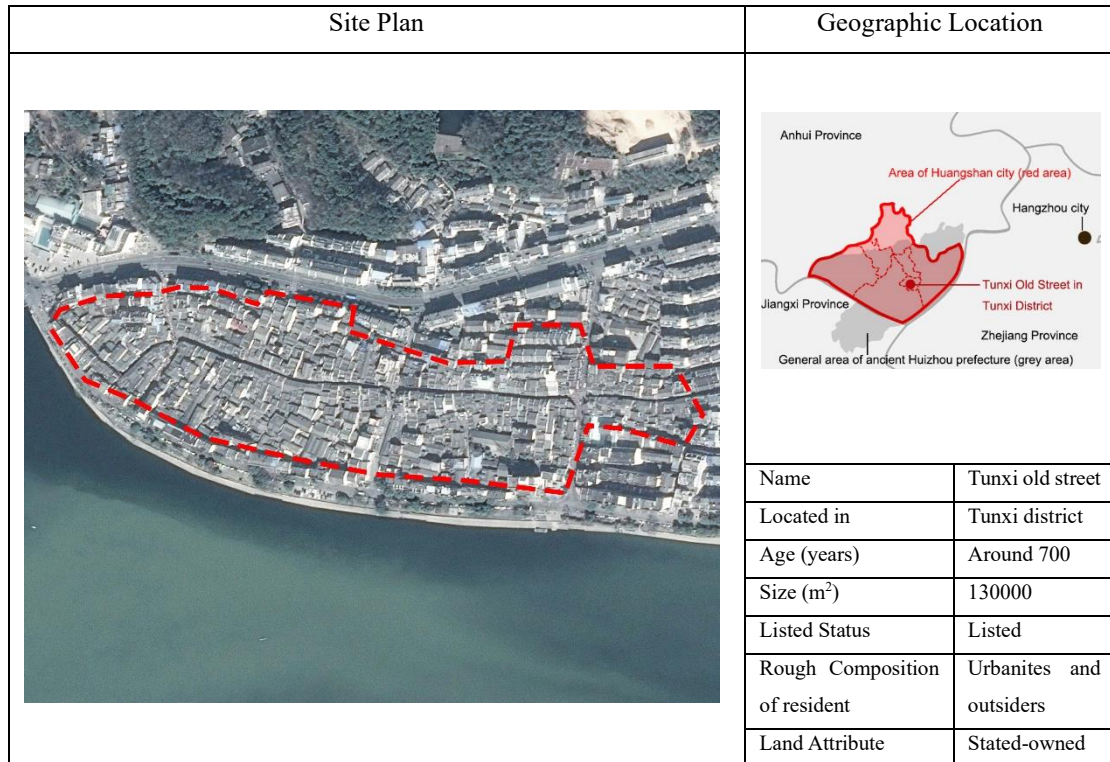
Figure 4.21. Basic information of Tunxi Old Street (source: Author).

Site Plan	Geographic Location

Name	Xucun village
Located in	She County
Age (years)	＞1200
Size (m²)	357000
Listed status	Listed
Rough Composition of Resident	Most of them villagers
Land Attribute	Collective (rural construction)
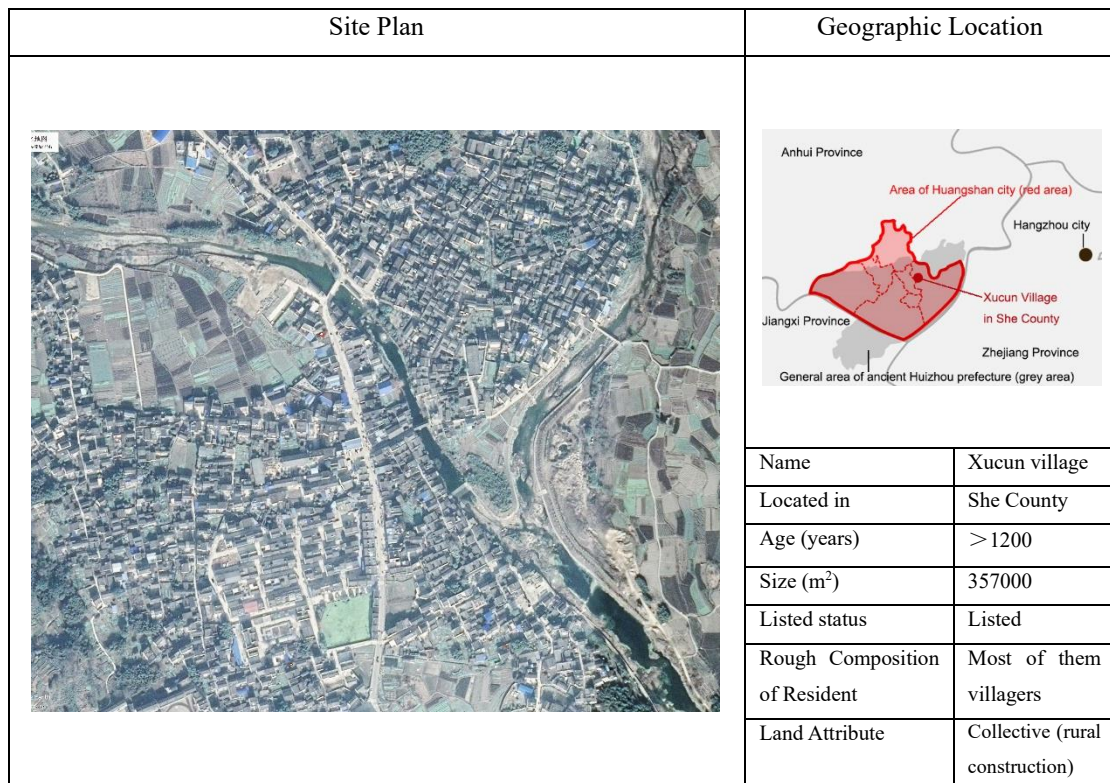
Figure 4.22. Basic information of Xucun village (source: Author)..

Chapter 5: Chinese Characteristics, Urbanization, Rural Development and Design System — The Wider Context at National Level

5.1 Introduction

Before narrowing down the scope to focus the form transformation in traditional towns and villages in Huizhou, the study first more generally explains such a phenomenon against a bigger context at national level from a broader perspective.

This chapter reviews the form change brought by the town development during urbanization and by rural development since the start of BNSC. It divides such a change into form growth (as the result of space production for growth) and form renovation (as the result of space production in inventory). The discussion thus highlights the role of government power as which has been dominating the driving forces of form development, and it systematically explains it through reflecting relevant power logics in towns and villages respectively, against the backdrop of 'socialism with Chinese Characteristics'.

This chapter further outlines the middle level — the role of designer and the design system, which has been influenced by the power logic from top down. However, the role of local people at the bottom is not included in this national-level view, as an understudied level it is thus explained in detail in showing the cast study findings in Chapter 8. The following discussion starts from introducing the concept of 'socialism with Chinese Characteristics' as the grand background of relevant form change, before moving to see the general situations in towns and villages.

5.2 Form transformation with Chinese characteristics

The context and form development cannot escape the influence of grand background of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'. It has been an inclusive concept to describe and consolidate the unique development mode chosen by China. So, all the development issues in China including the ongoing form transformation outside cities cannot be fully understood apart from this background. This concept was first formulated in the 1980s by Deng Xiaoping to define the development mode of China, yet the concept has continually evolved and been modified to the present era in response to the evolving reality of China. The timely interpretation of it can be found in every National Congress of CPC since the twelfth in 1982. Some scholars thus have described it as "a work in progress that is still evolving along with the interaction between the socialist principles (ideology) and Chinese characteristics (reality)" (Choi, 2011) or the "theoretical innovation and practical innovation of Marxism and scientific socialism." (Wan and Ye, 2013, p.7)

The latest interpretation of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' can be found in the overarching reports of 18th and 19th National Congress of CPC, which have summarized a five-pronged approach as the overall plan for building this 'socialism' (Hu, 2012; Xi, 2017). That is to promote economic, political, cultural, social, and ecological progress. The overarching goal of this 'socialism' has been defined as "to realize socialist modernization and great rejuvenation of Chinese nation." (Xi, 2017)

In this five-pronged approach, the economic development has always been the key, yet with the improvement of socialist market economy, innovation, supply-side reform, institutional and structural reform, opening-up, coordinated development and urban-rural integration now being highlighted in the current era, so as to build a modernized

economy system (Hu, 2012; Xi, 2017). For political progress, the principle of 'people running the country' has been upheld, and the party leadership, the socialist consultative democracy, the law-based governance, the grassroots democracy and the reform of government institution and administration has been stressed (ibid.). Cultural progress has been also emphasized to build 'stronger cultural confidence' and develop 'a great socialist culture,' with the socialist ideology and value, cultural creativity and competitiveness, cultural programme and industry being promoted (ibid.). In terms of social progress, ensuring people's well-being and developing new approaches to social governance have been stressed, with education, employment, people's income, especially social security system and poverty alleviation being key points (ibid.). As the fifth approach, building 'Ecological Civilization' and 'Beautiful China' has been newly highlighted. Green and sustainable development, ecosystem protection, and especially optimisation of national territory space development has been promoted. The national territory space has now been recognized as the spatial carrier to realize the Ecological Civilization(ibid.).

In line with this view, in traditional towns and villages, the 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' has been contextually applied in facing relevant realities there, and the form development, as a result of space production has been derived from this contextual application. These realities involving the space production can be explained from a number of aspects, conforming with the five-pronged approach and the categorization of the local power as the power has been ensuring the implementation of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' in the local level.

First, the economy has also been the key for local governments, and its growth has been achieved through developing industries (mainly in towns), especially the secondary and tertiary industries. The space production has been closely related to these industries; indeed, itself can be one kind of such industry: the real estate industry. Whilst towns

and villages undertaking the transfer of outdated industries from cities and developed areas, they have also strived for an industrial transformation and upgrading with greener and more efficient industries promoted in line with the economic structural reform and supply side reform.[33] The socialist market economy has met the grassroots levels, with the market force introduced in and promoted there, but the state/government control has never receded; it has even become stronger, which has been different to that in the pure market economy.[34]

Second, new policies supporting rural development and governance have been emerging. The grassroots governance in villages has been different from that in towns and cities, where a considerable democracy (Bell, 2015) and autonomy has existed, and hence the importance of village party branch and village collective has been recently stressed for leading rural development (e.g., Lu, 2022; Tu, 2021; CPC Central Committee and State Council, 2020). The political support to rural areas as a compensation has been upheld for years, with rural constructions developing rapidly. These supporting policies has been promoting urban-rural integration as a key goal, and the strategy of Rural Revitalization introduced by the 19th National Congress of CPC (2017) has focused on opportunities from the rural side to achieve this integration. Hence besides compensating and lifting the rural side, the Rural Revitalization has opened a new vision in seeing the vast rural areas of China as strategic territory space to power the nation's development (explained in Section 5.4). The opening up of villages, such as the gradually loosening of rural land policy has supported this effort, and the Ecological Civilization and development of national territory space have also been coordinated with this.

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[33] In Huizhou, these industries come to be the leading industry — tourism and other supporting industries, as discussed in Sub-section 7.2.1.

[34] See a discussion of socialist market economy in Ding (2009).

Third, the people have been always put first. The implementation of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' has had to represent the fundamental interest of its people. In the context this not only includes those newly urbanized people having moved into towns, but also includes those rural people staying in villages. The narrative of 'principal contradictions facing Chinese society' can be an overarching concern about the people's interest and demand. The first principal contradiction was between "the ever-growing material and cultural needs of the people and backward social production," mentioned in 1981(CPC Central Committee, 1981), and it was now in history. The 19th National Congress of CPC has stated that the principal contradiction has evolved to the one between "the people's ever-growing needs for a better life and unbalanced and inadequate development." (Xi, 2017) This shift of principal contradiction has also responded to the significance of urban-rural integration, which is to change the unbalanced situation in development between different regions. People's well-being in the context has been especially related to the poverty alleviation for people in villages, the fair access to public service for people moving to towns, and their income increase during local development. Their living space as a basic aspect of well-being has also been one important aspect, which need to be guaranteed through housing projects commercially or politically supplied.

Fourth, the culture progress in traditional towns and villages has been more challenging. Not only the cultural programmes and industries have lagged behind those in cities, but also the stronger traditional culture in these areas has been providing both a challenge and an opportunity to the effort of building the socialist cultural confidence. The more traditional built environment there has been one of the key carriers of the traditional yet diversified culture in different local places.

The contextual implementations of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' have been situated against the background of urban-rural relationship. Urbanization has been

coexisting with rural development that is now represented by the Rural Revitalization.

They have formed a 'twin engine' powering the nation's development.

5.3 Urbanization, economic development and form growth in towns

For the past two decades, the towns as a part of urban areas have mainly seen a form growth as an expanding space production in the built-up areas. It has been heavily promoted by local governments' interrelated power logics in 'conceiving space', within which the most powerful aspect has been the systematic economic considerations against the background of urbanization. Economic development has been closely related to local industrialization, which naturally needs new space, turning huge amount of rural land into urban industrial land, resulting in the town expansion as a kind of 'land urbanization.' Also, meanwhile a growing number of people moved from village into towns, contributing to the 'population urbanization' (pointing to the general meaning of 'urbanization rate'). Those added people need space for their production and living, especially living space that includes housing space, which has more extensively pushed the land urbanization (form growth). This demand has been quickly growing, especially the role of towns has been emphasized by the New-Type Urbanization (2014) for concentrating more population moving out from villages or coming back from cities.

The demands for new space in towns have been strategically organized by local governments into some systematic operations aiming for developing economy, which have been not dissimilar to those in cities. Within them the Land Finance mode has been a key.

'Land Finance' is not yet a formal academic terminology. Generally, it means a series of financing operations made by the local government based on 'state-owned land leasing' (use right leasing), under its monopoly of the primary land market. This started

around 1988 when the system of 'land paid use' was formally established, and the 'land leasing' has adopted a procedure including 'bidding, auctioning and listing' since around 2002.[35]

Although this widely-adopted and most influential mode for space production in cities and towns has been criticized a lot for its unsustainable and risky nature (e.g., Hu, 2010; Hua, 2014; Gu, 2019; Wu, 2021), it has been one of the most powerful and successful engine of China's rapid development. This thesis will thus take a more objective stance to see this mode by employing Zhao's opinion seeing 'Land Finance' as an efficient and effective business mode of local governments to promote economic growth (Zhao, 2009).

Zhao adopts the perspective of institutional economics and has explored the market role of Chinese local governments in urbanization. He challenges the conventional view considering government as the opposite of market, arguing that a city government is a part of market, as an enterprise facing customer (economic factors like investment and population) 'voting by foot' during market competition with other governments (ibid., pp.16-20). Competition has forced the government (as a kind of economic organization) to improve the efficiency in meeting customers' needs and maximizing their interest, to seek their 'voting' from the 'foot', when the government's monopoly on pubic goods and service has turned to be supply-side competition, with customers having various substitution options in the oversupply (ibid.).

Moving this proposition to China, Zhao sees local governments as local enterprises having been competing with each other since the reform and opening up, whilst the decentralization (Qian and Wingast, 1994; Yang, 1994, cited in Zhao, 2009) and tax

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[35] See an official summary of the development of land market and the reform of state-owned land management on: http://www.gov.cn/gzdt/2009-11/02/content_1454412.htm.

sharing system (Sun and Zhou, 2014) have exacerbated the competition in the developing socialist market economy. For them, the competitiveness to attract potential customers (such as investors) comes from providing better public goods and service, like tax reduction or exemption, better infrastructure, landscape and environment (Zhao, 2009, p.20). These thus have been essential to promote industrial development and gather talent and population — the key of economic growth.

For winning the competition, an institution (enterprise) has had to reduce the 'transaction cost' as to create the best net social surplus in profiting. This means it has to embrace a most efficient business mode, which can determine the role and behaviours of enterprise (government) (ibid., pp.42-118, p.282). In Chinese urbanization, the local government has been a territorial enterprise "that manages space and prices its services within its administrative boundary." (ibid., p. 62) For it, the mode of Land Finance has been proven to be its efficient business mode. In this model, the land has been the essential public good, and based on its monopoly of primary land market, the local government has put the land (state-owned land) into a typical business consideration: operating the input and output flows:

> For Chinese local government, the gap in return between lump-sum input of
> infrastructure investment and long-term regular output of tax revenue cannot
> be complemented by loans. This constraint forces local governments to create
> financing from land leasing income. In addition, because of lack of a stable
> tax resource, especially property tax, local government has to use land leasing
> income to subsidize industrialization to gain long-term regular business taxes
> to pay expenditures of urban maintenance. In this way, urban government's
> financial circulation is characterised by (a) subsidizing land cost to compete
> for industrial investor's business tax to pay urban maintenance expenditure
> and (b) maximizing commercial and residential land prices to gain lump-sum

land leasing income for industrial subsidization.

(ibid., p.30)

The model generally includes four steps as articulated by Zhao (ibid., pp.32-33):

First, urban government expropriates village land at the price of agricultural use and provides urban infrastructures. Second, the government obtains lump-sum income by leasing commercial and residential land to balance the infrastructure investment. Third, the government leases industrial land to enterprises at a very low price to create employment and local consumption. Finally, the government gains business tax and income tax from industrialization and further provides regular public services.

Operating the land in this way can generate two financial flows: the lump-sum fixed investment and long-term variable expenditure, which have been combined into an integration circulation (ibid., p.109). This circulation has been actually built on 'the second circuit of capital', as the money has come from the capital flow being invested into the commercial and residential space to gain profit.

Also, as mentioned by Zhao, the monopoly of the primary land market has been "an option for low transaction cost during the stage when China's legal and credit systems are immature and when there is no property tax." (ibid., p.170) It helps to avoid transaction cost like difficulties from compensation issues in land expropriation and levying property tax on numerous individuals. Also, it can lessen the 'free riding problem' in offering public goods and service (e.g., high-level infrastructures) through forbidding the free entry for rural land going into urban market as an 'income leakage' (ibid., p.161). It has "enabled China's urban governments to get large-scale and long-period investments within a short time and hence unfolded an amazing urbanization

course at an unprecedented speed and scale." (ibid., p.170)

Land has been the efficient resource to generate money to win the regional competition, which in turn has overheated the business mode, resulting a path dependence embedded in local governments. As the acquisition of rural land is relatively easier in the monopoly, the demand for land to lease has been sometimes irrationally created, causing unsustainable urban expansion and form transformation. The Land Finance mode has even been deepened by local governments to directly treat land as a financial vehicle—a kind of collateral to acquire mortgage loans. This together with other problems has been systematically mentioned a report from the Word Bank back in 2005 (State Council and World Bank, 2005), before the peak of the Land Finance mode in China around 2009.

For 'Land Finance', the demand for commercial and residential land needs to be created. Hence in line with the reform of state-owned land management, the housing system reform in urban areas was promoted, allowing people to purchase housing space, contributing significantly to the Land Finance mode.

The urban housing system reform had been incubated for nearly 20 years since the reform and opening up. Associating with the development of socialist market economy, it aimed to improve the harsh housing condition of urbanities and relieve the high pressure borne by the welfare-oriented housing distribution system. More importantly, it was acknowledged as a new driver for economy growth driver (Meng, 2018).

The reform was first proposed by Deng Xiaoping in 1980, who suggested that urban residents could purchase, build and sell their houses (ibid.). It went through a long period of experimentation before it reached a milestone in 1998, when the key document of *Circular of the State Council on Further Deepening the Urban Housing*

System Reform and Accelerating Housing Construction (State Council, 1998) was promulgated. As a formal start point, the document fully stopped the planned allocation of house in cities and towns, and marketized the housing allocation. For urban residents, house could then be purchased and sold, and it was supported by a set of measures like housing allowance, provident fund, mortgage loans, and the promotion of secondary housing market (ibid.). Indeed, the housing reform has not been ended and is still being deepened and modified.

The house (most of which apartment) in urban areas started to be commercially built and sold in the socialist market. Since then, the real estate industry has jumped to be one of the most important leading industries in China's economic boom. According to Meng (2018), one major promoter of the reform, this new growth driver had increased the investment into real estate from 358 billion CNY before 1998 to 14 trillion CNY in 2017 nationally, marking a huge growth of 4000%, and it had stimulated a state GDP growth from 7.8 trillion CNY to 82.7 trillion CNY, a 10-time increase during the 20 years. It had also helped other industries to grow rapidly, such as the production of cement, steel, electricity and engineering machinery.[36]

The housing system reform has opened the huge demand of living space and land in urban areas, and this demand has been further strengthened by the added population during urbanization, especially those in the town level.

Urbanization has been steadily promoted by the top designs during 'socialism with Chinese characteristics', as it has been seen as "the sure route to modernization and an important basis for integrating the urban and rural structures." (Li, 2014) In this process people gathered to cities and towns, with the degree of urbanization usually measured

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[36]Meng only pointed out the related industries. Indeed, as discussed earlier, other industries can also be benefited a lot indirectly through the local government's business mode of Land Finance.

by the proportion of population living in urban areas among the total population. For China, the urbanization rate has grown from 18% in 1978 to 60% in 2019 (Chen et al., 2021), and indeed, many of them have stayed within towns. According to Zhang (2013), from 2000 to 2010 the county level including designated towns had accommodated around 90 million added urban population, accounting for 45% of the total added urban population. However, many of these people moved to cities and towns have not had urban *hukou* (registered permanent residence) (Qiao, 2020).

The 2014 New-Type Urbanization has tried to 'put people first', aiming to grant more people from villages yet living in cities and towns equal social security and urban residency as a catch-up plan to fully 'urbanize the population', so a rapidly growing number of rural people have been becoming urbanites. However, as seen by the plan, these willing people do not need to be all settled in big cities; they have been encouraged to stay in small cities and towns, to be 'urbanized locally'. For example, urban *hukou* has been fully opened to added population in designated towns and small cities, whilst it has been still limited to different extents for people moving into cities with populations more than 0.5 million, under hierarchical rules defined by the existing city population (CPC Central Committee and State Council，2014).

Nevertheless, although having been a choice for a considerable part of added urban population and also promoted by the national plan to attract them, the towns have not actually absorbed people efficiently. According to a national survey in 2017 (Zhao et al., 2017), apart from county central towns, there were more than 18000 non-central towns. However, these non-central towns only accommodated 24% of the urban population, which accounts only 12% of the whole population, whilst those German towns with populations less than 20 thousand have anchored 70% of the total population. The survey has suggested that in national level, the people have concentrated to big and mega cities, whilst in provincial level, the people prefer prefecture-level cities and

county central towns, so the non-central towns have been overlooked (ibid.). In the New-Type Urbanization, thus huge potential of these normal designated towns can be tapped out to absorb new urbanites. If large and even medium-sized cities would see a slowdown in the growth of population and scale, the towns, both county central towns and non-central towns would still expect an accelerating expansion of population and space. Consequently, whilst in cities the space production for growth will be gradually replaced by the production in inventory, as suggested by Zhao (2014), in towns 'form growth' would continue to be a major trend, and it would be coexisting with 'form renovation' in local space inventories.

Other than the major economic considerations and operations pushing the form growth in towns, the logic of political responsibility has also helped to supply new space, especially living space, exemplified by the indemnificatory housing projects in towns, yet which have been a non-profit effort. Meanwhile, culture logic has been downgraded in front of economic and political logics. These two other logics will be discussed in detail in the first case study.

5.4 Rural development, rural land reform and form renovation in villages

The expansion of urban land has caused the shrinking of rural land. Many villages have been demolished, resettled, swallowed due to the land expropriation and 'land quota channel' relating to 'Land Finance'. However, for those villages survive this process, they themselves have not experienced a form growth as strong as that in towns except for some extreme case like the movement of '*Hecun Bingju*'. In villages, the space production for growth has been co-existing with such a production in inventory. The new space has related to the construction of rural 'concentrated living districts' in BNSC as a public and demonstration project for the well-being of rural people, and it has been also created on rural construction land for developing industries started from TVE era. [37] The change of existing stock of space has largely related to the reconstruction of dilapidated houses, the conservation and renovation of rural tangible heritages and traditional dwellings or buildings. The conservation and renovation efforts have been usually related to rural tourism and promoted by the Rural Revitalization, for preserving village characters, and for having these rural properties utilized to achieve a value appreciation. This has gradually grown to the main trend of contextual form transformation currently.

The Land Finance as a greatly effective driving force of form growth has not been allowed on rural land, so the economic logic underlying the form change has not been so strong compared to that in towns. It has still embraced a conventional mode that promotes rural industries to levy related tax, and not until recently did the capital flow

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[37] TVE (township and village enterprise) in Huizhou was much weaker than that in Suzhou, as mentioned in Section 6.2. In some developed Suzhou villages, the pattern of form growth created by industrial developments has been similar to that in nearby towns and cities.

start to be introduced into rural properties in the form of 'renting' to form the 'second circuit'. In comparison, cultural logic and political logic 'conceiving the space' from top down have sometimes contributed more. Especially at the national level, indeed, the political considerations have been much more influential.

Underlying the process from being sacrificed to being compensated and revitalized is the fact that the rural area has been long treated as a strategic 'reservoir' to support the industrialization and urbanization in urban area to stabilize and develop the whole nation (as mentioned in Chapter 1), and the institution design (with 'Chinese characteristics') separating rural and urban factors as urban-rural dual-track system has allowed this to happen.

The sequential strategic operations have been started from zero-sum calculation to a win-win situation against the backdrop of urban-rural relationship. The vast rural area with enormous resources had been long supplying the surplus value (from agriculture) to cities, anchoring the population, receiving backflow of rural labours who cannot live well in cities, avoiding economic crisis and stabilizing the society. As the compensation started from BNSC, large amount of construction happened and has caused the form transformation there. The rural industries have been promoted again and diversified in the cause of Rural Revitalization, especially the tourism, which is more sustainable and has been related to the newest political trend (e.g., Construction of Beautiful Village and Ecological Civilization). A new kind of economic consideration has emerged in this relation, with the rural resources including properties being in a trend of being monetized in the territory resource development, as bottom-up opportunities.

As mentioned in Sub-section 1.2.1, Wen Tiejun's view of 'rural areas three time saving the nation at three critical points' can well explain the strategic position of rural area during the nation's development process (Dong and Wen, 2019, pp.1-21).

The first critical time was shortly after 1949. The KMT government had ceded the economic sovereignty to US, causing a huge debt (deficit ratio at 80%), and took away all the gold and foreign currency reserve when defeated, triggering the hyperinflation in big cities, which was exacerbated by capitalists cornering the market, like stocking up rice, flour and cloth(ibid.). The new CPC regime thus launched a land reform in villages that anchored 88% of the population, allowing tenant peasants to have their own land, greatly raising agricultural products that were later supplied to cities to reduce the prices to destroy the cornering (ibid.). The excessive amount of paper cash was thus not only anchored by farm products, but also deposited by the farmers wanting to buy more land (ibid.). The economic crisis was solved.

The second time followed the reform and opening up in 1978. Before that many challenges had appeared, like the Great Leap Forward and People's Commune, the embargo led by US, the treachery of USSR, the 3-year natural disasters, and the 10-year Cultural Revolution. The re-link with US in early 1970s reintroduced foreign investment, creating again a huge external debt (120 billion USD in 1970s) and large financial deficits (more than 200 billion USD by 1979) (ibid.). Urban industries could not self-sustain, resulting in a wave of mass unemployment, being exacerbated by the event that millions of educated youths having gone down to villages coming back to the cities. The state hence launched the second land reform in rural areas by introducing the 'Household Responsibility Contract System', liberating rural people from collective ideologies. They could then work for their own, raising the productivity, and reducing the expenditure on *sannong wenti*, thus relieving the debt pressure in cities (ibid.). Also, the rural industries (TVE) began to boom under the top-down promotion, absorbing freed or idle labour force. Its plentiful products and increased agricultural outputs were exported, greatly reducing the debt. Its demand of equipment and technology — a domestic demand, had also significantly reactivated urban industries (ibid.).

The third time has begun recently, with a potential third rural land reform and a target of Ecological Civilization. With the export-oriented economy and socialist market economy taking shape in the reform era, huge foreign and private investment with more advanced technologies and management skills entered urban industries, whilst the TVE gradually lost the competitiveness for its small scale, low-technology and poor efficiency. Massive rural labour was thus attracted to urban factories, emptying villages, contributing to the largest and fastest urbanization process in human history (Qiao, 2020). But the pollution in these processes was very severe, and around 2010, overproduction happened in both manufacture and agriculture (Dong and Wen, 2019). Also, two thirds of the industrial divisions were backed by foreign investment, which took profit outside China whilst leaving pollution and conflicts inside. In addition, the financial problem relating to foreign investment had been also crucial. The developmental mode thus needs a strategic transformation (ibid.). Since 2007, the Ecological Civilization has been raised as the key, aiming at integrating the natural diversity and socio-cultural diversity, and the vast rural area has again become the best field to realize the goal. Its lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets, and the harmonious coexistence between human and nature can be achieved there (ibid.). 'Rural Revitalization' has been set to be the carrier of this transformation, with the industrialization and monetization of rural ecological resources being the key method (ibid.). Within the revitalized rural areas, ecological resources can anchor over-accumulated capital flow from cities or abroad and will have future value appreciation (ibid.), and to support this, there has been a significant freeing up of rural land policies, as land is an important kind of such resources. Therefore, during an urban-rural integration effort started from the rural side, rural people could become rich, and those who do not live well in cities could come back to the 'population reservoir'. In addition, it also conforms with the latest strategy of 'promoting internal circulation' facing the

economic conflicts between US and China, helping China stand firmly in the potential crisis so as to 'delink' again (ibid.).

These political strategies have closely related to the form transformation. The first land reform broke the private ownership of rural land, laying a base for subsequent evolution of rural land policies, especially for forming the collective ownership of land (Liu and Xiong, 2019, p.19), which has been a foundation for urban-rural relations. The second land reform contributed to the boom of rural industries, with the growth of construction land carrying considerable amount of new space, creating enormous rural properties that have been proved to be valuable in current rural development. The trend of third land reform in the Rural Revitalization has pointed to the appreciation of rural ecological resources (including those rural properties), indicating a series of new economic considerations promoting relevant space production in inventory.

The emerging economic considerations towards rural form and space or wider rural resources could be a much more efficient one in creating value, and can be best illustrated in the reform called 'Three Changes' (CPC Central Committee and State Council，2018a): resource becoming asset, capital becoming stock, villager becoming stockholder, aiming to holistically monetize the vast ecological resources there. The reform can be explained as follows (Ke, 2020):

For the first change, rural resource means every kind of tangible resource belonging to the collective group and its people. This includes natural resources as mountains, rivers, forests, lakes, grass; and artificial resources such as collective construction land with buildings and facilities, tremendous amount of infrastructure compensated, and arable land contacted by villagers together with their homesteads. These could all convert into stocks, as becoming admitted asset measured by stock rights (ibid.). Second, capital can be formed by the money owned by collective groups and the personal income earned

by rural people. The money could directly be used to buy a share to become stockholding (ibid.). Third, the rural people need to be stockholders. They can buy shares by money, or directly receive shares from collective groups, or they can convert their use rights of land and house into stock rights (ibid.).

Wen is a strong promoter of these changes. He calls the resource spatial ecological resource and emphasizes the subjectivity of village collectives in this process (Wen, 2020). For example, the money from upper levels needs to be directly controlled by collectives, which should be the main body to develop the resource as a management and service company to realize the resource value within the territory of village, and the reform should ultimately benefit the rural people (ibid.). He also suggests that the ways for villagers to become stockholders should be more flexible, as the labour they spend, the techniques they held can all become stock rights (ibid.). Also, the stock rights of the assets can even go to market, yet these nonstandard assets from resources need to be properly priced by introducing an IPO mechanism like pricing stocks in the primary market (ibid.).

A similar monetization mindset can be found from Zhao's arguments, yet he seems more radical as he aims at pricing all the natural resources within the whole territorial space, with the land, space and form being part of it, regardless of being urban and rural (Zhao, 2019). Further, he connects this to the 'National Territory Spatial Planning System' promoted, with the value appreciation of these resources being the key, and he suggests to avoid the problems from 'Land Finance' by setting up a 'central-local resource reserve banking' system similar to the economic 'central-commercial banking' system, so as to strip local governments off the ownership of natural resources that actually belong to the nation, or namely all the people (ibid.). Nevertheless, he advocates to allocate the right of using or developing these resources to those who can potentially bring back the biggest cash flow or the largest appreciation, as a market rule

(ibid.). However, in rural areas this may not be applicable as the more vulnerable villagers' subjectivity in operating resources is yet to be strengthened, otherwise it will be again damaged by capitals penetrating villages.

This new economic logic, however, could potentially raise a danger of another kind of 'Rural Land Finance' or of 'Resource Finance', which is discussed later.

5.5 The design system towards the form problem

The design system has helped to realize the goals embraced by aforementioned power logics and has been influenced by them. This is especially evident in the theme of form growth, where designers help to achieve economic growth through helping materializing the conceived space into spatial practice, bring about physical form changes. Indeed, planning has been closer to power logics and growth-oriented, within which form growth is one aspect. Architectural design has followed planning in the form growth, yet whilst it meets the theme of form change in inventory, it tends to become stronger than planning in helping change the form. However, they two have had separated understandings of the form issues. This has been caused by their ingrained professional stereotypes and fixed design procedures, which has been further caused by the Chinese planning systems. More, the planning systems have been long deemphasizing the form development in villages, and the design governance practice made through this system, which represents the state intervention in shaping the built environment, and greatly influences the form results, is also not very satisfying. This intervention is similarly absent in rural areas.

5.5.1 Planning for growth, architectural design for materializing growth and renovation

Planning has been growth oriented during the socialist market economy. Driven by local growth machine, it has been offered a greater role in place promotion by the local government, as its instrument for the entrepreneurial governance (Wu, 2015, p.76). According to Wu (ibid., pp.190-191), the significance of planning for growth can be understood in three aspects. First, planning has been an instrument for place marketing, utilized as development declarations to enhance local competitiveness, serve the investment, and justify local government's behaviours of exceeding national standards

in development. Second, it has been a regulatory response to control the "rampant local market development."(ibid., p.191) Third, it has been a governance technique creating complex dynamics between local and central government — the former using planning "to unshackle regulatory constraints" from the latter whilst the latter using planning "to restore a spatial order."(ibid., p.204) Planning for growth is not only for economic growth and the subsequent form growth, it has also been for the power growth — upscaling of governance.

In the theme of growth, planning has been one of the central issues and top priorities (ibid., 192). It thus has been more influential in helping the form transformation, especially form growth among design approaches. For example, in 'Land Finance', planning has helped to maximize the land income through defining and promoting state-owned construction land, and open up "a new space for growth to generate taxes." (ibid., p.204). This closer connection with power logics has in turn hugely boosted the development of the planning profession and education (ibid., p.52, p.190).

In comparison, architectural design has been less instrumental in helping this 'growth', as it has been less political, directive, controlling yet more personalized and focusing more on issues like feasibility, detailed codes, real invest and rewards, materials, technologies, and ecological performance. It has followed behind planning in fixed design procedures, filling planning's blank plots with mass and skin, materializing the form and space into more perceived ones, whilst facing various practical limitations.

For the form change in inventory, emerging in urban areas and also being the main mode of change (relocation and renovation) in villages in the Rural Revitalization, refined, articulated, tailored space production in urban or rural segments would be a more popular reason, especially in villages where 'scattered' rather than 'scale' has been the important character of built environment. Thus, for phased development rather

than one-off movement, piecemeal land rather than whole districts, individual buildings/settlements rather than large blocks, architectural design would be a more promising solution to fit their fragmented and grounded form problems, as well as the individualized construction process.

5.5.2 The different understandings of form

Besides the two approaches' different positions and emphases, however, there has not been a shared concept of 'form' among them. Although the problematic phenomena have been revealed in the background and literature review, some deeper reasons still need to be explained.

Architectural design has more grounded and viable understanding of form issue. Planning originated from architecture, its perspective on form has grown from similar 'pure form' to 'deform', and now to 'form plus', with planners' background increasingly diversified, allowing more explanations of form to emerge (Yang, 2018). This tendency tends to increasingly conceptualize rather than materialize the form and space. Also, the sense of thinking form in two dimensions has been widely accepted by these diversifying roles, as it makes the connections between these concepts of form easier whilst broadening planning's content.

Indeed, the disparity has been further consolidated in the conventional design procedures in a sequential order, with different understandings of form not properly coordinated before the start of construction. Take town (urban) planning for example,[38] planners usually first prepare town master plan to define the function and distribution of construction land, then formulate 'detailed development control plan' (DDCP,

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[38] The disparity in facing villages has been introduced in Sub-section 1.3.2.

originated from 'zoning ordinance', as an instrument of 'design governance') to set requirements of blocks as a means of control (yet sometimes rather a means of calculating and pricing the land), and throw out 'detailed construction plan' (DCP) of one block or plot to connect with architectural design, who then follows to fill in the plots in blocks. The architects have had to accept the preconditions made by planners, and the concerns on grounded form problems from them could not be well heard by planners and government leaders, with necessary planning changes hard to happen. In some hectic form growth cases where there are little room and time for architects to realize their knowledge and skill, they have tended to be reluctant and contented with an indifference of 'just filling the blanks', 'not violating relevant regulations', and 'not pursuing higher quality design under the pre-set planning frameworks'. This has been especially common in the growth of residential projects in towns. Urban design as a mediate platform could be useful to reconcile these differences for optimized form results before the construction start, however, urban design itself in cities is still problematic (mentioned in Sub-section 2.3.3), and also it has been largely absent in traditional towns and villages.

5.5.3 The planning system

The different understandings and fixed design procedures have been influenced by the statutory planning system, in where the urban design has been long excluded. The following discussion hence sees the development trajectory of the system to further explain the problems.

Having been halted for many years in difficulties, [39] the planning work gradually restarted after 1978. The recovery was marked by the *1984 Regulation of Urban*

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[39] See a detailed discussion from Lu's *Remaking Chinese Urban Form: Modernity, Scarcity and Space, 1949–2005* (Lu, 206, pp.102-119).

Planning (State Council, 1984), and later the *1990 City Planning Act* (NPC Standing Committee, 1989) firstly entitled planning to a legal status.

There have been three planning systems reflecting the urban-rural relationship, the former two of which have been represented by relevant planning acts. The *1990 City Planning Act* focused on the urban area; the *2008 Urban and Rural Area Planning Act* (NPC Standing Committee, 2007) incorporated in the rural area whilst still focusing on the urban side; the '2019 National Territory Spatial Planning System' includes the whole territorial space, aiming to bring all kinds of space-related planning in one system.
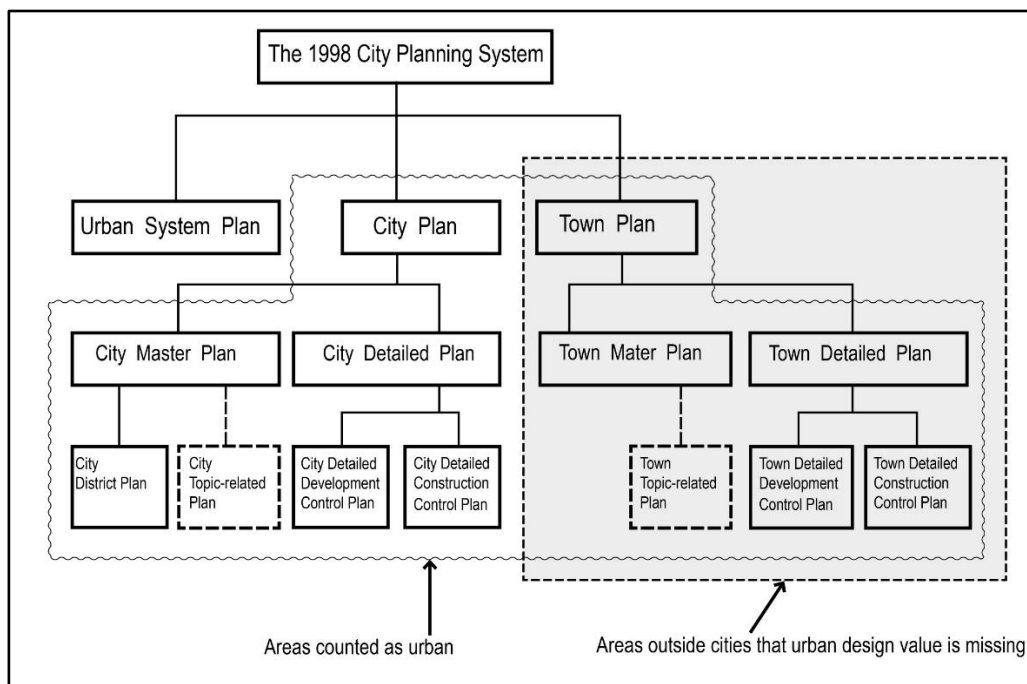
Figure 5.1. The 1998 planning system based on *1990 City Planning Act* (source: Author).

The first system established the statutory status of 'city planning' and lifted planning's position from being subservient to the economic planning. It was a multi-tyle system, including urban system plan, master plan and detailed plan, with district plan added for large cities. Development control (design governance) was first granted to planning

authority with a mechanism of 'one report and two permits',[40] but according to Wu (2015, pp.55-57), the control was not successful, due to the pressure of development and inter-government politics. For example, the land certificate for development needs the planning permit as a precondition, but the two document were then controlled by land department and planning department respectively, and the two authorities had different interests and approaches in regulating land, causing conflicts. The situation had been exacerbated by the growth mentality, the related compromises or interventions from government officials, the lack of punitive mechanism, and the trend of treating 'development control' as a process to formalize a deal rather than contribute to decision making (ibid.). The system only covered cities with the rural areas and towns not included (Figure 5.1).
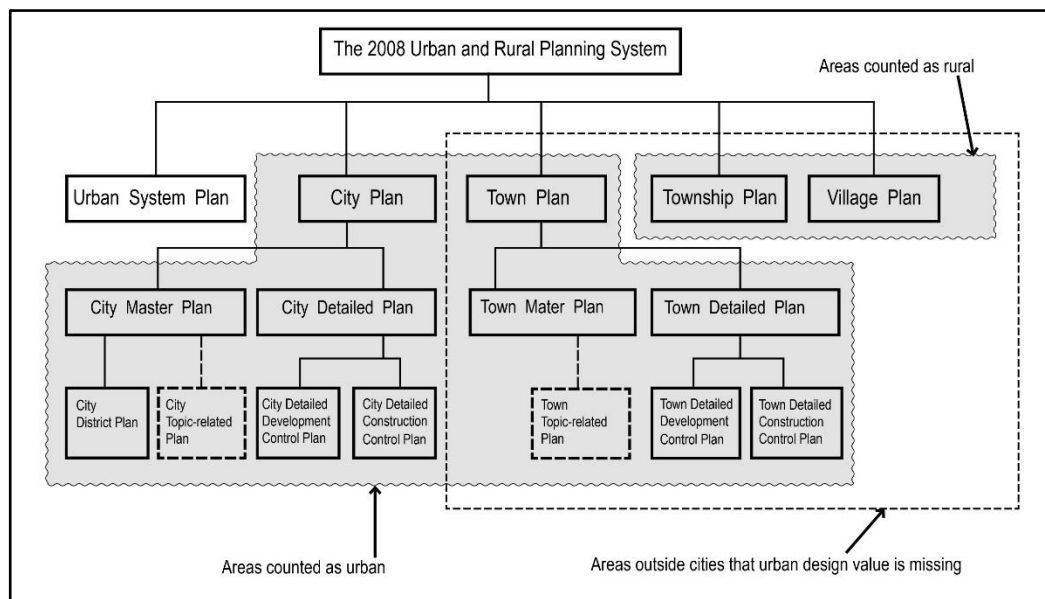
Figure 5.2. The 2008 planning system based on *2008 Urban and Rural Area Planning Act* (source: Author).

The 2008 planning system was expanded to five levels: urban system plan, city plan, town plan, township plan and village plan (Figure 5.2). It had covered rural area and

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[40] See detailed discussions from Wu's *Planning for Growth: Urban and Regional Planning in China* (Wu, 2015, pp.54-55) and Chen's *The design dimension of China's planning system: urban design for development control* (Chen, 2016).

included the mechanism of plan revision, monitoring, implementation and public consultation. The town and city were regarded as urban area, whilst the township and village were treated as rural area. For urban areas, the system kept the two tiers — master plan and detailed plan. The urban detailed plan included DDCP and DCP, endowing them statutory statues. The master plan was for general strategies of development, whilst the DDCP set land boundaries, offering requirements of land plots through codes and index like land use type, building height, density and ratios (Figure 5.3); and DCP was to "regulate immediate construction on design and engineering issues." (Chen and Thwaites, 2013, p.152). More, the non-statutory plans had grown as well. For example, strategic plan (Wu, 2015, p.62) and topic-related plan were included in urban master plan, such as the conservation plan.

Figure 5.3. A typical 'detailed development control plan' of a district in Huangshan city (The resolution is not very high as it was publicized on the website) (source: The Paper. Available at: https://m.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_4908454).

The rural side, namely the other half — 'rural planning', was not clear in this planning system although having a statutory status. According to Sun (2017) and Zhang (2013,

2017), first, there were confusing concepts and disunified regulations across the country (Zhang, 2013). Second, the rural planning system was not completed, as it only treated villages and market towns as points, without recognizing the regional relations and coordination between these points (ibid.). Third, the methods of rural planning were largely copies from urban planning (discussed in Sub-section 2.3.2 and 1.3.2) yet without effective development controls (design governance measures like DDCP and DCP), and the implementation of these plans was also ineffective (Sun and Zhang, 2017). In transplanting urban planning methods, rural particularities relating to rural industry, rural life and social structure had also been overlooked (Zhang, 2013).

The maturing urban detailed plans in 2008 system have gone "beyond morphological design" to become a tacit in the Land Finance to build "the local land-driven growth machine." (Wu, 2015, p.57, p.63) The land thus was controlled more tightly with the power of land management all handed over to the 'land authorities' who were more capable in land survey and hence had their own 'land use planning'. To protect arable land, a quota-based management system was built in 2004, incidentally open the quota transfer channel (mentioned in Chapter 1) allowing rural land to be extracted by urban land market. With rural area incorporated into the 2008 planning system, rural planning could be optionally or arbitrarily utilized to justify the quota transfer channel without being limited by the development control.

In addition, in the up-scaling of governance, not only the land use planning, but other parallel planning efforts relating to form and space had also been created by different government departments being equal to the planning department, causing further contradictions in the development process.

As the latest reform of current planning system, the '2019 National Territory Spatial Planning System' is emerging and in the process of being refined (CPC Central

Committee and State Council, 2019). It aims to solve the contradictions between the different big planning efforts (as 'unifying multiple plans'), and to inclusively put all the territorial space and resources under a unified planning framework so as to build 'Ecological Civilization' (ibid.). It is also an up-scaling of governance, with the responsibility of managing urban and rural planning moved from 'Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development' (MOHURD) to 'Ministry of Natural Resources' (MNR).

The system has three types of plans being situated in five administrative levels from 'national' to 'town and township' (Figure 5.4). The master plan is situated in all five levels, whilst the detailed plan is only needed from municipal level down to town and township level (3 levels), and the topic-related plan can be used in the first four levels according to practical conditions.

2019 National Territory Spatial Planning System				
Three Types / Five Levels	Master Plan	Detailed Plan		Topic-related Plan
National Level	National-level Territory Spatial Master Plan			Relevant Topic-related Plan
Provincial Level	Provincial-level Territory Spatial Master Plan			Relevant Topic-related Plan
Municipal Level	Municipal-level Territory Spatial Master Plan	Municipal-level Detailed Plan (within the boundary)	Municipal-level Countyside Plan (outside the boundary)	Relevant Topic-related Plan
County Level	County-level Territory Spatial Master Plan	County-level Detailed Plan (within the boundary)	County-level Countryside Plan (outside the boundary)	Relevant Topic-related Plan
Town and Township Level	Town and Township-level Territory Spatial Master Plan	Town and Township-level Detailed Plan (within the boundary)	Town and Township-level Countryside Plan (outside the boundary)	
		Detailed Plan within the urban development boundary	Countryside Plan outside the urban development boundary	

Figure 5.4. The '2019 National Territory Spatial Planning System' (source: Author).

According to relevant guidelines of preparing plans under this system (MNR, 2020a, 2020b), the territorial space comprises ecological space, agricultural space and urban

space, with three strict controlling lines to manage them: the red line of ecological protection, the field of permanent basic farmland and the boundary of urban development. These lines were similarly implemented by zoning plans. 'Protection, development, utilization, restoration' are the main themes in managing territorial space and resources and the resources are defined as all the natural resources and historical & cultural resources within territorial space. More, the mechanism of 'one blue print' is emphasized, as building an overarching platform coordinating and sharing all fundamental information among plans at different tiers, such as statistics, standards, and definitions (CPC Central Committee and State Council, 2019).
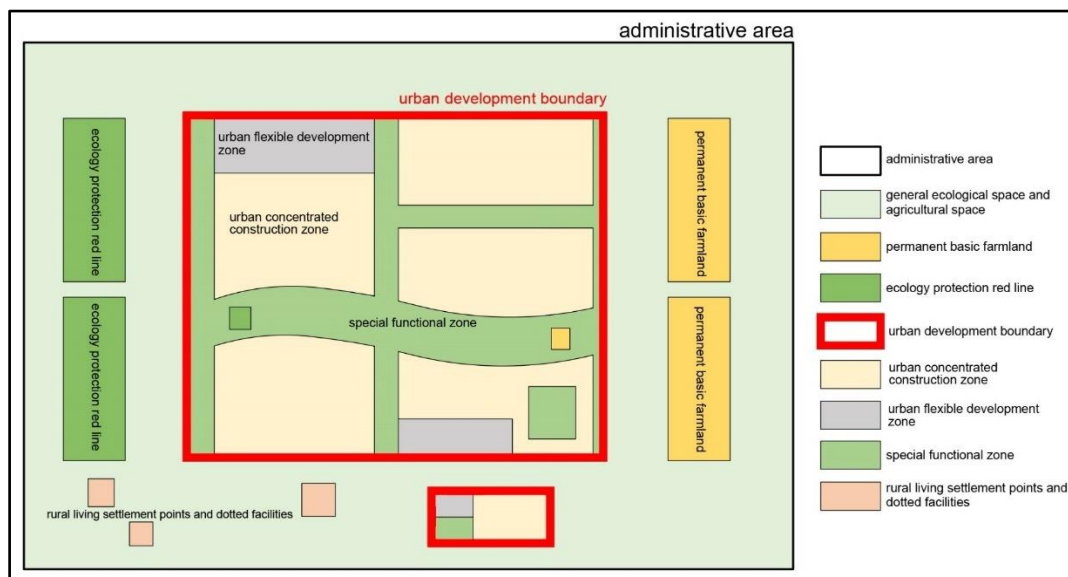
Figure 5.5. The diagram of 'urban development boundary' (source: adapted from MNR, 2020a, p.32).

The rural area, interestingly, has seemed to enter the shadow of such a big system. Although being mentioned in the lowest level of this system as 'township', in detailed plan it was only defined as built-up areas outside 'urban development boundary' consisting of groups of administrative villages (Figure 5.5) (ibid.), and the built-up area of 'market town' of rural area has not been clearly defined. [41] The measures of

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[41] It proved the top-down mind to not emphasize the role of 'market town' in planning, but it should not be totally excluded from the planning system.

development control have been updated, mainly including detailed plan, planning permit and controlling index (ibid.), but how it will be practically implemented is not clear, as some places keep using the DDCP and DCP (Shi, 2019). More, for villages outside the development boundary, there are still no specifically defined control measures and mechanisms.

However, this ambitious system, as shown by Zhao, has seemed to be in a trend of scaling 'Land Finance' up to a more inclusive 'Natural Resource Finance'.
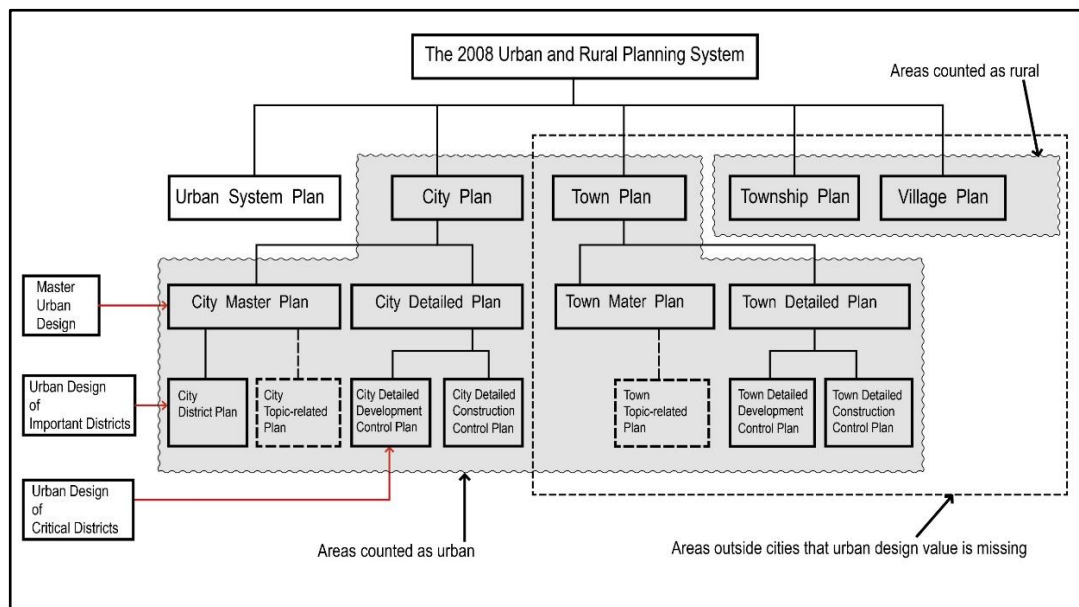
Figure 5.6. Urban design has been matched with the master plan and detailed plan in 2008 planning system (source: Author).

For urban design, it has never been fully incorporated into all these planning systems, so it has unclear affiliation and no statutory status in practice. Both the 1990 and 2008 planning act had not mentioned urban design at all. The first official document mentioning urban design was the *1991 Preparing Method of Urban Planning* (Ministry of Construction, 1991), and *1998 Standard for Basic Terminology of Urban Planning* (Ministry of Construction, 1998) further offered a definition of urban design. Not until 2017 was urban design officially mentioned again in the *Management Method of Urban*

Design (MOHURD, 2017); it was divided into 'mater urban design' and 'critical district urban design' to correspond with the two tiers of urban planning — master plan and detailed plan, but it still has not offered urban design a statutory status (Figure 5.6). In addition of its problematic position, its official definition has too heavily focused on the physical 'form' issues, without sufficient attention on the 'social aspect of human habitation' (Chen and Thwaites, 2013) as exemplified in the aforementioned *1998 Standard*.

5.5.4 The design governance practice in the system

The discussions on the design system have well demonstrated that the development control as a mean of design governance reflecting the power logics has been at a superior position during the space production than that of designers' efforts. Therefore, it is still necessary to specify the mechanism of design governance in the design system, although some relevant problems have been stated in the above discussions. Design governance indicates the mechanism of "design review and development management" (Punter 2007; White 2015, cited in Chen and White, 2021), and is described by Carmona (2016, p.705) as "the process of state-sanction intervention in the means and processes of designing the built environment in order to shape both processes and outcomes in a defined public interest." Indeed, Carmona has offered a holistic yet detailed reflection on this practice and calls for treating design governance as a sub field of urban design (ibid.). He concludes the motivations of such state interventions, points out the problem that regulations and standards tend to be a substitution for design, and conceives of four notions of design quality: aesthetic, project, place and process. He then offers a triad of characteristics for urban governance (operation, power and authority) to which design governance belongs, and raises some of its core problematics and cautions. To answer the question of when should such interventions occur, Carmona stresses that it needs to come early, before key design decisions are made. A spectrum of design governance is hence built on his triad of urban governance, existing

between ideological and managerial, between centralized and disaggregated, and between public and market. Carmona further offers some conceptual distinctions reflecting the broad limits of design governance, in which, particularly, the 'formal and informal' nature of relevant tools and process are related to the Chinese context (ibid.). Another inspiring view is that he looks outside the conventional circle that only sees design as public policy, regulation and control, calling for a stronger role of designers that should be skilled, has clear knowledge of their actions and decisions, and can "write the rules for the significant choices that shape the city." (Barnett, 1974, cited in Carmona, 2016, p.725) As seen by him, design governance should be 'a governance of constructive engagement' for optimized outcomes in shaping places, with the 'opportunity space' of stakeholders engaged and negotiated with each other.

However, as mentioned by Chen and White (2021), little attention has been paid on the design governance practice in Chinese context. They hence lead the examination of this 'state-sanction intervention' considering its Chinese features in response to the state's growing concern about urban design, whilst focusing on the design dimension of the planning system and relevant urban design efforts. Based on the 'best practice' principles (Punter 2007; White 2015, cited in Chen and White, 2021) they establish a framework against the backdrop of statutory planning system to review the design governance practice, which is a "tripartite structure of urban design policy, implementation and decision-making." (ibid.) The instrument of design governance is then concluded in four types based on the *2008 Urban and Rural Area Planning Act*: Masterplans (urban design policies and strategies), DDCPs (design codes), DCPs (site masterplan) and Topic-specific design guidelines (informal tools mentioned by Carmona); the key actors are regarded as local planning and urban design institute, local urban planning bureau and land administration bureau, with the latter two controlling the 'one report, two permits' mechanism (ibid.). In an empirical investigation conducted towards three cities of Shenzhen, Shanghai and Nanjing pioneering in

design-led planning, Chen and White evaluates their design governance approaches by using the review framework. The problems hence lie in each of the three aspects (ibid.). For urban design policy, the governance efforts prioritize city-level visual identity and quality over site-based morphological quality in the masterplans, sometimes with imported Western urban design principles not well understood and implemented. Hence the typo-morphological approach could be employed to deal with more contextual and culturally relevant urban form issues in a human scale. For implementation tools, DDCP as a key are too normative, generic and inflexible to ensure the quality of form results, and it is not locally contextualised, site sensitive and not followed by the attendant non-compulsory guidelines with consistency. For decision-making, the intra-government coordination and cooperation is not satisfying, allowing individual departments to develop 'silo mentalities' (also mentioned in the preceding section). The recent reorganization of relevant departments (the establishment of Ministry of Natural Resources) creating the '2019 National Territory Spatial Planning System' marks a good trend but the effect at local level is yet to be seen. More, the public participation in decision-making is still under-developed (ibid.).

It is worth paying particular attention to the DDCP, the legal vehicle through which urban design efforts are delivered and governed. Since urban design is not included in the statutory planning systems (as informal tools), ideally its outcomes need to be fully translated into contents of relevant DDCPs and become conditions for land transactions, which should be monitored by local governments (Chen, 2016). But in fact, as mentioned by Chen (2016, 2021), DDCP as a key governance control tool based on technical indices is too prescriptive and inflexible, not able to well incorporate, convert and implement urban design outcomes, so there have often been significant mismatches between urban design documents and DDCPs, damaging designers' creativity and aspirations. However, the role of DDCP seems to be still essential and irreplaceable because it "can be easily followed and monitored by inexperienced Chinese planners

unable to keep up with the rapid pace of urban development," (Chen, 2016, p.97) reflecting Carmona's concern about regulations being a substitute for design. Chen (2016) treats this kind of mismatch as the biggest challenge for Chinese planning system, calling for a stronger link between urban design and DDCP and even a legal status of urban design in the planning system. Jin (2018), more radically, argues that urban design's 'bridging role' connecting planning and architectural design and other wider design-related efforts has been long occupied by DDCP in the planning systems, hence urban design should gradually replace DDCP in this system to ensure better spatial qualities.

In the growth-oriented design system, the design governance, represented by the popular instrument of DDCP, seems not to fully confirm with the definition given by Carmona. The mentality of economic and power growth is so strong among the local governments in the space production, with the processes and outcomes of design governance not shaped in 'a defined public interest' but rather 'the arena of power logics'. This is the current institutional environment that designers are subject to.

However, the design governance practice in China and the reflections on them have been all made towards cities and towns, and in those 'non-pioneer' towns the design system's design dimension would be smaller and the regulatory sense would be stronger. For the villages, as the preceding sub-section has revealed, effective design governance (development control) practices have been almost absent. There are no DDCP and DCP as effective legal instruments to control the rural development, and in terms of design policies and decision-making, the design sense (urban design considerations) is very weak. The informal governance tools are also rare in most of the ordinary villages. This infantry has lowered the quality of built environment in villages where most of the traditional form results sit in. On the one hand, designers' 'creative destruction' has been less restricted (as discussed in Sub-section 1.3.2); on the other hand, the

production of space there, in inventory, driven by the capital flow and power logics different to those underlying form growth, has been harder to regulate. However, this situation has still not been paid enough attention by designers and those space suppliers. Especially, the local governments tend to see the waves of rural development more from political and economic perspectives than from design perspective.

5.6 Conclusion

Form development has been always a reification of the nation's development, and is politically influenced by the power logics, grand strategies and the feature of 'Chinese characteristics'. The above discussion from this wider perspective has further consolidated the analytical mode.

Particularly, design has been responsive and instrumental, especially the planning. It has been overarching and growing along with the form growth and 'power growth'. Architectural design has been increasingly important since the form renovation (space production in inventory) began. However, the different understanding of form fixed by professional stereotypes and the evolving planning system have been still posing challenges on the integrated design of form and space. The non-statutory status of urban design in the planning systems and the absence of its wisdoms in design towards rural areas has also exacerbated the situation. The planning system will be growing stronger and macro, with the grounded form issue in rural side still not well considered. The design governance in this system is also not well practiced by the local governments, especially in villages.

Chapter 6: The Situation in Huizhou — The Focused Context at Local Level

6.1 Introduction

This chapter starts with a general introduction of Huizhou being the context for case study. It presents the similarities and particularities of this cultural region compared to other areas. It then offers a review of the form development of Huizhou, which could contribute to the comprehensive understanding of the form problem after 1998, and support the selection of sub-cases representing two trends of form development in the discussion of research design.

6.2 A general introduction of Huizhou — the research field

Huizhou is located in southern Anhui province in east China (Figure 6.1). It has been a distinct cultural region in a mountainous area for more than a thousand years, and its people share a united and profound tradition and culture. Huizhou was also once a united administrative region, in which six traditional counties (She, Yi, Wuyuan, Qimen, Xiuning, and Jixi) formed a single prefecture. However, the Huizhou region was administratively broken apart in modern era, and in 1987 the city of Huangshan established, largely incorporating the areas of ancient She, Yi, Qimen and Xiuning, whilst Jixi and Wuyuan were attached to other adjacent cities (Figure 6.2-6.3).[42]
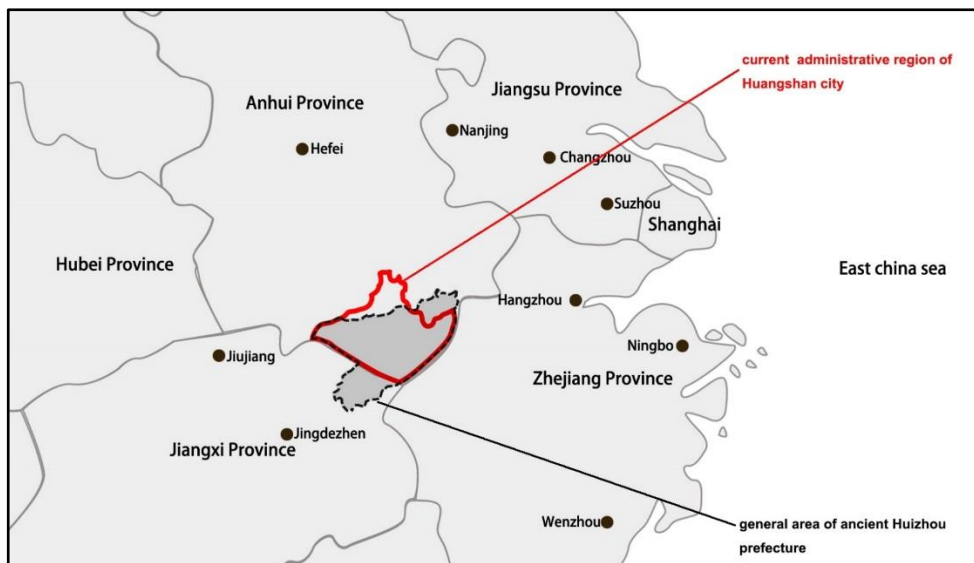
Figure 6.1. The region of Huizhou and the area of Huangshan city (source: Author).

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[42] However, to avoid complication, this thesis sometimes uses the main body of Huizhou — Huangshan city (also the main body of historical Huizhou) in reality to represent the region of Huizhou in concept, especially when talking about recent local policies and regulations. Also, when later discussion mentions Huizhou or Huangshan city, it generally means the traditional towns and villages in Huizhou or Huangshan city.
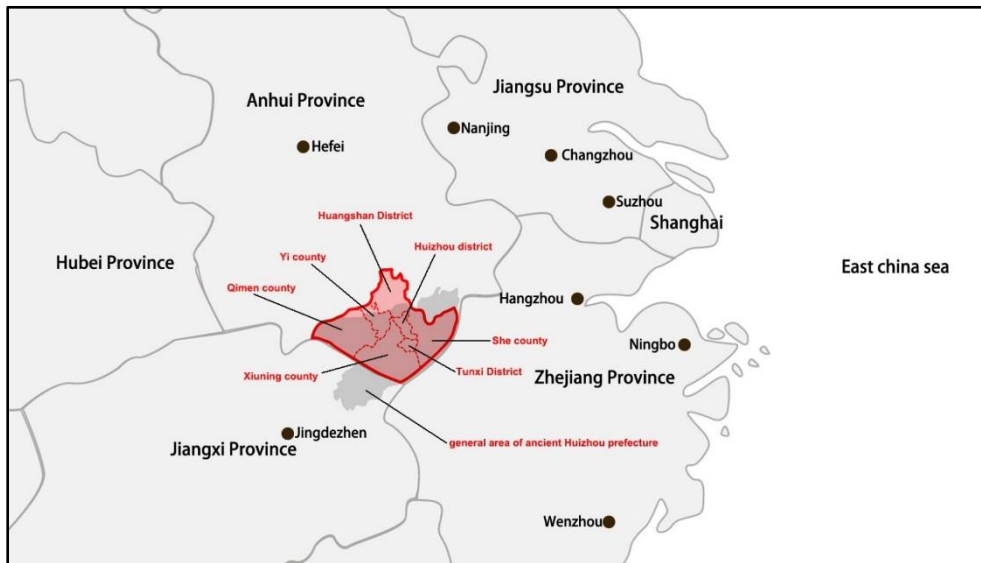
Figure 6.2. The current counties and districts of Huangshan city (source: Author).
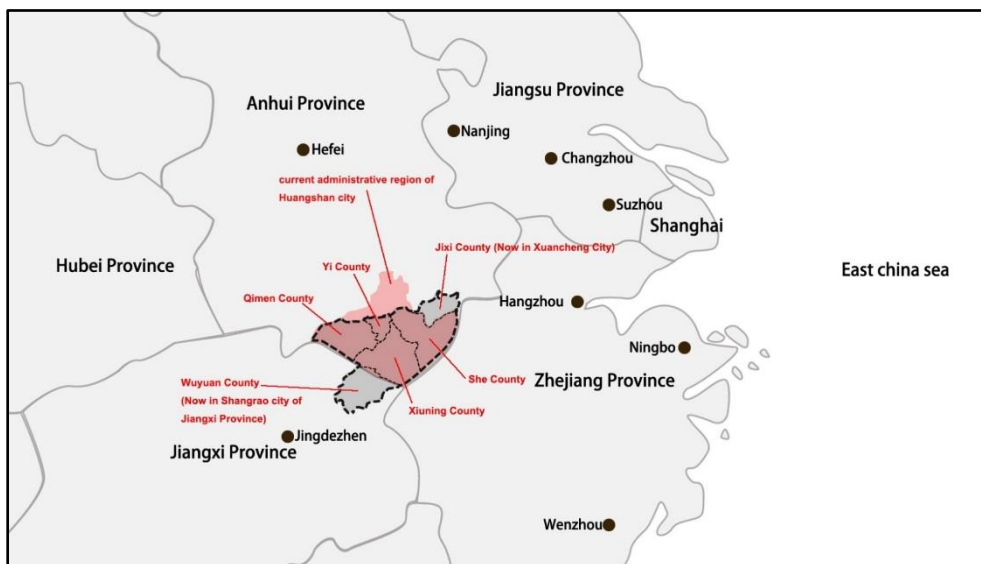
Figure 6.3. The general area of counties of ancient Huizhou prefecture (source: Author)

Nowadays, the main body of Huizhou-Huangshan city, is famous for tourism. Within it, the Huangshan Mountain is listed in the UNESCO World Heritage-Mixed Properties, and also numerous historical dwellings and settlements scatter in the territory, two of which (village of Xidi and Hongcun) are also listed in the UNESCO World Heritage-Cultural Properties.

In 1979, the great reform designer Deng Xiaoping visited the area and climbed the

Huangshan Mountain. He encouraged the local governors to promote tourism: "to be more ambitious, to throw out the Huangshan card…." (Huangshan Daily, 2014) This marked the start of local tourism as an industry. To closely follow Deng, the local government developed the encouragement into "to better play Huangshan card, to better compose Huizhou literature." (Huangshan Daily, 2013) For decades, this has been the motto of local government. Its means is to celebrate the role of Huangshan Mountain and compose a strong Huizhou mentality, as well reflected in the local traditional built environment and cultural identities. This mentality has been hovering over the local officials and people, bringing them both advantage and burden at the same time during the form transformation.

In the past forty years, whilst Huizhou has remained a cultural region with a strong sense of tradition and cultural identity, like many other historic or traditional areas, it has experienced many special challenges in terms of development and the physical form transformation. These have been caused by preconditions of history and geography (as a mountainous area Huizhou has limited developable land and weak industries) and exacerbated by insensitive and often ill-conceived development projects. In contrast, other areas, such as towns and villages in Suzhou — which have followed a different economic trajectory since 1980 (sometimes referred to as the Southern Jiangsu Model)[43] — have seized opportunities of moving beyond agriculture to develop rural industries as a main driver of local GDP. The development challenge under the overarching Huizhou mentality has brought a special trajectory to space production in the area. This has been heightened by its close proximity to the developed cities in Yangtze River Delta, which has made Huizhou a prime target for new capital flow from

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[43] South Jiangsu Mode or *Sunan* Mode generally refers to the successful rural development that does not rely on agriculture. Starting in the 1980s, it created a push to establish rural industries, which happened in towns and villages in southern Jiangsu province, like Suzhou, Changzhou, Nantong. See Chen and Xie, 2014. For a discussion of *Sunan* Mode and the form evolution of rural settlements, see Li, 2007.

there,[44] during the local urbanization and rural development.

This production of space having happened in a united cultural region, being promoted by a power with a strong conservative mentality, being driven by a dynamic capital flow penetrating from cities to villages, and having experienced a political transition with more focus putting on rural areas is therefore a fascinating and important focal point for greater scrutiny. The similarities and particularities of the form change in traditional towns and villages in Huizhou would offer valuable references to the solutions to form issues in other traditional towns and villages in China, especially those in the hinterland in the trend of being increasingly opened up against the backdrop of urbanization and rural development.

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[44] In many official discourses, Huangshan city and the Huizhou region are described as the 'backyard' of nearby cities (e.g., Shanghai, Nanjing, Hangzhou) in the Yangtze River Delta due to many close ties between them. See a description at: http://news.sina.com.cn/o/2003-08-25/0214625879s.shtml.

6.3 The form development of Huizhou

Before discussing Huizhou's form transformation in the contemporary era, a brief reflection on its form development in history is necessary, as it reveals relevant historical and intrinsic preconditions of the contemporary form development.
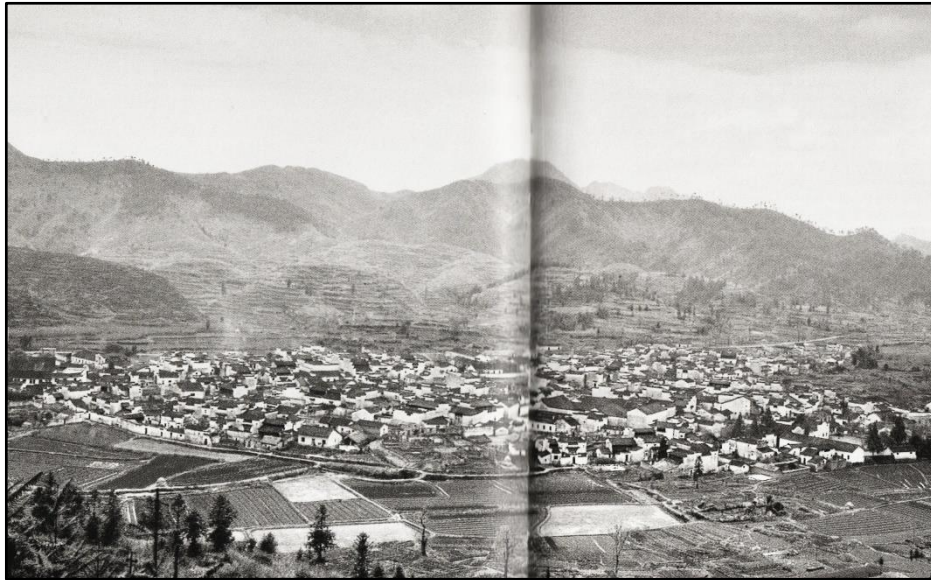
Figure 6.4. The form continuity of Huizhou (panoramic view of Xidi village in 1985) (source: Zhang, 2016, p27).

Figure 6.5. The form continuity of Huizhou (Yuliang village) (source: Author).

A large number of historical dwellings and settlements remain in traditional towns and villages of Huizhou (Ye, 2010), comprising many districts having integrated and continuous form texture. Many of them were formed in Ming and Qing dynasty, when Huizhou saw a great prosperity and development. Today, although these architectural heritages have been destroyed and fragmented to different extents, they are still greatly unified in terms of form.

Indeed, before the massive construction processes against the backdrop of modernization or especially 'reforming and opening up', the form of Huizhou had been in a stable and continuous system across centuries. This continuity also transcended geographical and administrative boundaries, as the form systems of ancient villages, towns and cities were similar to each other, and their developments showed an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary manner (Figure 6.4-6.5). This form continuity can also be found in other historical settlements across China, and was influenced by a classical concept in ancient China, which was summarized by Li (2005) as the "Cathay's idea of architecture." (Chinese concept of architecture) He concluded that the primary living space — house (dwelling) was the archetype of Chinese classical architecture, with all kinds of buildings originated from it (ibid., p.83). The architectural functions hence were not distinguished through the forms and plans of individual buildings, but through the combinations of basic units originated from the archetype of 'house', such as the 'door', 'hall' and 'corridor' (ibid., pp.66-67). These units were not initially tied to specific functions, yet they were set in different scales to be largely grouped and organized in horizontal plans to form different composites to accommodate different functions (ibid., pp.129-139). The most significant difference between these composites seemed to lie in the quantity of these basic units, not the basic organizational logic of them. Hence if expanding the scale, the key was to increase the 'quantity' of basic units horizontally to add building groups to extend the form system, and then to allocate more functions to these units, compared to the convention of

enlarging the 'mass' of individual buildings both vertically and horizontally in the West (ibid., pp.129-133). *Lizhi* (code of etiquettes) and *xuanxue* (metaphysical concepts such as *feng-shui*) had been the rules in the grouping and organizing processes, for controlling the quantity and scale of basic units, and for regulating the inner decorations of organized composites (ibid., pp.39-43). The difference between architectural hierarchies and classes could thus be set up, such as the distance between a normal mansion and an imperial palace. Nevertheless, the basic units and building groups with same origins had inevitably contributed to the unified and continuous form systems. Indeed, this classical concept of architecture had not changed a lot during the whole feudal age of China, and thus the form continuity had been well handled down throughout that period.

Figure 6.6. Examples of the landscape and form of Huizhou village (source: Zhang, 2016, p.29).

Figure 6.7. The overall view of Tangyue village (source: Xuanzhong Hall Genealogy, Qing dynasty, cited in Shan, 2010, p40).
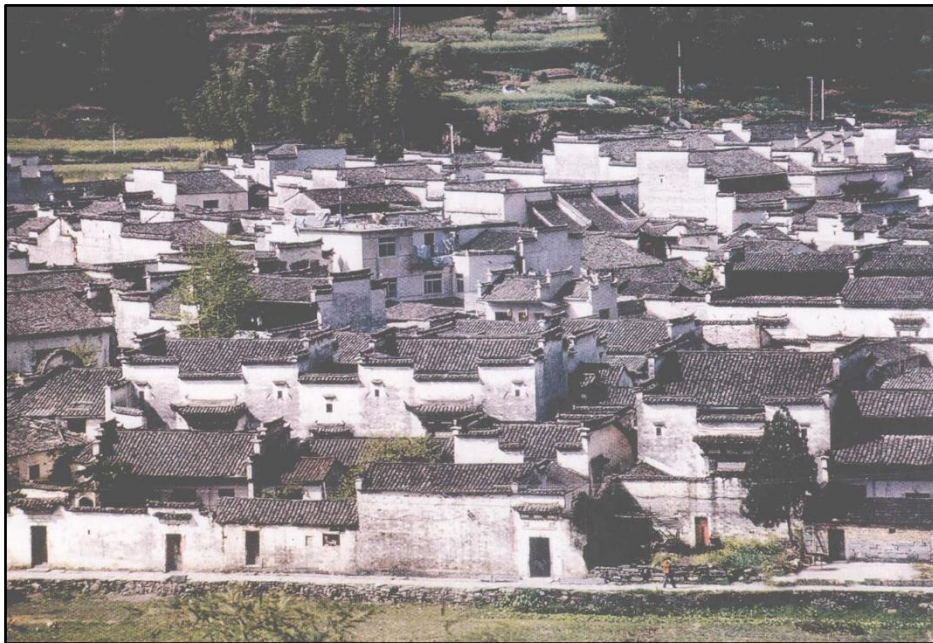
Figure 6.8. Matouqiang enclosing house groups with the outside facade largely left blank and sealed (source: Shan, 2010, p.45).

Whilst being subject to the classical concept, the form development of Huizhou had also expressed many unique features. For example, the landscape construction had been largely independent from agriculture, but influenced by the interests in high culture, wealth and pastoral gardening (Zhang, 2016, pp.5-24). The settlements were more compact compared to those in other areas, forming three major kinds of geometric

shape — dots, belt and block, which were all in harmony with mountains and rivers (ibid., pp.28-29) (Figure 6.6-6.7). Also, the dwellings as basic units had been built and grouped with regional tectonic techniques and fitted with delicate decorations, with such details having richer cultural connotations (e.g., *feng-shui* concepts), being presented around patios (courtyard) inside the continuous tall walls (ibid., pp.69-88). These tall walls (including *matouqiang*[45]) enclosed the house groups, with the outside facade largely left blank and sealed, indicating a sense of privacy and territory (Figure 6.8).

The reason for the unique features can be viewed from an anthropological perspective. It could all start from the geographical condition. Naturally the mountainous area with many meandering rivers were not suitable for buildings to scatter, so a concentrated layout was the primitive response to the geography (ibid., pp.25-40). Nevertheless, the successive socio-cultural factors situated in this precondition had been constantly influenced by it. First, the mountainous region offered an enclosed environment, which had attracted people during the three great population migrations in Chinese history, who migrated to Huizhou from central plain to escape wars (Wang, 2011). The local '*yue* culture' had hence merged with the 'orthodox culture' brought by the migrations, and formed a splendid Huizhou culture, which was very stable thanks again to the enclosed environment (Zhang, 2016., pp.5-6). Second, little arable land among this mountainous area had forced people to venture out to do business. Fortunately, they achieved great successes, especially in Ming and Qing dynasties, making Huizhou merchants the most successful and powerful group among business circles nationally then (ibid., p.8, p.12). Great wealth not only brought great development to the physical form of their hometowns, but also pushed Huizhou culture to its prosperity during the

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[45] A tall wall used to prevent fire and theft, and divide house units, which has become a classic symbol of Huizhou dwelling.

same era[46] (ibid. pp.8-16, p.6) This phenomenal affluence also maintained the local society's independence from agriculture, nurturing a tradition advocating the career of merchant rather than farmer, and an ideal that a merchant should also be a good literate or have an official position in the bureaucratic system (ibid., pp.8-16). This further resulted in the fact that many celebrated scholars and officials in the two dynasties originated from Huizhou. The combination of wealth, culture, and power had contributed to an elegant lifestyle that was widely accepted (ibid.), which can explain why the landscape, settlements and dwellings, and inner decorations were "permeated with the temperament and interests of bureaucratic literati, a mixed feeling of the state of mind of showing off wealth with the aristocrat's aesthetics and mentality."(ibid., p.16)The independence from agriculture also allowed residents to live together more compactly, coinciding with the concept of patriarchal clan greatly emphasized in local culture.

Figure 6.9. The form structure of Xidi village, influenced by the clan system (source: adapted from Google Earth Image).

[46] For example, Hui-style architecture, Huizhou carving arts, Huizhou painting school, Huizhou medicine, Huizhou drama, etc., were all benefited from the historical cultural prosperity.

In forming the special form continuity, therefore, *lizhi* (code of etiquettes) and *xuanxue* (metaphysical concepts) had been represented respectively by an enhanced patriarchal clan system and enriched *feng-shui* concepts. *Feng-shui* concepts were essential for initially selecting the site, positioning the orientation and structuring the framework of a Huizhou settlement (ibid., pp.41-56). According to local *feng-shui* concepts, "to be backed by hills and to face the water" was the ideal condition (ibid., p.56). After *feng-shui* concepts have determined the base of a settlement, the patriarchal clan system started to dominate the form evolution. This clan system had indeed been a tradition across ancient China, meaning that "blood ties determined social organization." (ibid., p.48) The social organization in Huizhou settlements and related spatial structures were thus built on this kinship system. However, this system had been greatly emphasized in Huizhou, as the culture was greatly influenced by the Neo-Confucianism (the Cheng-Zhu school) (Bian and Ma, 2022). The members of a clan with a same surname lived together and worshiped in the same main ancestral shrine, which was the most significant building in a settlement. Around it, different shrine branches were built in different parts of the settlement to divide living areas filled with house clusters (groups) accommodating increased member families (Zhang, 2016, pp.41-56). The form structure of the settlement was thus formed. Based on this, basic house units made up clusters, and clusters gathered around shrine branches, and these branches led their own areas to join the domain of main ancestral shrine to constitute the whole settlement (ibid.) (Figure 6.9). Usually, one house with one family made a basic unit, and increased families divided up house clusters, with new house units starting to grow — a process similar to the division circle of cells (ibid., p.72). Due to the long process of dividing and grouping against relevant geographical preconditions and *feng-shui* concepts, the layouts of settlement differed from each other, but the form of basic house unit was relatively stable and unified, being stylized in the form of *yikeyin* (one-square-seal) (ibid., p.71), namely a regular three-sided courtyard with a patio hall in the centre (Figure 6.10-6.13). These numerous courtyards were connected together horizontally,

with narrow alleyways and tall walls realizing family division and fire prevention, forming special morphological continuities in Huizhou settlements (Figure 6.14).

Figure 6.10. The appearance of a *yikeyin* (one-square-seal) dwelling in Xidi village (source: adapted from Zhang, 2016, p73).
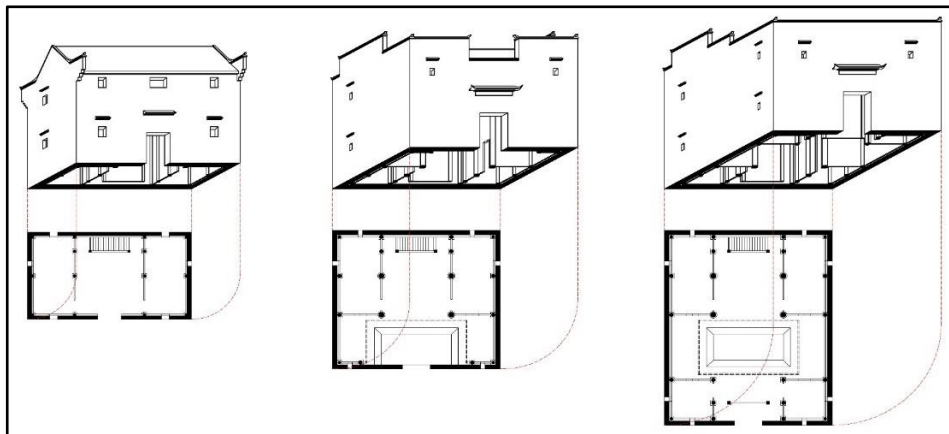
Figure 6.11. Types of *yikeyin* (source: courtesy of Shou Tao).

In the detail construction processes, *feng-shui* concepts were again important. For many settlements, from the construction of 'bayou' (water gateway), to the orientation of doors in each dwelling, even to the setting up of indoor furniture and decorations, all relevant activities needed to refer to *feng-shui* concepts (ibid., pp.57-74). More, the interior decorations were sometimes further related to more personal cultural

connotations, like some special interests or aspirations of family ancestors (Figure 6.15).
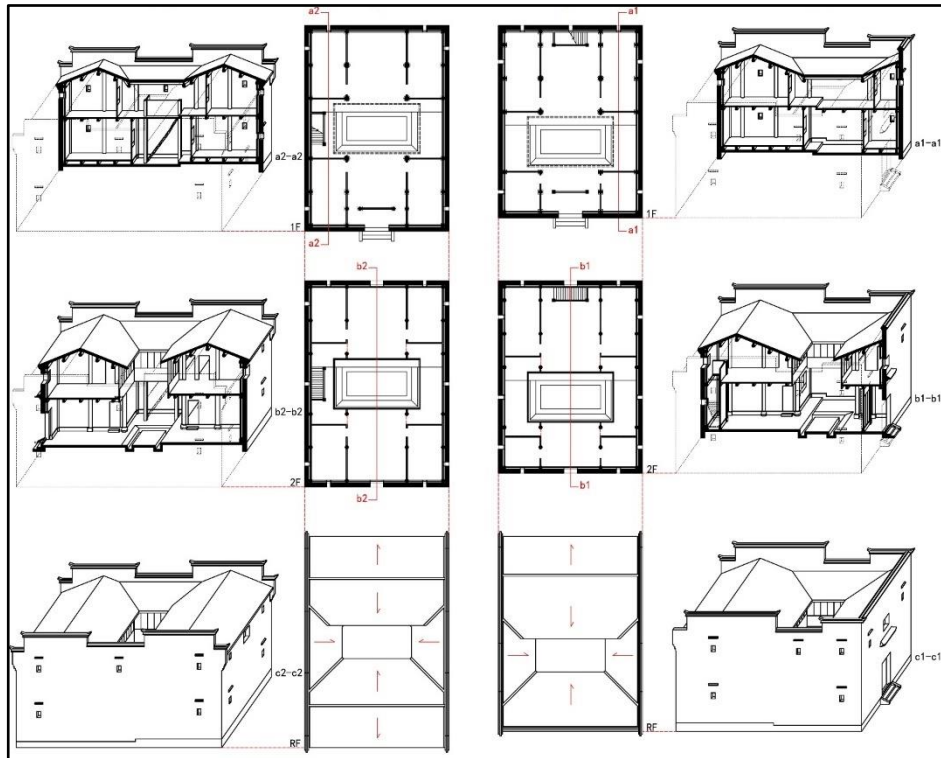
Figure 6.12. Sections of two classic types of *yikeyin* (source: courtesy of Shou Tao).

Figure 6.13. The patio halls in the basic house unit (source: adapted from Shan, 2010, p73).

Figure 6.14. Series of *yikeyin* (one-square-seal) forming the form continuity (source: Author).

Figure 6.15. The settings and decorations of the central hall (*zhongtang*) of a house (source: the left image: Shan, 2010, p.132; the right image: Zhang, 2016, p.71).

This special form continuity had almost lasted through all the feudal era, despite little impacts brought by the Taiping Rebellion (Yu, 2013). It did not experience big changes during the republic age (1911 to 1949), because the early modernization did not fully reach Huizhou, and the Japanese invasion and the civil war also did not damage the region, as the mountainous precondition again reduced its military significance (Wang, 2015).

However, the morphological continuity did come to a stop later, and the uniqueness also started to disappear. According to Ni and Wang (2014), the major reason was the

land reform brought by the founding of new socialist state of PRC (1949), which fundamentally changed the whole rural society. The feudal class system was overturned, and the landlord's private ownership of rural land was terminated, with the land being equally divided to all peasants (ibid., pp.38-56). As a consequence, the patriarchal clan system based on the familial monopoly of land broken up, which means the main logic coming from *lizhi* to drive the form evolution was suddenly wiped out. Those occupying the house clusters were no longer under same surnames, and even one house unit was divided to smaller parts to accommodate more families without blood-ties (ibid., p.42). There were no merchants, literati, bureaucrats and related spatial operations catering to the interests of 'high culture', let along *feng-shui* concepts. Agriculture came to be the key theme, with not only the public space within settlements but also the patios within houses no longer serving cultural interests, but instead being utilized by agricultural demands (e.g., storing farm tools, drying cereals) and ordinary living activities (ibid., pp.43-56). Huizhou was gradually transformed to a common region with normal agricultural settlements. The special form continuity had divorced from the intrinsically self-disciplinary logics, being in a state of detachment, floating above the real social contents.

Although opening a socialist era (1949-1978), the new socialist system still did not bring great changes to the form of Huizhou. The industrialization only focused on big cities; the transitory 'People's Commune' and 'Cultural Revolution' had limited impact on its form issues. Actually, the first remarkable change was caused by the direct 'form colonization' of Huizhou from cities, namely the reception of a series of work unit in the process of *sanxian jianshe* (Third Frontier Construction) (1964-1980). This was a national movement to prepare for conflicts with potential enemies (e.g., Soviet Union and USA) against the backdrop of Cold War. As a way of protection, the state moved many essential industries (especially military industries) and institutions to inland areas,

and also built affiliated infrastructures and facilities there. [47] Huizhou—the mountainous area not far from Shanghai was again a good option (Office of Shanghai Chronicles, 2018). Many such industries from Shanghai landed at there in a short time (ibid.), and the series of work unit — whole sets of industrial complex as fresh integrated districts with modern form were patched into the morphological continuity. Like those work units in cities, the walled enclosures included both working and living facilities, and the later as organized modern residential districts and the origin of 'gated community' were first seen in Huizhou. The exclusiveness caused by the walls and gates naturally made them alien enclaves in the local form system. To the locals, everything there was from outside: designed by Shanghai, constructed by Shanghai, and populated by Shanghai. Although little evidence of conflicts between the work units and local settlements could be found today,[48] some locals still can recall the unequal hierarchies, as "the first level was Shanghai people; the second level was local recruited workers; the third level was our peasants."[49]

The *sanxian jianshe* generally stopped around 1980 as the international situation changed. The work-unit enclaves were then handed over to local authorities with most Shanghai people returning back. As the socialist market economy developed, they were sold to private sectors and were largely demolished to welcome real estate projects, with only fragments remaining. Smaller work units were also built by local government departments later, but they were smaller, usually comprising one office building and two residential units, as well as essential facilities, gathering around the central areas of county central towns.

The rural industry (township and village enterprise) (TVE) has been seen as a major

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[47] See a systematic discussion of this movement from Chen, 2003.

[48] As a reference, Lu has documented the such a conflict in her study on the socialist work unit (Lu, 2006, p.136).

[49] Interview with a resident from an old work unit in Yansi town, which was left by a factory from Shanghai (on 19/07/2019).

reason for the form transformation of form in towns and villages (Li, 2007), but again due to the disadvantaged geographic location and weak transportation, Huizhou had seen far smaller scale of such industries compared to the towns and villages in Suzhou. The scale and vast form transformation, probably had not begun until the fully launch of national urban housing system reform in 1998, which has continued until today (mentioned in Chapter 5).

Along with the housing system reform, the Land Finance operation came to be a significant driving force to change the form of Huizhou. The influence has extended from the city centre (Tunxi district) to every county central town, and to the normal towns even the countryside. Much rural land bearing traditional settlements has been expropriated and transformed to construction sites to develop new residential districts and industrial zones, and this process has been coordinated with the rapid local urbanization process promoting the concentration of population which has created more demands for living space and expanded the labour force.

The later development of local infrastructures such as the construction of motorway system and CRH train stations have reduced the geographic disadvantages and 'protectiveness' to some extent, allowing many more outside investment and population to come in, again contributing to the expansion of new residential districts and local industrial zones.

In addition, in the same period since 1998, considerable form changes have also happened in Huizhou villages. Under a series of policies supporting rural development since BNSC, rural infrastructures have been fundamentally improved there, and new 'rural concentrated living districts' have also been built as an implementation of political support, contributing to the form growth. Also, the later efforts for preserving the remains of form continuity — the historical dwelling and settlements has also

brought various form changes to these objectives largely existing in villages. The Rural Revitalization has further opened the rural land, allowing more kinds of force to come into Huizhou villages to operate and change the properties. The purpose of opening up is to develop tourism-centred industries and benefit more rural people there, and potentially achieve a more ambitious goal to realize the value appreciation of the resources and properties.

The form development in traditional towns and villages in Huizhou has its distinct features, but it could also be a typical example of such a form change demonstrating some similarities to those in traditional towns and villages in other regions of China. Indeed, this specific geographical precondition of being mountainous had been a fundamental reason for shaping the ancient morphological continuity, which had caused many secondary reasons for the stable existence of the form. Upon this condition, the long-standing feudal institution had been an influential backdrop, co-nurturing a stable relationship between the people and land (homestead), which kept evolving. The form evolution, or space production, was based on this evolving relationship. However, in the socialist era, the new institution and land reform fundamentally re-wrote the people-land relationship. In the period after the launch of urban housing reform, the relationship has become more complicated and uncertain, with the form being situated in an unprecedented transformation process till today. In the background there have been more complicated logics that are influencing the people-land relationship and hence influencing the space production, which is discussed in the following two chapters explaining the two trends of form development.

Chapter 7: Production of New Residential Districts as a Form Growth

7.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the growing production of new residential districts (NRD) in the context against the background of local urbanization and rural development, within this background the concentration of population has been a key.

With only one small city and some subordinate towns, Huizhou has experienced a local-level urbanization and rural development since 1998 with a relatively stabler and slower expansion of built-up areas. However, indeed, the local governments' efforts in the causes have been consistent and firm, and have closely followed the trend of relevant national policies, for example, they have increasingly emphasized the role of local towns (county central towns and normal towns), as treating it as proper places to carry out local urbanization and help rural development through concentrating population, which is also supported by the New-Type Urbanization and Rural Revitalization.[50]

The *Master Plan of Huangshan City (2008-2030)* (Huangshan Municipal Government, 2008) stresses the importance of towns within the city region by stating:

> …to lead the rural population and production factors to concentrate around the central city and towns, in order to build a rational and well-organized structure, to clarify the management system, to nurture the central city and towns, to reasonably expand the scale of towns, to focus on creating a comfortable living environment…
>
> (ibid., p.9)

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[50] According to Huangshan Daily, Huangshan city's urbanization rate (marked by the percentage of people living in cities and towns) had increased from 38.2% to 45.1% between 2007-2011(Huangshan Daily, 2012). In 2018, it rose to 51.5% (Huangshan Daily, 2019), but was still behind the national average of 59.58% (Economic Daily, 2018). Thus, it would still rise as urbanization has been continuously promoted by local governments, with the people keeping gathering in Huangshan city centre and its subordinate towns.

The *Master Plan of She County (2011-2030)* (She County Government, 2011) has named six key towns beside the central town of Huicheng, and arranged a functional structure from its central area to key towns and other towns, with four kinds of function designated to them: the comprehensive, industry-centred, transportation-centred and tourism-centred (ibid., pp.2-3).

The *Master Plan of Xiakeng Town of She County (2007-2030)* (Xiakeng Town Government, 2007) has concluded its developing mode of as "to transfer the situation of decentralized development in a scattered geographic distribution into the state of concentrated development around the town," (ibid., p.5) which is to promote the agglomeration of economy and to prioritize the town centre area that will influence its surrounding key villages and more grassroots villages.

It can be obviously seen from these local documents in an administrative hierarchy that 'concentration' has been the main tone, and one key factor — population has concentrated in three tiers: people coming to Huangshan city centre from other counties; people gathering to county central towns from surrounding normal towns; and people moving to places within or around normal town centres from scattered villages across the whole rural area. These added people have thus inevitably promoted the expansion of living space, conforming with the urban housing reform.

The expansion of living space has brought about the growing production of space in Huizhou, as the closest form change to local people's life. Since 1998, most of this produced new space has been in the form of 'new residential district'(NRD), driven by two population trends towards concentration. One is a movement from settlement to apartment, with local people moving from traditional settlements to new gated communities formed by uniformly designed modern building units. Most of these new

living districts have been built within central towns of each county with the help of nongovernment capital or sometimes of public funds, in a pattern similar to those in cities. Another is a movement making replacement as betterment, replacing scattered rural old houses with modern terraced housing on the periphery of towns (usually non-central towns of each county), creating new regulated yet non-gated communities (rural concentrated living districts), most of which have been constructed with public funds.
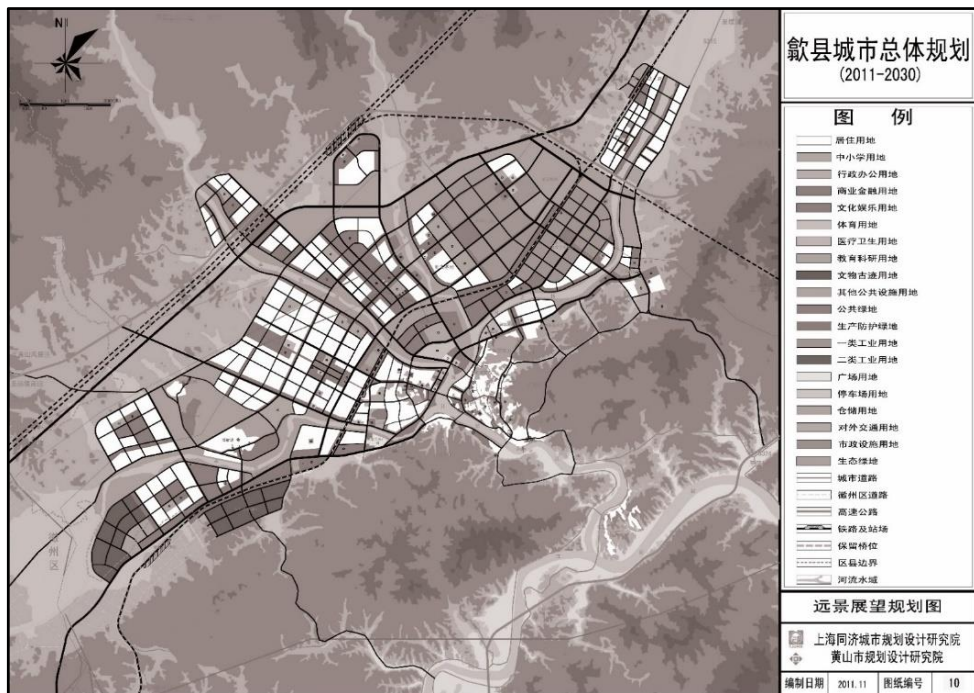
Figure 7.1. The prospect master plan of She county. The white blocks are all for residential districts (source: courtesy of the Construction Committee of She county).

Taking She county for example, its series of master plan in different periods clearly show that the production of living space has dominated the town expansion. The white blocks around its central area have been zoned as residential land (blocks) for gated communities in the land function plan, occupying the largest portion of planned area (Figure 7.1). Also, the google map of these areas in different years can better prove this

transformation, as many residential blocks have expanded from the central area to the peripheral land, encroaching on the settlements with traditional layouts (Figure 7.2).

Figure 7.2. The expansion of residential blocks of a town (source: Google Earth)

For the second expanding NRD, nearly every designated town has had this kind of non-gated communities. The google map can also clearly show a series of them as model rural communities scattering around Huizhou towns (Figure 7.26 in Sub-section 7.6.1).

These two changes have all created new space. The 'newness' not only means they are all newly constructed, but also implies that they share a similar modern appearance being new to the traditional environment yet rejecting a continuity with them. They both generally have a regulated and monotonous pattern in form, ranging from layout to details, due to their similar genealogies of formation, and a number of social and physical constructs have also contributed to their genealogies, such as the neighbourhood unit, the Soviet *mikrorayon* (micro district) (Grava, 1993; Hirt, 2012), the work unit, the People's Commune, the modern urban residential district model, and the ideals of modernity and efficiency.

Their form genealogies have all come from outside Huizhou, showing a 'form colonization' of the local built environment mainly by cities in terms of both the appearance and mechanism. As a consequence, not only spatial problems related to 'perceived space' in these NRD (Xu, 2009; Xu and Yuan, 2015) have been inherited from those in cities, but also the characters and wisdoms from local traditional built environment have been largely ruled out from the space and places within or between these districts (except for some symbolic forms like *matouqiang*) (Figure 7.3). The characters and wisdoms refer to the series of linked open area being small but lively, the street having appropriate containment and scale, and the holistic structure and layout being compact but integrated, which could all be found in every traditional Huizhou settlement.

Figure 7.3. Symbolic *matouqiang* on the roof of a regulated gated community in the town centre (source: Author).

Nevertheless, underlying these similar form results, the roles of stakeholders in the space production have differed from each other, yet they have been all conforming with and influenced by the ideas, strategies and reactions from the bigger causes of local

urbanization and rural development. The following discussion thus tries to explain these logics and their behaviours based on the analytical mode and field findings,[51] with an emphasis on the response of local people as the space receiver.

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[51] Field findings indicate to the data collected in various forms selected by the methodology (e.g., documents and texts, interviews, observations, second hand materials, personal experience). However, it is not possible to indicate the data origin for every piece of information presented in the following discussions as writing reference notes in the bottom of pages. Indeed, the explanation and narrative are based on comprehensive and integrated analyses of the 'field findings', which is a synthetic process for understanding and answering research questions. Many components of the discussions are hard to be individually related to a single form of data.

7.2 Top-down level — the role of local government power

Forming the government power, the three sub-logics driving the production of NRD have been relatively independent from each other, with economic considerations dominating the effort, political responsibilities acting as a supplement, and cultural constructions not emphasized.

7.2.1 Relying on an intrinsically limited 'Land Finance' —the economic considerations in a contradiction

The economic considerations have been mainly demonstrated by the rapid development of commercial gated communities, which is backed by nongovernment capital and promoted by the local governments' business mode of Land Finance.

Nationally, as mentioned before, the Land Finance mode has tended to become a path dependence for local governments to achieve economic development and has exposed its problems, but when this mode has been adopted by Huizhou, especially its towns, there have been much more complicated and challenging conditions. Not only intrinsic problems of this mode have been inherited, but also new fissures have grown evidently in the 'transplant' without sensibly considering the local context.

Whilst 'Land Finance' do have also formed one backbone of local economy (Figure 7.4), its contextual problems can be dissected into several aspects based on the findings from the field work,[52] all relating to intensifying the pressure of economic development

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[52] The 'field findings' here mainly indicate to data from interviews with relevant officials, yet data from interviews with developers, designers and residents have also helped the analyses, and data from observations and documents

imposed on the local governments. They are the contradiction caused by the geographic limitation, the irrational design and distribution of industry, and the rushed and unsophisticated process management.

Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
A	14656	16765	18518	20416	20016	21765	24128	27226	31150	48419	84641	85127	140819	167942	166879	199052	186517	190521	204270	247138	259551	295403	271878
B	610	633	2633	3393	2263	3669	4922	5704	6894	17480	41985	42854	83743	87235	63669	79653	54587	48070	44452	73922	63610	78748	45595
C	4.2%	3.8%	14.2%	16.6%	11.3%	16.9%	20.4%	21.0%	22.1%	36.1%	49.6%	50.3%	59.5%	51.9%	38.2%	40.0%	29.3%	25.2%	21.8%	29.9%	24.5%	26.7%	16.8%
D	0	0	1686	2448	965	1485	2588	2887	3285	13068	36844	35024	74200	67810	37056	54140	27646	24487	26926	53311	34499	50558	20975
E	610	633	947	945	1298	2184	2334	2817	3609	4412	5141	7830	9543	19425	26613	25513	26941	23583	17526	20611	29111	28190	24620

A = Revenue from real estate = Revenue from land leasing + Tax income from real estate (mainly the deed tax from the transaction)

B = Revenue from real estate   C = Proportion of the total revenue   D = Income from land leasing   E = Tax income from real estate

Figure 7.4. The revenue from real estate (mainly commercial gated communities) has accounted for a significant proportion of the total fiscal revenue of She county for twenty years (source: adapted from statistic data offered by the bureau of finance and the bureau of tax of She county).

7.2.1.1 The geographic limitation — an inherent and overarching contradiction

Huizhou is a very mountainous region, yet it is not a high-altitude area like the plateaus. Generally, the meaning of 'mountains' refers to multiple ranges of 'hills' stretching continuously in a very high density. *Ba shan yi shui yi fentian* (eight portions of hills,

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are also supportive.

one portion of waters and one portion of farmlands coming to make up the whole terrain) has long been a vivid local description of the natural landscape.[53]

From time immemorial to the present, the local people have long been struggling to reclaim land from the nature whilst the nature has continued to limit their constructing activities, resulting in a reality that most built-up areas have been compactly situated within the basins or along the valleys, enclosed by numerous hills. According to a geographical study (Yang, Zhu and Wang, 2019) that statistically relates the local built land to the regional topography, from 2007-2015, over 80% of the land transfer activities had happened at altitudes between 0 to 287 meters, only occupying the lowest two of the six pre-defined altitude ranges ($\leq$ 148m, 148~287m, 287~468m, 468~756m, 756~1500m,1500~1864m). [54] The geographic precondition has been exerting a fundamental influence on the local constructions. Historically, it helped Huizhou to form a long existing morphological continuity, but nowadays, when meeting with new socio-economic factors promoting development, the precondition instead has been an

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[53] This popular saying is also heard from interviews with local officials and residents.

[54] The satellite images of this region from Google Earth can also prove the terrain condition in a more visual sense (See Figure 7.5).

intrinsic reason for destroying this continuity.
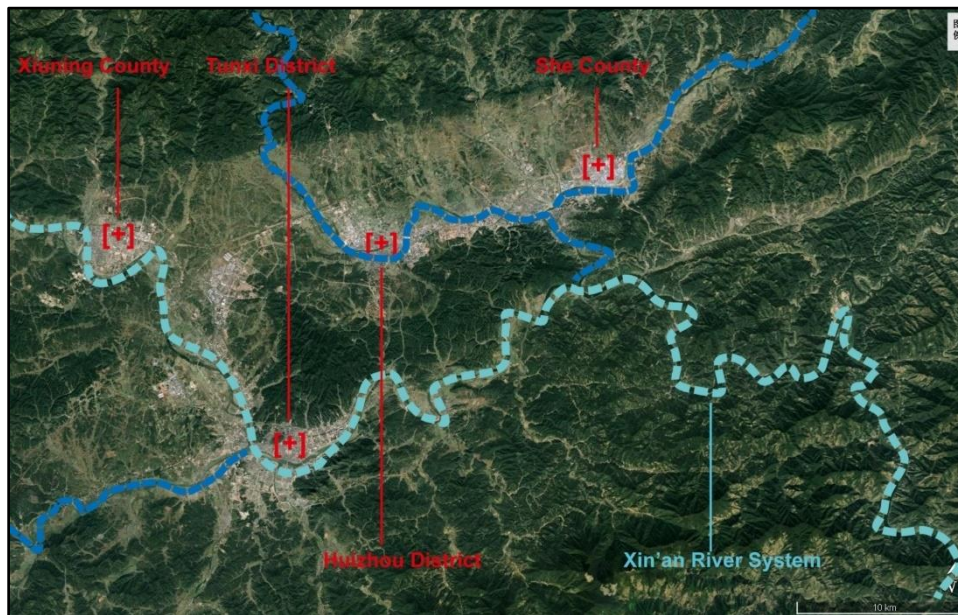
Figure 7.5. The terrain of the mountainous region and the locations of some counties having more even land (source: adapted from Google Earth Image).

The local government has directly adopted the Land Finance designed for cities as its major business mode, for which stated-owned urban construction land is the key. However, for Huizhou with an inherent shortage of land, this mode has caused a land scarcity. With this mode tending to become a path dependence, Huizhou has been very struggling to have adequate construction land to be leased for the income to subsidize and attract industries so as to raise the local GDP in a long-term plan, not to mention that a scale industrial zone (for manufacture) also costs considerable land too.[55] Among its three districts and four counties, only Xiuning, Tunxi, and Huizhou (Huizhou district) and part of She as a connected area situated in the Xiu-Tun basin and Xin'an river valley have relatively more even land (Figure 7.5). Other areas with more hills have been facing a more severe land scarcity. To take Qimen county at the West of Huizhou as an example, its new constructive land offered for 'Land Finance' has needed to be

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[55] According to the interviews with officials and residents involving the development of NRD.

squeezed out by digging hills, making the basic land cost very high in the market. Less land net income resulting in weaker industry, making Qimen the most backward area of Huizhou for years in the terms of economic development.[56]

Indeed, in a time when relevant regulations or laws were not so strict or perfect, this scarcity of land did have some grey exits through either secretly or openly encroaching on surrounding rural land (farmland or rural construction land carrying traditional settlements).[57] However, as the control of arable land started to be stricter from around 2006,[58] and more and more traditional settlements were nominated as cultural heritages in the local conservation effort, the land exit was shut down. The inadequate land lease income in the whole region has similarly resulted in less fiscal revenue based on industrial tax, and the situation was once worsened by the mountainous terrain again as it caused a latency in having modern transportations, which long obstructed industries from outside.[59] However, the judging criteria for local governments' performance have closely related to economic achievements, which keeps making Huizhou (Huangshan city) embarrassed in the provincial GDP ranking for years.[60]

As a consequence, in turn, the economic pressure on local governments has been very high, and being seized by both 'Land Finance' and geographical preconditions, the only solution has seemed to be introducing as more quality industries as possible based on what Huizhou has had. However, the greener, more advanced and efficient industries

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[56] This fact was mentioned by a local cadre involving the construction of NRD, and has also been a local common sense heard in the interviews.

[57] This fact was also mentioned by two local officials involving the construction of NRD.

[58] The 11th Five-year Plan (National People's Congress, 2006) first officially stated that at least 1.8 billion *mu* arable land should be protected in the development, as the bottom line.

[59] For example, there had been no motorway system connecting Huizhou until 2003, and the CRH (China Railway High-speed) reached there as late as 2015.

[60] For example, according to the statistic yearbooks of Anhui province, the GDP of Huangshan city has long been at the bottom since 2008.

would once not prefer Huizhou, so the low efficient ones with higher pollutions could still be the only good choice. This concession once just coincided with the need of neighbouring developed areas to weed out such inefficient industries in their industrial upgrading process, which for Huizhou is a typical process of undertaking the industrial transfer yet being accelerated by the local land precondition.

The pressure has strengthened local governments' determination to focus on developing industries, which has in turn promoted the land leasing and form growth within the limited boundary, with the production of commercial gated communities being a major result. Hence there has long existed a contradiction in the economic development, that is the local government tends to rely on the Land Finance mode depending on leasing state-owned construction land, within an area having a geographic precondition of lacking such a kind of land.

7.2.1.2 The once irrational industrial design and distribution — intensifying the pressure

The problems of industrial development have not only been caused by 'Land Finance' and the geographic precondition. Some internal reasons in the industrial development have also been liable, in a sense intensifying the economic pressure and hence impacting the space production. The reasons have lied in the industrial structure, the nurture of local industries and selection of outside ones, and the organization and distribution of them.

Based on a local official summary (Huangshan Bureau of Statistics, 2018), the local industrial development since 1978 could be understood in three phases. From 1978 to 2002, the tourist industry had been the key. After Deng Xiaoping's visit, the local tourism started to change from reception-centred to market-centred. Slogans as 'playing

out the Huangshan card', 'tourism being the key of Huangshan city' marked the main strategies in that period of time. From 2003 to 2012, the industrial structure had been changed. The secondary industries overtook tourism in driving economic development. In 2010, it accounted 43.8% of the local GDP as the largest portion. 'Big Huangshan, big [secondary] industry, big tourism' was the motto and 'tourism as the centre, [secondary] industry as the backbone' was the main strategy (Hu, 2010). From 2013 to present, 'tourism plus' as a reformed tourism have been promoted, aiming to surpass the outdated 'sightseeing' mode to reach an 'all-for-one' and 'experience-based' mode. Also, a 'supply side reform' has started to be emphasized, indicating an improved industrial structure that welcomes high value-added and greener industries, with their integrations with local tourism highlighted. More, regional cooperation crossing provincial borders has been promoted as well (Sun, 2020).

The logic underlying this trajectory has been clear and practical. Mere tourism could not offer sufficient fiscal revenue and make local people rich, so allowing manufacture-centred industries mainly transferred from developed areas to bridge the financial gap had been an essential solution when facing the aforementioned 'contradiction' in economic development. Now comes the reflection stage, which still emphasizes tourism, but seeks for other efficient and sustainable industries as substantial supporters of tourism to drive the economic development (People's Congress of Huangshan city, 2021; Wang, 2021).

Tourism has been a key role throughout the industrial development. As a green and sustainable industry, it could have been better developed. In the first phase, the sightseeing mode at major scenic spots had relied heavily on the sales of tickets for revenue (Wang and Li, 2018), and these scenic spots once concentrated around the Huangshan Mountain, preventing this mode from making other local areas rich. Although later many historical villages with cultural themes joined in the tourism, these

places were scattered and not well connected into chains and districts to form a scale tourism, with the sightseeing and ticket-selling mode remaining dominant (Sheng and Zhang, 2009).

In the second phase, the tourism and manufacture-centred industries were separated largely and even conflicted with each other. On the one hand, the pollution from secondary industries had to different extent annoyed tourists and damaged the reputation of local places. On the other hand, the awareness of environmental protection with insufficient scientific evidence hindered the growth of these industries as well. Even for the secondary industry alone, the planning and distribution were not rational and coordinated. For example, the once hectic campaigns of *zhaoshang yinzi* (introducing industries and attracting investment) prioritizing the scale and capacity over the quality[61] allowed chemical industry to became the pillar industry in both She county and Huizhou district, which situate next to each other. The problem was, although their zones of similar chemical factories also adjoined each other, the managements were totally separated following their administrations, resulting in separated chains of manufacture, separated systems of pollution treatment, and different regulations of control and inspection.[62] This was a waste of resources and money.

In the third phase, the 'tourism plus' now aims to upgrade tourism to a leading role to bring a shared development for the whole region, with relevant industrial chains, local communities, public services, supporting infrastructure, and ecological environment all

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[61] This can be seen from a series of local government documents around 2009, showing a strong mindset of introducing industries and investment. See, for example, *Decisions of She County Party Committee and Government on Having Industries Strengthening the County* (She County Party Committee and Government, 2008a), *The Implementation Plan of She County's 'Hundred Days Great Battle' for Introducing Industries and Attracting Investment* (She County Party Committee and Government, 2008b), and *The Implementation Plan of the Event of 'The Year of Promoting Project Construction'* (She County Party Committee and Government, 2009).

[62] According to the interviews with a local official and a NRD developer involved.

integrated to a coordinated developing process (Sheng, 2018a; Wang, 2021). For example, together with the Rural Revitalization, it will push tourism further into more villages in this region and promote a variety of related industries such as food production, souvenir crafting, rural homestay and agritainment, revitalizing the idle traditional properties. However, as the strategy is in the initial stage, the regional effects are yet to be seen with some problems being hard to solve. The tourism-centred real estate projects, as an example, have concentrated on scenic areas with a speculative fever (Wu and Li, 2015), yet lacking necessary living facilities and threatening the rural land and traditional settlements. More, Places like Huangshan Mountain and Hongcun village are still local 'tourist unicorns' (Fan, 2012; Jin, 2019), being too big to be divided to form an industrial balance, and the separated local governments tend to lease scenic spots within their territorial jurisdictions to individual investors who usually lack a coordinated vision, intensifying the 'ticket-selling' mode and blind competition (Sheng, 2018b).

The proposed improvement of industrial structure seems promising (Sun, 2020; Huangshan Bureau of Statistics, 2018). New tertiary industries related to health have joined the tourism upgrading, such as medical treatment, elder care and health recovery. The secondary industries are also being upgraded, with green food, automotive electronics, green soft package and fine chemistry engineering forming the main categories of manufacture. Internet economy has been promoted as well, such as live broadcasting selling local products as a new type of retail (ibid.). A recent strategy of *ronghang* (being integrated to Hangzhou) is especially inspiring, which calls for learning from adjacent Hangzhou, introducing quality industries from there, creating cooperation and competitions, and achieving mutually beneficial goals. Digital, IT and R&D industries from Hangzhou are seen as potential opportunities (Huangshan Daily, 2019; Chen, 2019). Nevertheless, they are still largely in blueprints and yet to affect the economic development and the current status of the form transformation. The question

now is, how these new industries, together with the improving tourism will influence the form transformation through the top-down economic logics in the future.

7.2.1.3 The management — the only steerable choice at two extremes[63]

Under the Land Finance mode driving the production of commercial gated communities, the local government applying a good process management could help to relieve some problems in the form change. Nevertheless, the management has turned out to be not satisfying, and greatly impacted by the economic pressure.

The management problems have mainly existed in the beginning or pre-construction stages of commercial gated communities, whilst on the contrary, the management has been more sophisticated after their completion, as issues like property transaction, right confirmation, facility management, community governance have been systematically managed by relevant departments.

The pre-construction stages of these gated communities have seen more uncertainties, especially in towns of Huizhou. This stage has left rooms for local authorities to operate the land leasing prices, being the key to them under the economic pressure, and the lack of a leading department to organize this early process has allowed many other related departments to impose their influences. These together have resulted in an unsystematic and unintegrated management towards this contextual space production. Captured by the price-centred logics, the management efforts have easily gone to two extremes, exerting either too little intervention or too much intervention, to different projects or to different phases in one project. Obviously, the insufficient intervention has been common in 'less-economic' processes, whilst the excessive intervention can be found

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[63] The explanations and narratives in this sub-section are mainly based on the interviews with relevant officials involving the development of NRD.

in situations closely related to land pricing and leasing.

On the one hand, the 'less-economic' issues before or after land pricing and leasing have been usually downgraded. For example, once in the hectic land-transfer processes, some local governments even allowed unprepared land to be leased to developers, which was raw, with unclarified attribute in regulation and unsettled disputes in expropriation and compensation. The ill-considered permission had later caused many troubles. In cities, however the land on market should be attribute-clear, dispute-free, and *santong yiping* (the land being even, with water and electricity supply and systematic road net). Also, the quality of space and the experience of local people have been largely overlooked in the stressful process, and the entry requirements for developers have not been carefully reviewed, letting many unprofessional ones rushing into the towns, resulting in unawareness or stealthy violation of relevant regulations, such as required building distance and ratio, green land areas, and parking lot numbers. A typical case is the short-sighted development of a residential district named 'M town' started from 2008 (see Sub-section 7.5.2). With no piped gas and enough parking lot built initially, the whole district now needs to face a complicated reconstruction and upgrading process causing great inconvenience and danger.

On the other hand, some local authorities have intervened too much into issues relating to land price, even to an extent of violating planning regulations and overriding market rules in some extreme situations. The land location, usually, has been the key to them as a better location with better public service would define a higher leasing price. Also, the land boundary, the area and density, the plot ratio and building distance, which influence the land leasing income have all been controlled. Nevertheless, under the nominal 'control', these issues have been sometimes negotiable and changeable during the discussion and trade-off between local governments and developers, in order to achieve a satisfying transfer price. In this way, the economic pressure has found another

expedient yet grey exit through influencing the form growth by disobeying planning requirements with the excuse of 'planning change'. The rule-breaking has been purposive and often random, being opposite to the planning control proposed in a time range. The power could change land divisions and quotas fixed in planning documents, such as moving the planned location of a specific project land to another place they think can help the land to obtain a higher price, or just making a specific urban district flourishing to raise the land price by discriminately moving some important public facilities to there.

These abrupt changes could sometimes work efficiently. For example, the relocation of Tunxi No.1 High School (a provincial level key school) to the new district of Huangshan city has been proven to be a decision with its merits outweighing demerits in terms of development, as it has been effective to attract many real estate projects there, bringing prosperity to the district, although in the beginning it was controversial as the teachers and students thought the new place was too far.[64]

However, sometimes the changes would be risky. In one case, the site of a proposed bus station of a county was suddenly moved to the east part of this county being near to its industrial zone having chemical factories, resulting in the failure of a residential and commercial development already under construction adjacent to this proposed station.[65] This movement was speculated as a rescue plan to save some other commercial residential projects adjacent to the industrial zone that was dying due to the fear of pollution.

These two extreme interventions into managing space production for growth have been essentially caused by the fact that the local government is both the participant and

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[64] This is a fact mentioned by the interviewees from residents and officials.

[65] This is related to Mr.Z's case in the end of Section 7.3.

organizer in the Land Finance mode due to its monopoly of the primary land market. Nevertheless, sometimes the influences from the ambitious wills of local top leaders during the economic calculations have been fairly strong, as their personal promotion was once determined by the performance of local GDP growth (Chen and Thwaites, 2013, pp.156-157). This has been a problem from the 'meritocracy' mode of Chinese institution (Bell, 2015, pp.112-120), which would potentially contribute to the individual and random judgements causing local planning changes. However, this deficiency has been the target of a continuous institutional reform from central level to local level, yet it seems harder to be overcome in small towns that holds a smaller political ecosystem with closer interpersonal relationships.[66]

The contradiction in local economic development has been after all caused by the objective geographical precondition, but subjective reasons intensifying the economic pressure could have been relieved. More, when some unsatisfying form results have been made in the limited geographical boundary, there would be little room to make corrections. A bigger city can have two or more bus stations to promote the land leasing but a town cannot, and a bigger city can create many themes in different districts to raise the land price but a town cannot.

7.2.2 Offering a direct compensation of living space — the political responsibilities in a localized convention

Besides the economic logic having driven the growing production of space through promoting commercial gated communities, there has been another important reason for the local power to push this expanding trend, which is a political responsibility marked by the supply of indemnificatory housing as public gated communities within or around

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[66] See a detailed discussion of the social relationship in rural areas from Fei, 1992.

county central towns, and as new non-gated communities on the periphery of towns. However, the following discussion on the political logic of power focuses on the former as the latter is specially discussed at the end of this chapter because its power logics and context are fairly different to those of the former.

For the local government, admittedly, pushing the economic growth seems to be the biggest responsibility, but the efforts often would not immediately benefit all the people. For example, 'Land Finance' does greatly support local industries, but meanwhile the growing housing price does impede some people living in towns from having a decent living space, as they cannot afford commercial residences. Hence the indemnificatory housing has been a timely complement to the commercial housing, for meeting the urgent demand from these people such as vulnerable groups with low incomes, villagers relocated to towns with their houses demolished, and new migrant workers arriving in towns with unstable incomes. This effort has showed a typical responsibility in the socialist market economy with the government never receding too much, and this political hand has actually been coordinated with the economic hand to serve the bigger goal of local urbanization conforming with the New-Type Urbanization, which concentrates people in and around towns and supplies them residences in the form of selling or allocating.

The main mode of indemnificatory housing in Huizhou towns has not been dissimilar to that in cities. It is formed by four kinds of housing in general: economically affordable housing, being much cheaper than commercial ones, but still following market rules with full property rights offered to those buyers; public rental housing, being rented rather than purchased, at a cheap price yet with the tenant potentially entitled to buy the full property rights under certain conditions; low-rent housing, being similar to public rental housing yet with a much cheaper rent, and often being specifically offered to those with local *hukou* (registered permanent residence);

resettlement housing, being compensated to those relocated from their original houses demolished in town expansion, with the property rights held in diverse conditions. At cheaper prices these residences have had economical housing types and limited area, and they have been invested or subsidized by local governments, with the land mostly administratively transferred rather than commercially leased. They have been built concentratedly in one plot, or sometimes spread in commercial gated communities following certain percentages (Zhao et al., 2012). Currently the investment structure has become more hybrid, with private capital joining in, forming PPP (public-private partnership) mode or solely private proprietorship mode (Ministry of Finance, 2015). The latest trend is that local governments buy apartments to supply indemnificatory housing from commercial gated communities now facing an oversupply, as a mean of 'destocking' (Cui et al., 2016) and the public rental housing has now been promoted as a major kind of indemnificatory housing (MOHURD et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, during the implementation of such a political responsibility in these central towns there have been some particular issues compared to those in cities, due to the spatial and managerial conditions. In cities, as a rigid and urgent livelihood project, these compensatory housing projects have been strictly planned as a political mission, with certain construction index assigned from top levels, resulting in rapid yet short-sighted planning work without comprehensive and accurate data supports concerning on-site conditions (Zhao et al., 2012). This together with a strong market force in 'Land Finance' have caused a prevalent 'location' problem,[67] as these projects tend to be concentratedly arranged in remote or peripheral areas of cities with sufficient supporting facilities not following up on time, bringing great inconveniences to the space receivers (Yang, Zhang and Wang, 2009). The aforementioned mixed habitation could be a solution, but conflicts between different groups would still be a problem,

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[67] The state-owned urban construction land for indemnificatory housing has been politically allocated rather than been commercially leased.

with the relevant management mechanisms yet to be effectively established (Zhao et al., 2012). However, these problems have not been obvious in Huizhou towns that have also undertaken considerable number of such 'political tasks'. Due to these towns having relatively smaller built-up area, distances between such housing projects and related facilities have been always close. Take Yansi town for example, the two major compensatory projects are all within 2 km from the town centre, with a similar 'location' to that of another major best-sold commercial project. A report from Huangshan Daily (2010) has described one such project:

> The indemnificatory housing of 'Fengle Home' will build 50 low-rent houses, 50 economically affordable houses, and 200 public rental houses. For guaranteeing the convenience of low-income groups, the district government has had special inclinations in offering the land, with 88 *mu* land around the central area arranged for them, which only takes 5 minutes driving to the school and hospital...this is a special consideration for the poor family...with good location, and developed living areas left for them...

It seems that it is the town's smaller built-up are that has allowed this 'inclination' to happen. The people thus have been naturally in a mixed habitation with those buying homes as the two kinds of project have been essentially mixed within a bigger residential area in a town, which is interwoven with other supporting functions. Also, this mix has been further consolidated by a more unified identity nurtured by a similar village-related backgrounds (discussed in Sub-section 7.5.3). This, however, may cause a free-riding problem as some of them have not paid equal money for enjoying a similar public service, yet this problem has not been evident though, as there has been no property tax required from the commercial residence owners (Zhao, 2009, pp.129-131, pp.275-281), and a higher tolerance exists between them for the shared identity (see Sub-section 7.5.3). However, the management of these projects has been more

problematic than that in cities, being evident in the admission and quit of qualification for having compensatory homes, due to the latencies and deficiencies in design and implementation of relevant methods and regulations. For example (Huangshan Auditing Bureau, 2013), the legal support has been not sound locally; the information sharing system has been separated between departments, and not open enough for the public; the verification and audit system has also been inadequate. As a consequence, some public gated communities were not fully occupied, whilst others were in a short supply. Also, in early years there were controversial or illegal cases in the applying process with vague admission criteria. For quitting the qualification, it has been also harder for the regulators to reclaim property rights from those occupiers as their awareness of legal issues has been very weak. [68] In addition, after years of implementation, the local top comprehension of indemnificatory housing policies, seen from a more strategic standpoint, has been still conventional. It is reasonable to keep looking after vulnerable people, but when other towns in developed areas have started to use relevant policies as strategies to attract high-level talents, and thus gradually raised the design quality of these living spaces (exemplified by those Hangzhou towns' efforts to incorporate the 'talent housing' into the indemnificatory housing system) (Hangzhou Municipal Party Committee and Government, 2014), Huizhou seems to stop at the basic level of such missions, still dealing with allocating the limited living space for poor, migrant, and rural people,[69] rather than simultaneously upgrading the space based on the beautiful local environment to seek for talents from outside, as a mean to support its industrial transformation.

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[68] According to the interview with a local cadre involving local indemnificatory housing.

[69] This can be read from many relevant reports from local government discourses on Huangshan Daily (e.g., 2015, 2016a, 2016b).

7.2.3 Maintaining and promoting Hui style — the shallow cultural construction

Compared to the economic and political logics, the cultural logic has not been a direct driving forces for this space production. For the local government, it seems to be a cultural responsibility or burden, or sometimes to be measures supporting the promotion of local places. Nevertheless, it has not been well addressed, as the local culture and related tradition, character and identity borne by the growing living space have still been understood and expressed through superficial symbols, and generally narrated by local top minds as the Hui style, with related definitions, regulations, and implementations not being explicit and integrated. This can be demonstrated by four key official documents discussed below.

The *Master Plan of Huangshan City (2008-2030)* (Huangshan Municipal Government, 2008) is the overarching guide of local development. The *article 21: the strategies to highlight the identity* summaries the Huangshan (Huizhou) identity as "the place of famous mountain and beautiful water, the origin of Huizhou culture, the location of pleasant living, and the city of international tourism."(ibid., pp.12-13) Specifically, it defines the feature of 'city form' as "city in the mountain and water — the city grows among the natural environment; mountain and water in the city — a harmonious figure-ground relation made by the construction patches and the landscape background"(ibid.) and the character of local building form is understood as "the continuation and innovation of traditional Hui-style architecture with white wall and black tiles."(ibid.) More cultural and traditional concern can be found in *chapter 7: the conservation plan of natural resources and historical & cultural heritages*, but it only focuses on things from history defined in five layers: world historical and cultural heritages; historical and cultural cities, towns and villages; historical and cultural streets and blocks; cultural relics and sites; and intangible cultural heritage. The newer and larger part of space —

residential living space has not been included. However, the master plan does mention living space in *article 88: the residential development and land layout in central areas*, but within it the residential system, its quality, total and per capita area, land layout are key issues; the consideration on its cultural and traditional factors are neglected.

The *Technical Regulations of Huangshan Central City Area on Urban Planning Administration (in trial)* (Huangshan Municipal Government, 2008) is a local compulsory document, offering detailed requirements for urban planning and architectural design. Nevertheless, it seems to be a purely technical controller aiming at central areas of Huangshan city, mainly focusing on the land classification, ratios, setbacks, redlines, building distances and heights by offering tables, indexes and diagrams. The only culture/identity-related issue is stated in *article 54*, as the only discursive content in this technical file:

> The new building should follow the 'Temporary Regulations of Huangshan City on Managing and Protecting the Hui style in Architecture', presenting the city features and local Hui architectural characters as 'delicate, elegant, ecological, with Hui aura'. The colour needs to be based on white or grey, with bright ones like red, yellow, blue, green prohibited.

The *Temporary Regulations of Huangshan City on Managing and Protecting the Hui style in Architecture* (Huangshan Municipal Government, 2006) is an instructive regulation to keep the Hui style in the built environment. It defines Hui style in architecture as "the feature being in harmony with the natural environment, with major outside form made by 'white wall and black tiles and *matouqiang*', having a principal colour set of grey, white, black and symbolic system of *matouqiang* and sloping roof." A style control zoning system is adopted, dividing the whole territorial area into 3 parts: zone 1 as the core mainly including historical and cultural heritages defined in the master plan, which is in strictest control with construction activities limited; zone 2

including the old city districts outside these heritages and those areas in sight, as the city portal areas and villages along main traffic lines, with all buildings controlled by the Hui style; zone 3 holding the city new districts, industrial zones and other towns and villages, with a more moderate style control.

The *Spatial Characteristics Plan for Central City Area of Huangshan* (Huangshan Urban and Rural Planning Bureau, 2017) seems to be an updating of the above one. With a similar recognition of Hui style, it adds a new concept of 'innovative Hui style' that does not have to include the actual symbols but embraces a vaguer term of Hui aura. It has developed the 3 controlling parts into 5 zones, with industrial (manufactural) zones moved to zone 4 and portal areas moved to zone 5. Particularly it stresses the residential area in zone 2, as being the background of Hui style in the city, which needs to "have more Hui-style elements, symbols, forms, and traditional mass."

The former two documents are more controlling, with the master plan being statutory, but they have less cultural concern. The latter two focusing on style and feature are not statutory, yet unintegrated, impractical and too descriptive. Most importantly, none of them have offered a practical design guide to control the Hui style more than just description, or required any design agency to do the job. The residential space as a vast background has naturally not been their key concern in terms of cultural logic. In addition, in a broader level, there has been no integrated urban design consideration for the whole area of Huizhou that may have cultural logics better presented in physical form.

The cultural logic mainly has two problems. First, it has been divided. Being a theoretically rational measure, the zoning controls have in fact cut the built environment into pieces, with the cultural identity borne by them not integrally organized. For example, the cultural construction efforts have been heavily attracted to and seemingly

fulfilled in the core zones where do have relevant objectives, but it has not been treated in a similar way in other zones, especially in the growing residential districts. The cultural responsibilities have thus tended to be divided into different missions in an order of priority. Worse, the effectiveness of such zoning measures is questionable too, due to that they have had non-statutory status, allowing discretionary powers to judge and affect the form regarding cultural issues.

Second, despite the fourth regulation seeing the significance of residential space in sustaining the local identity, there has still been a problem: the expressions are cosmetic, relating the Hui style to merely symbolic forms; other elements that may better present the identity have not been picked up, such as the space-related cultural expressions (placing-marking and public-realm-creating) and many more dynamic intangible features. To say the least, the stylistic symbols themselves have not been well managed as the related criteria are not clear in the discursive text-descriptions. The 'innovative Hui style' seems even more inexplicit, which may result in more discretionary choices in less-essential zones.

Figure 7.6. The street in the red is Yansi Old Street, which is treated as a heritage and should be put in zone 1. However, the real estate project (including a commercial gated community made up by some high-rise buildings) on the other side of the road has a much larger scale regarding form and space (source: Author).

Without integrated urban design considerations from top down, the in-between and transitional spaces have been isolated by dominant planning mindsets and separated from cultural implications, exemplified by the huge scale difference between the form and space along each side of the style zoning boundary dividing zone 1 and other zones (e.g., zone 2 and zone 3 are sometimes controlled by DDCP and 'Land Finance') (Figure 7.6). How can these in-between space together with their interfaces, especially those between NRD (e.g., roads, streets, lanes, entrance squares, corners, facades and walls) learn from those of traditional Huizhou settlements has not been included by the cultural construction efforts at all. Similar problem has also happened in space inside the NRD with commonly monotonous layouts, where better design of spatial characters could have been encouraged.

Nevertheless, actually, for the government, it seems easier for them to control the

rhetoric of cultural logic in these more unified space production at larger scales, compared to control that in such a production in inventory, which is discussed in the second case.

7.3 Top-down level — the inexperienced capital

The capital[70] (represented by developer) has had a simpler and more direct motivation to drive the space production for growth, mainly through promoting commercial gated communities. It is to earn more profit from this process within the socialist market economy, as entering the special 'second circuit'. It has been welcomed by local governments to buy the use right of state-owned construction land and to fund the NRD on it, but it has concentrated around Huangshan city centre and within other county central towns rather than the normal towns, and has yet to fully reach those non-gated communities in the rural areas (discussed in Sub-section 7.6.4).

In these areas, the developers have largely come from private backgrounds, with few of them controlled by state-owned enterprise, for example the Huangshan Tourism Group that is 100% held by SASAC (State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission). However, generally, the developers have been all at relatively lower levels. According to a recent summary made by Huangshan Daily (2019), since 1998 when the housing reform started, the number of real estate enterprises registered locally has grown rapidly, from less than 20 to more than 300 in 2018. In 2019, it reached 372. Nevertheless, 354 of them only hold a qualification of class 3 or class 4 (lowest), and other 18 of them are class 2, with none being the first class. The most professional and prestigious ones such as Vanke, Greentown, Longfor have not directly operated projects there, except for few of them (Country Garden and Greenland) only setting local branches for one or two projects around city centre, yet these branches are still not in class 1. It has actually been a result of a two-way selection. There has been a popular saying that the Huangshan municipal government tried to

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[70] For the purpose of not causing complication, this thesis treats investor, developer, operator (in the second case study) as the same role, all representing the interest of capital (earning profit). Also, as the scales of commercial gated projects and other scattered projects (in the second case study) in Huizhou are usually not big, the investor, developer or even operator have been in fact often the same individual or group.

introduce in Wanda Group, a famous developer and runner of commercial complexes that have expanded nationally. Their shopping malls with residential buildings have been built in almost every city of Anhui province, but except Huangshan city. The agreement seems yet to be made. One guess is that Wanda has been not satisfied with conditions and offers given by the city in an overall consideration of profit, and another guess is that the two sides still have not had a consensus on the developing mode, such as the proportion between residences and shops. The scarcity of advanced commercial and residential complex has caused dissatisfaction among citizens.[71]

The county central towns or normal towns can only gather more lower-level developers like ones at class 3 and class 4. Many of them have had less funds and shorter professional experience in developing real estate projects. For example, many switched from other roles such as local manufactures. It was because the profit had been higher, quicker and easier with a threshold lower compared to that in cities during the local Land Finance mode once heavily promoted, as a local developer recalled that:[72]

> Around 2010, the hottest time of developing commercial gated community here, the land was around 500000 *yuan* per *mu* [666.67 m^2], and the total unit cost of the development was around 2000 *yuan* per square meter, whilst the unit selling price of the apartment was around 2500 *yuan* per square meter. The profit margin was very high [20%]. Basically, if you had a land, you would for sure profit, and now although there are more competitors and stricter regulations, the profit is good as the price is still growing.

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[71] See an online message for the leaders of Huangshan city and the response at: http://liuyan.people.com.cn/threads/content?tid=9340045.

[72] Interview by the author, on 01/08/2019.

Figure 7.7. The relatively smaller-scale gated communities fragmenting the form of She county and encroaching on the remaining traditional form, many of which are commercial gated community projects run by the lower-level developers (source: adapted from Google Earth Image).

To take She county for example, currently, there are 23 projects of commercial gated community for sale. The developers behind them have had very diverse backgrounds. 16 of them were not professional developers and transferred from other industries and occupations, like running transport company, textile factory and cement plant, selling household appliances and chemical materials, and even working in government departments.[73] With limited funds, most of them run only one project each, with single function of residence (mainly apartment) surrounded by some peripheral shops, which is hard to be called mixed-use and has divided the landscape whilst complicating the management. These projects are in a sense like fragmented appropriations of the traditional form continuity remaining in existing settlements (Figure 7.7).

The lack of experience has caused many other unsustainable problems that would eventually affect profit and form results. For example, the unfamiliarity with relevant

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[73] According to the real estate information website of 'Huangshan Leju' (https://huangshan.leju.com/) and the information provided by the bureau of tax of She county.

requirements has placed hidden legal troubles, especially in acquiring lands, and the irrational settings of house types has directly affected the sale, which has also been exacerbated by the indifference to design. When these meet aforementioned external errors from top-down management, the risk of failure would be higher and the consequence would be harder to overcome with their limited funds and experiences.

Mr. Z is the developer of the station-related project mentioned earlier (in 7.2.1.3). Besides having been influenced by the managerial and planning uncertainties, he has learned lessons due to their own deficiencies, as he mentioned:[74]

> I shut down my factory to fund the project around 2006 when the real estate in Huizhou started to boom, but except for the fatal planning changes, I have made two critical mistakes by myself. One was I accepted the raw land leased by the government then, which is prohibited now. The issue was not only the 213 *mu* land had zero infrastructure, but also it was not dispute-free as the demolition and resettlement work had not been finished, bringing me big headaches as the time and cost was huge. This greatly slowed the development speed, with the annual loan interest of 10 million *yuan* kept like a huge burden. Also, although the government has compensated me by allowing me to transfer the attribute of adjacent land for bus station into residential use as well, the resettlement issues was still hard to solve as up to now some people still live there. If it was in my home city Hangzhou, this kind of land would not be allowed into market.

He continued to recall that:

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[74] Interview by the author, on 01/08/2019. All the interview with this interviewee happened on this day.

The Second was about my products. Besides conventional apartments, I added large detached houses and a single-room apartment building, which was popular in Hangzhou. However, I did not know these unmarried young ones were all outside Huizhou, with no one wanting those single rooms, and for the houses as big as 400 m^2, they were too big and expensive for the locals' small-scale family and limited income, as only the furnishing and decoration cost of one house would probably reach 2 million *yuan*. Later I had had to sell the single-room apartment to a hotel brand to bridge the financial gap, and many of these houses are remain unsold. Now I know the advice from local sales team is very important.

When asked about design, he said that the architect was actually his relative, who was also a novice then, copying the housing types from somewhere else. Mr. Z further mentioned his excitement and satisfactory when seeing the design in a sense of self-mockery, as the scheme had big houses in the middle with a low density and several tall and fashionable buildings (including the single-room apartment) standing against the big roundabout, which would be, in his own words, "a landmark definitely leading the local trend." With the follow-up residential land admitted by the government, he has survived, but he did not know how much he can earn at last.

Mr. Z's case has been special yet typical. Indeed, many developers in Huizhou towns, to different extent, have experienced similar difficulties due to the internal or external reasons. In this special context, some have easily succeeded in the speculations but some have unwittingly failed in the complexities and contingencies. Their fragmented operations on the land pieces, backing by various experiences and capabilities, and attitudes to design, have covered the form transformation with another layer of uncertainty and irrationality.

7.4 Middle level — the indifferent designers

As concluded in Chapter 5, designers[75] in this space production for growth has been confined by regulatory procedures and limitations imposed, but they have seemed to be contented with the situation or to some extent detached from the context, with little independent reflections on the form changes they have contributed to. Relevant design work in Huizhou towns has closely followed top-down logics as instruments, busily yet passively responding to the demands from governments and developers. In the mode of 'planning for growth', planners arrange living blocks to spatially answer local urbanization plans made by political decisions, with architects following them to ground these plans by designing physical residential building units in blocks, backed by economic calculations. Designers at this level have been very practical, with meanings deeper than design fees not being further interrogated, such as what design can do for the local people and lived space, and design significance towards broader changes done through form — a lack of recognition and appreciation of their own efforts. This has been very different from those dealing with smaller and more individual non-NRD projects in this region, who usually compose various responsibilities before real constructions as showed in Chapter 8.

Indeed, in terms of responsibility, in these big-scale changes of living space across cities and towns, the sense of mission was once very strong in the movement of People's Commune and the construction of work unit, as designer believed they were capable to change the society, representing a mentality of 'high modernism' (Scoot, 1998, p.90 cited in Lu, 2006, p.103). Interestingly, in the market economy, the mentality has greatly declined and seemed to only exist in theoretical debates, which mainly focuses on cities. For example, for cities, the reflection has been marked by a modified national

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[75] This section talks about designers of NRD in towns, as they face different conditions whilst dealing with non-gated communities, as discussed in Section 7.6.

regulation aiming at building a set of 'community life circles' defined by people's walking times (5 min, 10 min, 15 min) (Yu, 2019). This stresses people's demands in everyday life rather than planning quotas, as a turn to be socially responsive, through breaking land separation caused by conventional classifications to allow more flexibilities in arranging supporting facilities. This also indicates an effort to achieve a more integrated and optimal allocation of public resources (ibid.). However, it has yet to be widely realized in NRD in big cities, let along in towns, where the influence of conventional planning thoughts on living space (e.g., 'criteria' and 'quotas') is still strong, such as the three levels set by the previous *Code of Urban Residential Areas Planning & Design* (State Bureau of Quality and Technical Supervision and Ministry of Construction, 1993): residential area, residential quarter, residential group. Within them the residential group has been the most common level built in towns, holding a population of 1000-3000, with the land area for its supporting facilities defined in a range from 488 m^2 to 1058 m^2 per 1000 people.

The problems from power and capital have all challenged the design work in towns. For example, the contingencies caused by ill management and governance have broken design consistency, whilst the lower investment and stronger speculative motives have inevitably lowered design fees, undermining designers' enthusiasm and triggering vicious design competitions. A less sophisticated design market would only attract design teams at lower professional levels. In many circumstances, the designers are developers' friends, like Mr. Z's situation, or introduced through their networks of social relation, or closely related to local departments (Wu, 2015, pp.70-71). Generally, a detailed 'smooth' process of designing a NRD in Huizhou towns starts from the master plan, guiding the DDCP of one specific plot or several plots for a residential group. The DDCP lists a set of controlling indexes (e.g., plot ratio, building height, redlines, green land ratio). With these requirements the land is leased to proper developers. After the land planning permission and land certificate being granted, the

architects are sought to organize buildings in the plot with relevant housing types offered in a schematic design, which later is reported to the planning department for permission and is put on records. After that the 'design development' and 'construction documents design' are conducted before real construction, but often, these three design phases have been made by different designers. For example, the schematic design has been more likely taken by designers from bigger cities like Shanghai, Hangzhou or Hefei, who may only come to the real site for twice: at the beginning of the schematic design and before the commence of design development. The latter two phases have been usually carried out by other design teams like local design institutes with government backgrounds (e.g., Architectural Design Institute of Huangshan City Co., Ltd). In early years, often this orderly process tended to be disturbed by developers for shortening the developing time, through starting the real construction secretly and illegally before the completion of the last design phases.[76] The procedure has been long fixed, and without an integrated urban design consideration promoted from top down, the architects' horizons have tended to be delimited by the land boundaries of different NRD, seeing plots as just plots, not considering the spatial relationships in-between.

Even within a town NRD, the architectural methods have been also in a fixed mode. Housing types are picked from product libraries or other designs, and inserted into building units with different heights, length and width, which are regularly grouped into an 'economically optimal' site plan conforming to the land conditions. These buildings largely face to the south, keeping certain distances with each other. Many rules are controlling. Up level plans (master plan and DDCP) are overarching, and technical regulations like fire prevention codes, sunshine distance, setback distance are also decisive.[77] These have to be balanced with ratio and density as the key for the profit.[78]

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[76] According to the interviews with designers having relevant experience.

[77] Also, according to the interviews with designers having relevant experience.

[78] In indemnificatory housing projects, relevant indexes are assigned by governments.

The inside spatial quality is often perfunctorily dealt with, exemplified by a design report of a NRD project in Yansi town (Shanghai Jinwei Architectural Design & Planning Institute Co., Ltd, 2017). Its design specification has 14 chapters, yet most of which are technical explanations towards architecture, structure, electricity, ventilation, etc. In *Chapter 4: architectural design*, the content only describes various housing types with supporting index, with zero concern of space (place making). The closest concern on spatial quality could only exist in 4 conceptual pages from more than 250 pages of this report, in which the designers allege the whole design originated from Norberg-Schulz's 'sense of place' and the *feng-shui* wisdom, but have not explained how will they realize these concepts in space. For local character and form, there is, however, one sentence mentioning that "the facade of residences and shops will adopt neo-traditional style, with architecture learning from the quintessence and cultural connotation of classic Hui-style building, by using modern techniques and symbols...." (ibid., Section 4 of Chapter 3 in the design specification) Indeed, it seems the only agency to respond the local identity in NRD design is the building form — a similar recognition to that of cultural logic of power.[79] Even the building form in their operations has been largely fixed and copied too, and interestingly it has seen a kind of 'reversed copy' regarding the Hui style. For example, the form of the clubhouse in one NRD of Yansi town obviously transplanted the design language of The Fifth Garden (Figure 7.8), a famous residential project in Shenzhen developed by Vanke Group 15 years ago, which has been widely praised in design circles for its innovation in the architectural form that was alleged to be inspired by historical Huizhou dwellings (Wang, 2008). Ironically, the architects now have been indifferently copying back what the context had exported.

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[79] There even exists a standard atlas made by Tsinghua University for guiding residential design in Huizhou (05SJ918-1). However, the effectiveness is weak, due to it being not compulsory but suggestive, with the designers not usually referring to it.

Figure 7.8. The left two are images of The Fifth Garden; the right one is an image of the clubhouse of the NRD mentioned above (source: left two are from Wang and Zhu, 2005, p.118; the right one is from the Author).
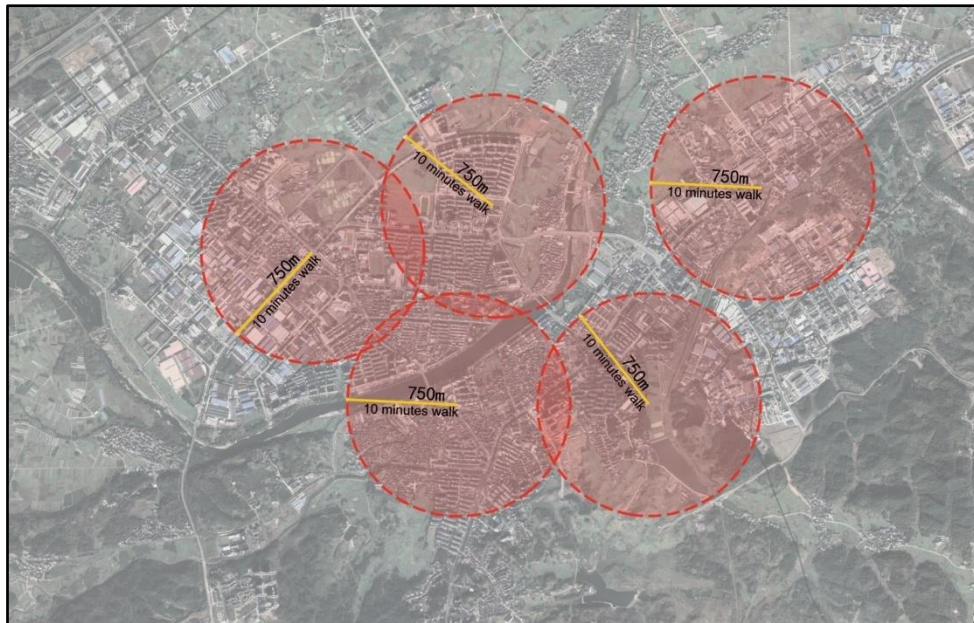
Figure 7.9. Five life circles of '10 minutes' walk' covering the central area of a town (source: adapted from Google Earth Image).

In addition, in terms of 'community life circles', there has had less problems as the towns are small and relatively compact, as mentioned earlier. NRD have been all built at the level of residential group, with the distances between them only ranging from 1-3 km. This means these NRD within a county central town can be usually covered by

4-5 life circles of '10 minutes' walk', with each circle covering a walking distance up to 750m according to the regulation. 4-5 of such a life circle could also easily cover the central area of a town, having plenty of supporting facilities and mixed functions (Figure 7.9).

Rather than connecting conceived space and perceived space in spatial practice, designers in this case have directly and instrumentally dealt with the spatial practice, at the tail of the process that conceives space. Their priorities have been following power and capital, with critical thinking and humanistic concern not being obvious towards the lived space at the bottom, which has been very fresh, subtle yet flexible, as discussed below.

7.5 Bottom-up level — the compliant yet resilient local people

The local people at the bottom, proven by the finds from field work, have not formed a main driving force for this form growth. Because in this one-direction process they as the space receiver have had no practical access to a more influential position. Some scholars suggest that it has been due to the lack of 'public participation' mechanism (e.g., Chen and Thwaites, 2013, pp.159-160; Wu, 2015, pp.72-74; Zhang T.W., 2003, p.13), and for this, designers have been long hoped to speak for the locals during the living space change.

However, although the access problem does have existed, the field findings further suggest that the people there have been largely indifferent to it. Being dominant, participating design and conceiving space have not been their key concerns. More importantly, they have barely showed resistance to the physical results of conceived space formed in the spatial practice, instead, they tended to be satisfied and obedient.

This may have left designers at an ironical position. Their theoretical prescriptions may not really reflect local demands at all, whilst their practical behaviours continue to repeat conventional procedures. The distance from theory to practice, and from both of them to genuine local conditions, if cannot be shortened by changing the top logics, then at least might be narrowed by knowing the bottom practices and meanings creating 'lived space'.

Therefore, the discussion below tries to understand the local space receiver's mundane experience during this form change, including their genuine comprehensions and meaningful behaviours as conscious or unconscious responses in their everyday life. They have formed the lived space, which is close to human agency, yet being created

and limited by historical conditions and future expectations. The explanation of lived space focuses things 'on site' and takes an insider's view, borrowing ethnographical methods such as narrative interview and participant observation, whilst also referring to relevant documents and archives.

The findings [80] suggest the formation of lived space can be articulated by four diachronic stages: acceptance, adjustment, harmonization and revival, and the process has showed a congruence between mundane human practices and larger social progresses, as the individual pursuit for a better life has been projected from bottom up onto the backdrop of grand development in the era, with this projection further coinciding with the power and profiting logics from top down. Unfortunately, in the processes the design issues have been again overlooked.

7.5.1 Accepting the form changes

This acceptance of form results and the detachment from conceiving or designing space can be explained by the change of local people's notion underlying their true and common experience influenced by the growing production of NRD (new residential district). The common experience could be summarized as that, in the fast-growing socialist market economy, in a relatively short time local people have seen a sudden improvement of living space, and witnessed a huge upgrading of facilities and services indicating a quick value appreciation of their space. Indeed, this experience has reflected the two principal contradictions of Chinese society since 1978 (discussed in Section 5.2) and the change of notion is a reification of the contradiction shift in respect of living space — a basic issue of life. From this perspective, the local notions are essentially two kinds of spatial 'scarcity' — not having enough, with the first more

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[80] The findings here mainly indicate to interviews with residents and observations in relevant places, however, the author's long-term experience of living in a local NRD is also very supportive.

material, and the later more conceptual. For local people, solving the spatial scarcities has been a self-actualization process in pursuing a better life, as a more fundamental task. Other issues involving space have seemed less important. When the first spatial scarcity was greatly alleviated by receiving plentiful residential districts, the following conceptual one quickly occupied their mind.

For solving the spatial scarcity in first 'contradiction', the subject was the locals who were born in early 1950s to early 1970s. They have largely experienced the housing reform in towns and rural constructions in villages, which allowed them to greatly improve their living environments.[81] For those who had been 'in system' (working for the state and patronized by it, e.g., civil servants, teachers, employees of state-owned enterprise), they could pay their organisations to have the private ownerships of those apartments or dormitories they were inhabiting in small work units, which were usually small and basic, allocated to them without ownerships, limited by a set of criteria made in socialist era. As the homes might not meet their everyday needs, they later tended to sell them for more spacious ones in commercial residential districts as an essential improvement. For those 'outside system' with unsatisfying living environment in towns, they could either buy second-hand residences in those work units or new ones in commercial gated communities. For a small number of people who could not afford a residence, the later indemnificatory housing could be a choice. Also, for those in villages but also needed such an improvement, the non-gated communities were gradually supplied to them (discussed in Section 7.6). As the housing reform proceeded with more supporting policies launched, those from villages can also buy or rent residences in towns. Indeed, most of these people either originate from villages or have close relationships with there, having experienced the very harsh living environments before. The improvement was dramatic and impressive, with the comparison of conditions before and after it being so sharp in the local minds in so short a time. When

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[81] According to the interviews with relevant residents and officials.

especially the improvement was earned by themselves, the self-gratulation would be deep and long.[82] Admittedly, design flaws were ubiquitous in these first batch of new living space, relating to the quality of space, material, and construction, as well as basic requirements, but the local people had seemed not to care about them, as for them, the betterment was once a material 'yes or no' question, rather than a 'good or bad' one.

Upon the fact that the material scarcity of space having been largely settled, the conceptual one pushed by the 'growing needs for a better life' has been on the agenda, but challenged by the 'unbalanced and inadequate development'. The former is the needs beyond the material ones, whilst the latter is essentially a position problem — the locational disparities regarding the ability to meet these needs. People naturally want more for bettering their lives: more advanced education and medical care, better work opportunities and entertainment, or just larger homes again. In their mindsets and very much so in reality, these growing needs could only be met in somewhere else that is better, with cities better than towns, towns better than villages. More, these goals could once only be effectively achieved through having a new or second home and *hukou* (registered permanent residence)[83] in NRD from 'better' places, making a growing number of people move from villages to towns, from towns to Huangshan city, even to Hangzhou or Hefei.

Within those needs the education has been a key. Similar to those in cities, young parents have been increasingly gathering to places having better schools, and the 'school district' (a policy allocating educational resources according to residential positions) has actually moved from cities to towns. A phenomenon of 'accompanied-schooling' has been very popular in Huizhou, with parents or grandparents moving to

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[82] Some local people's fresh memories and pleasures could still be seen from the interviews with them, even twenty years has passed.

[83] Once, receiving public services in towns and cities need urban *hukou*, which is tied with an urban residence.

residences near good schools to serve their children educated in those schools. Also, the trend of buying homes near good schools as an investment for future generations both in money and in education has been obvious. Concentration of conceptual scarcities of space has naturally resulted in a competitive consumption in a booming housing market. The price has kept rising, with the rising trend following the housing positions and influenced by the extent to which these new needs can be met there. This has been employed by the top logics to promote commercial gated communities at new parts of cities or towns, which has been exemplified by the case of 'moving school' in Sub-section 7.2.1.3.

Growing housing price has in turn exacerbated the conceptual scarcity in Huizhou. A residence in towns or Huangshan city has essentially become a necessity for a standard for the locals who are preparing marriage; even they are from villages. The advertisements promoting commercial residences as a rigid demand have been penetrating villages (Figure 7.10). Buying home at better places has been widely accepted as a key investment for a better future life.

Figure 7.10. A billboard in a Huizhou village promoting commercial gated communities in the nearby town (source: Author).

It seems that, if relevant locational disparities still exist, or in other words the urban-rural integration has not been ultimately met, then 'voting by feet' and jumping the gaps to 'better' places to meet the growing needs will not stop. Nevertheless, again, in these second spatial scarcity, the quality of form and space and related design issues have been basically replaced by the position of places that is about needs and money.

Not like the situations before 1998, with individual desires for better living space oppressed in villages and work units. These spatial scarcities could be solved by local people themselves. The self-actualization has been conforming to, and encouraged by series of development policies in this form change.[84] The consumption of space has been no longer oppressed by the production of space; it has been a powerful engine of social reproduction. However, this would easily result in irrational production and consumption, with the former seized in a path dependence (Land Finance mode), the latter affected by the alienation of second scarcity. The problem will be similar to that in cities, as the exchange value of living space would greatly surpass its use value, triggering an over-production of such space.

7.5.2 Facing the changes and making adjustment

After the acceptance, the space receivers have been adjusting their everyday practices to these form changes. Nevertheless, it has not only been a situation of bodies being 'disciplined' by power from standardized structures as seen from Foucault's perspective, but also a fact that the people have been changing these physical environments (produced space) in a micro, trivial, ambiguous, and silent way from bottom up, which has been disguised in their everyday life, as a constant appropriation

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[84] For example, 'small-town strategy', 'New-Type Urbanization' and 'Rural Revitalisation' have all encouraged people to move from villages to towns.

and modification of space, contributing to a contextual 'everyday urbanism'.

However, the everyday practices in the form changes have been no longer a positive, ideal and poetic one imagined by Lefebvre, because the 'everyday life' cannot naturally all escape from regimentations; in the encirclement of these modernized space of NRD, the practices have been responsive and reactive (or sometimes passive), but never detached, with meanings meeting actual needs and solving fresh problems, like an 'everyday guerrilla' (Siu, 2007) to tactically face the realities. In the background, the special context of Huizhou has encouraged more possibilities for the lived space. If the sophisticated NRD in cities have been a big retreat from the socialist work unit in terms of control, then the NRD in Huizhou towns have seemed to retreat a lot more. Formed in a shorter period, bearing more legacies from tradition, embracing a much looser management and higher tolerance, holding a group of more close-to-village people, they have contributed to many particular and inspiring phenomena in forming the lived space, which would not possibly happen in those from cities.

Figure 7.11. The bird's-eye view of M (source: Author).

In the NRD in Huizhou, people have been very flexible and resilient in making the

spatial practice into lived space. Indeed, as suggested by the field findings, in the process essentially everybody has been doing design and joining the space production — as a follow up — facing spatial (design) deficiencies, bringing in traditional life styles, and creating/welcoming new conditions. These three aspects of the adjustment and modification are hence carefully recorded below, based on interviews and participant observations mainly conducted in three gated communities across Huizhou towns:[85] M, H and P. M is the largest commercial gated community in the north of one town, being built between 2008 to 2014 and adjacent to the district government, with the best-in-town schools sitting to its west (Figure 7.11). H is not far from M, at the town's northern fringe, being the largest indemnificatory housing project (built between 2010 to 2014) holding people with different backgrounds. P is also commercial but much smaller and was built earlier near another town centre.

The spatial problems were generally made by insensible designs, but the residents always have had their situated strategies. The lack of parking space, for instance, is a major problem, with all three of them having no underground parking. It did annoy people as more and more of them have had cars. Hence neighbours have to stagger the use of parking lots at daytime, and to park cars one next to another closely at night, and to move them orderly in the morning. In M, there was a plan to increase parking space, but with digging an underground parking being impossible, it had to sacrifice some surface green land. The residents largely tolerated this, as if green space was never a scarcity for them. Compared to that in cities, abundant green space can be reached more easily in towns as it is more rural. For M, residents can walk for 10 minutes to reach a well-built riverside green park; for H, it is still encompassed by farmland; P has a hill park at back, and its parking problem is less severe as many of its people just walk to commute. Similar tolerance has happened to the availability of open or public space

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[85] The responses through practices in non-gated communities are slightly different to those in gated communities, which is discussed in Section 7.6.

that is usually concerned by some designers. Actually, the people can achieve it from plentiful places within or outside the NRD, and flexibly adapt them to suit their needs. For example, a very large square is between the schools and M, gathering people at morning or night in all seasons, especially at summer night, with various activities organized like square-dancing, walking, Tai Chi and roller skating. When asked why they prefer to go out when M also has a moderate open space in its centre, they replied that they do not want to interrupt others with loud music in dancing or playing, and they can also meet friends or relatives from other NRD. Besides being occupied by cars, some limited open plots inside NRD have been utilized by the needs for sunlight, especially in winter, with few elders enjoying sunshine, or more often housewives drying clothes, quilts, and special food. The needs have been stronger in NRD with inadequate building distances, as exemplified by P, where household items are moved out from homes in certain periods of a day, being hanged on fitness equipment in sporadic small plots, or spread on bushes along lanes. Also, public life seems to prefer indoor or grey spaces. Take these small convenience stores at ground levels along peripheries of NRD for example, they are always the hottest hubs attracting people, as they are not in a branded chain but private operated by ones familiar to everybody. People often go there for buying necessities, for chatting, gossiping, drinking, watching news and matches, playing cards and mahjong, having kids entertained by kiddie rides at the entrances (Figure 7.12). Even the community securities sometimes join in, as if meanwhile they could watch the gate from another angle.

However, some other design flaws have been hard to solve. Most buildings were not thermal insulated when designed, causing intensive uses of air conditioners, especially in summer. However, people have been more used to the 'built-environment' without insulations in winter, which is similar to what they had experienced before in villages, and they can use electric radiators and even charcoal baskets that is more popular among elders. Nevertheless, it increases fire risks as in last winter, H reported two

related fires with casualties. More, the piped gas was also originally absent in most of the NRD and is difficult to re-install, but the residents have been contented with using gas cylinders and solar water heaters as a habit formed. In M, some were even against the plan of introducing piped gas, which they thought was too expensive and troublesome (Figure 7.13).

Figure 7.12. A small ground-level convenience store along the periphery of a NRD (source: Author).

Figure 7.13. The newly-introduced gas pipes had to be installed outside the buildings (source: Author).

Traditional life styles from villages were not immediately dead; as residues they have been brought into new lives in NRD fragmentarily and momentarily, and in the same way being passed down. For example, in early years of H, the arrived people always appropriated open spaces to dry their grain — a typical farming life style in villages using open land in front of houses. "We were relocated to here with our village removed; if we did not dry them here, then where else could we do it?" — a member of H sighed with memories.[86] Some traditions do have reappeared in momentary local rites held in NRD and instantly and transiently occupied every public space like lanes, paths, and parking lots. For example, in these places people shoot off fireworks in spring festivals, and light joss sticks, candles and burning paper money for the dead at spirit festivals, which were like what they did in villages. The most lively scenes could be found from a wedding. The main ceremony is usually arranged at night in banquet halls, differing from that held around village houses in a traditional way, but the beginning rite at morning for fetching the bride is always similarly held at the home of bride's parents, with cars lining up along lanes in a special order as the welcoming and escorting team for the bride, within which a limousine (Mercedes, BMW or Bentley) would hold the bride, taking the role of the historical sedan chair. Procedures are also similar to the past ones, but narrowly happen in and out apartments, such as blocking the groom from reaching the bride at the doors of building unit, elevator, and apartment rooms; sharing sweets with onlooker 'villagers', and setting off firecrackers in those small open spaces before successfully leaving. People also tend to bring some traditional life styles inside homes. The setting of *zhongtang* (the central hall in vernacular Huizhou dwellings) (Figure 6.15 in Section 6.3), as an example, has been partially resumed in their new living space. In ideal it is a core space organising affiliated rooms, with a grand landscape painting hanged on the north wall as a background, and a pair of couplets fixed at each side of the painting expressing the very virtue of family, under which a

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[86]From casual interviews during the observation, between 05/07/2019-25/07/2019.

long table holds antique mirrors, procelain bottles and vintage clocks. Also, a *baxian zhuo* (old fashioned square table for eight people) is placed against the long table for daily use. In reality, in detached or semi-detached houses in NRD, as those in M, only the painting and couplets can be kept as an independent background on a wall at the west or east of main living hall, as there is no longer a core place with a complete north wall in these houses. Whilst in apartments, the painting and couplets are usually simplified and mixed with TV sets, being hanged on the west or east wall of living room to form a notional 'background wall' (Figure 7.14), a key concept in the local mindsets when decorating interior space.
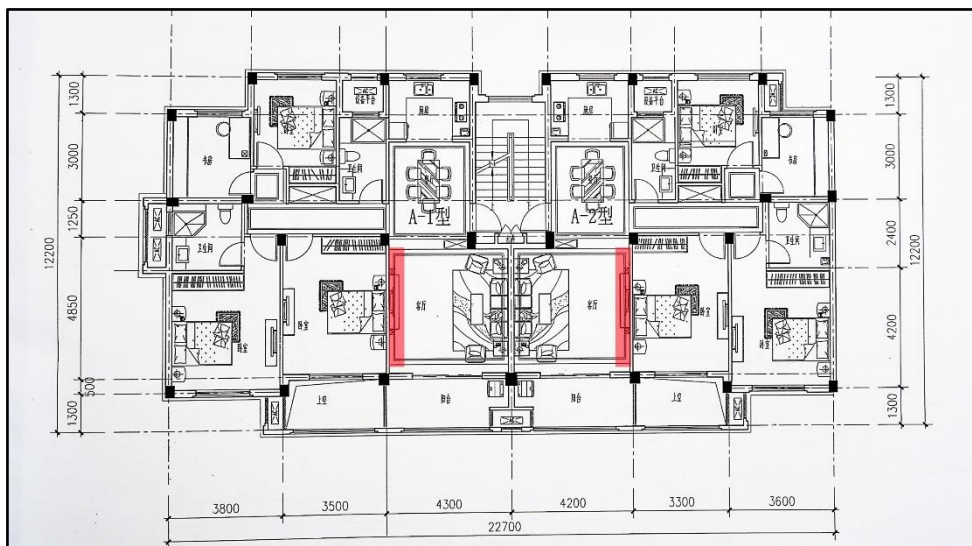
Figure 7.14. A plan of an apartment in NRD; the walls marked by red are the 'background wall' (source: Author).

Figure 7.15. A storeroom was turned into a barbershop (source: Author).

Nevertheless, the traditional lives have spilled out of physical containments. For example, sometimes *baxian zhuo* and its matched chairs, or a whole set of *zhongtang* are straightforwardly resumed in storerooms or garages, if not possible to be held in living rooms, and new uses of storerooms are actually invented constantly. People have store farm tools, grains or even raise poultry there, exemplified by cases from H in early years. They also make them into recreational rooms and tea houses; or rent them to others to use and live in (Figure 7.15). Some even change storerooms into bedrooms for elders living with them, because it is not a culture to let old parents stay in care homes, and the limited apartment areas without lifts also impede the elders from living upstairs. In this circumstance, they treat storerooms extensions of interior rooms. However, these new uses are not safe and against regulations, but no one would intervene in or blow the whistle. The consequences have been demonstrated by aforementioned fire accidents in H, which all related to elders misusing electricity or charcoals in storerooms. People also tend to appropriate and adapt some outside space when there is a chance, like the traditional way in villages. For example, some living upstairs would expand balcony farms or gardens to various outside platforms or decks either holding devices or being the roof of other rooms (Figure 7.16). It has been more obvious for those from detached or semi-detached houses in M as they do own small gardens facing front doors. In there they have all altered the original landscape offered by the developer like growing vegetables and flowers, or building new landscapes with traditional Huizhou characters (e.g., exhibiting bonsai with cultural metaphors, making porches into pavilions on water). They even dig wells in gardens as they think a well is essential in a traditional home, and boast that the well water is more clean, sweet and healthy, and also handy for daily wash, like the well water in villages. Under a loose management, the garbage disposal has been another example of remaining traditions. As relevant regulations have not reached these NRD yet, the residents deal it in an old way: all recyclable pieces are kept to be sold to someone collecting it, and the leftover

food is often used to feed pets, or sent to their relatives living in villages to feed their livestock.

Figure 7.16. The appropriation of space on the roof of other rooms (source: Author).

Figure 7.17. People building walls to divide and appropriate public space in front of their home (source: Author).

However, some residues of traditions have been obviously negative. Some narrow peasantry values, such as a self-centred sense of territory and possession, has damaged

the public life. For example, some people are unwilling to pay property management fees, with excuses like that they can manage their living environment without helps, or they do not always live in NRD as they have homes in villages. In one NRD, as another example, they even have personally claimed and divide public space in front of their semi-detached houses by building walls, indicating one common conflicts in villages — the dispute of homestead land (Figure 7.17).

In the meantime, the old or new needs has been also interacting with the new living space and creating new conditions. The peripheral shops, for instance, have been made much more diversified than those in city NRD, as those are either confined by functional zoning, or challenged by concentrated commercial facilities like hypermarkets or shopping malls. These shops are situated in an integrated, lively, dynamic commercial ecosystem in local NRD. After years' growth, they basically can offer everything people need — restaurants, convenient stores, pharmacies, barber and beauty shops, bakeries, massages, clinics, auto repair shops, electric bicycle shops, fresh food stores, printing shops, solicitor offices, funerary agencies, etc., forming an all-round local market. They are all small, smart and fitting, never too dominant, growing in an equilibrated metabolic process nourished by the people's everyday life (Figure 7.18).

Figure 7.18. The small, smart and diversified peripheral shops around M (source: Author).

Some remarkable new needs and functions have been indeed reinventing space. E-shopping express stations, as an example, have been plugged in during the last five years. They are scattered in storefronts, with each often taking one room, serving couriers, storing online packages people buy and sell, and exhibiting new products promoted by cooperative brands or local social media influencers.

Some small factories have also appeared between shops, as seen from M and H, often taking 2-3 storefronts together. Most of them accommodate workers to sew clothes for exporting, who were brought back by those having worked in related garment factories in Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces. It is naturally illegal regarding the place they chose, but they have been tolerated, as there have been no better options. They cannot develop this small business in their village houses which are too scattered or have been demolished, and they can neither afford renting workshops in industrial zones nor being admitted by zone leaders for their small scale. In these peripheral shops, or sometimes within storerooms inside NRD, they can save cost and easily hire those unemployed people or housewives.

Figure 7.19. One afterschool club on the periphery of M (source: Author).

Figure 7.20. Two cases of storerooms modified into living space (source: Author).

For new conditions moving from outside shops to inside rooms, there has also been a big theme — education. Along the west periphery of M being the closest community to the best educational resource in town, for example, there have been many afterschool clubs, named as tutoring class or hosting class, running full time or part time. Ostensibly they fetch pupils and look after them before the parents get off work, but deeper inquiries have revealed that many of them even host children for long periods due to that their parents all work outside Huizhou with their grandparents too old to take care of them (Figure 7.19). Those agencies rent apartments inside NRD and divided them into dormitories full of bedrooms, which is again not legal, but there are such rigid demands. Same thing has happened to the storerooms again, as within M, at the back of such hosting clubs, around 7 or 8 of the storerooms have been constantly inhabited by adults accompanying their children who attending the adjacent school. They are fresh 'outsiders' from nearby villages, working in this town at daytime whilst their children attending school, cooking dinners for them at night and helping them with homework. These rooms are identical to each other, being about 4 meters wide, 4 meters high, with a depth of 6-7 meters, and they have been thoroughly modified, with thin

floor slabs added at the height around 2.2 meters, and small living rooms and kitchens inserted under the slabs (Figure 7.20). Beds have been put on the slabs with curtains hanged to form bedrooms, even small toilets have been built under the steep stairs. 'For the kids' is the saying of these parents to do this. More, these growing educational demands have sometimes caused an alienation of living space. Next to a famous private school 2 km away from M and H, one single slab-type apartment has been erected by the school operators for being sold or rented to parents and students in need. The room type looks bigger than a dormitory, but smaller than an apartment set, as probably a new space type invented by the needs and market, and it is hard to tell from outside which building regulation or land attribute it conforms to, as the regulation and land attribute for residence are different from those for dormitory.

7.5.3 The harmony between people

A stable and harmonious relationship between people and space has been gradually reached in NRD in towns,[87] forming the lived space, but in this process there has been another important harmony being formed, which is a harmony between those people themselves as residents in NRD. This harmony seems to be more prevalent and steady than that in city NRD.

An 'acquaintance society' in Huizhou towns and villages has naturally contributed to this harmony. It is closer to Chinese rural society being earthbound, differing from that in modern cities, in where an individual has a nameless face in a crowd full of strangers (Poe, 1986), and social relations are not embedded in a physical locality (Giddens, 1990). In a rural society, as mentioned by Fei (1992), the social relationship is self-centred. "Like the ripples formed from a stone thrown into a lake, each circle spreading

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[87] The harmony is discussed in NRD in towns. For people in the non-gated communities, as they have been more 'village-related', the harmony can be formed more easily, as Sub-section 7.6.6 suggests.

out from the center becomes more distant and at the same time more insignificant." (ibid., p.65) The circle with kinship is the key, with other circles complicatedly coexisting. "Everyone stands at the center of the circles produced by his or her own social influence. Everyone's circles are interrelated. One touches different circles at different times and places." (ibid., pp.62-63) In this what Fei called *chaxu geju* (a pattern of oscillating but differential social circles), "social relationships spread out gradually, from individual to individual, resulting in an accumulation of personal connections. These social relationships form a network composed of each individual's personal connections." (ibid., p.70) Therefore it is easier for people to know each other and keep a good *guanxi* (social relation) in a traditional town they have lived in for decades, especially in these NRD where they have shared the 'lived space', they have more reasons and chances to do so.

Some people might well know each other before they moved into NRD,[88] hence the recommendation from that moved in a NRD earlier may contribute a lot to another's decision of moving into that NRD as they trust their *guanxi*, or they would quickly be acquainted with each other tacitly after moving in, in a 'face to face' life based on so-called *mianshu* (being familiar with the face). If one need to develop *guanxi* with someone that is *mianshu*, introductions through one or two people in NRD would be enough, like easy movements from circles to circles. The interlaced *guanxi* circles, together with their close-to-village backgrounds, have soon created a shared identity within these residents, which has nurtured the harmony between people. However, it seems not to be defined by the boundary of NRD, but more likely built on a shared experience of moving from villages to towns, with subconsciously collective memories. In the interviews they did not usually mention their urban status despite many of them have an urban *hukou* (registered permanent residence). Instead, they tended to label

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[88] As across these oscillating circles, they could be connected by roles of relatives, schoolmates, colleagues, army comrades, business partners, or just friends.

themselves as villagers. "We are just villagers, [there is] no difference;" "my family are after all from villages;" and "I do not feel different between living in here and my villages" were typical opinions heard from their personal narrative.[89] Sometimes they even mocked someone having moved to the city centre like: "That guy now is a city people; he is now so different to us as living in Tunxi [Huangshan city centre], but we are still ok with here." They usually speak dialects of the villages they originate from, which helps to immediately build a casual and intimate atmosphere. Although there exist many dialects from village to village in a same town, they can communicate well, and sometimes they can shift to one dialect after they start conversation. Also, those having freshly moved in from villages with a rural *hukou* seem not to feel inferior at all; they have been getting along with other residents quite well, and in their languages even a light sense of pride could be noticed, seemingly supported by series of official narratives of village's merits and of the growing advantages of rural life.

The rough constitutions of people in these NRD in terms of backgrounds were mentioned by a relevant local cadre. Generally, in M, there are more than 2000 homes holding a population about 10000, two thirds of whom are from surrounding villages. In H, the indemnificatory housing project, the percentage of those directly coming from nearby villages are higher, as their houses were demolished. In P in another town, those early-in-system or having urban *hukou* are the main components as P was one of the earliest local commercial housing projects. For people from villages, there are mainly four groups. The first is those come to work in enterprises and public institutions (in system) in towns, who usually buy homes in NRD; the second is those run small businesses around NRD, who buy or rent homes; the third is those younger villagers working outside Huizhou, who buy new residences for their children and parents but they themselves not usually stay there; and the last is the parents specially bringing in children for better schooling, many of whom only rent homes.

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[89] From casual interviews during the observation, between 05/07/2019-25/07/2019.

Under the shared identity, for these fresh 'outsiders', no matter whether or not they would like to permanently live in NRDs, they have been largely welcomed and tolerated by these experienced 'insiders', who have experienced and understood their 'pursuits for dreams'. The young parents and children in storerooms, for example, are sympathized, respected and supported, whilst similar groups may be suspected or kept away as 'outsiders' in city NRD (Lu, 2006, pp.153-156). They keep their small rooms open in summer nights, discussing children's study with 'insiders' who often 'pop in' to have a chat. "We've all experienced the situation like this," a women said with empathy, "15 years ago I was in city centre to accompany my son in Tunxi No.1 High School, and rented a shabby garage from a teacher, who supported us a lot. I really appreciate this kind of efforts for making progress. *Chiku* (eating bitterness) is indeed for a better future."[90] However, this sympathy and empathy have sometimes covered some illegitimacies, as garages are not legally for people to live, and factories, especially the sewing ones easily catching fires, as another example, should be strictly prohibited in residential space according to the fire codes. "Yes, they are not safe, to be honest, and last year I even witnessed a fire from one such studio, but how can they do? Everybody needs a life. The government really need to do something." A resident has warned.[91] Actually, the government has not been blind to this, as the same resident recalled a comment from a local head officer: "It is hard for them, but the same to me as well. If any really make a fire accident, then it is not only a tragedy for them, but I will lose my *wushamao* (a metaphor for the official post). We have to deal with it carefully, but never with a cut (one-size-fits-all approach)."

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[90] From casual interviews during the observation, between 05/07/2019-25/07/2019.

[91] Interview by the author, on 09/07/2019

Figure 7.21. The entrance and exit of a gated community, which are loosely controlled, with two convenience stores situated at both sides (source: Author).

Under the shared identity of 'being related to villages', there has been a sophisticated familiarity and harmony penetrating these NRD. Sometimes they are really like villages under 'modern clothes'. Neighbours trust each other, even they have arguments; they share foods, inviting others to drink together during lunches or dinners; they even leave keys to next door neighbours before going out for days, or just do not lock doors at all for a short leave. The securities seem not very vigilant, but the places they guard are not unsafe as numerous familiar eyes are watching. In M, H and P, for example, they do not check pedestrians passing through the gates, unlike what their counterparts do in cities; they only check cars, yet more likely to ask for parking fees rather than identities (Figure 7.21). The walls with gates encompassing these living units have largely lost their practical functions, as the boundary they created has been blurred, both physically and psychologically. The walls should have been a key instrument for controlling and excluding, like their genealogical origins, such as ancient city walls showing imperial power, socialist work units excluding villagers living amid scarcity (Lu, 2006, pp.124-142), and contemporary city NRD walls protecting collective interests of residents in a 'club realm' (Xu, 2015) whilst preventing 'free riding'.[92]

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[92] Some walls in city NRD have created a new scarcity of urban space, see Lu, 2006, pp.156-158.

Nevertheless, in NRD in Huizhou towns, these genic functions have not been inherited down.

These tolerance and familiarity, or in other words the harmony has been supported by the shared identity of 'being related to villages' in local people's notions, which has been furthered supported by the easily formed acquaintance and the shared experience during the form change. This 'ruralness' have contributed to people's similar scarcities of space underlying the experience, from material ones to conceptual ones, from being historically excluded by a set of walls, to contemporarily admitted by the NRD walls. This space production has been bringing them to a better place in the end. Nevertheless, the better place, now is not always pointing to the cities, as discussed below.

7.5.4 A mentality of revival — a mixed motivation

Moving to new NRD[93] and adjusting the everyday life in there have meant a major break up with things in old time and space, or namely the 'tradition'. Tradition, for the people who had the desire to solve the material scarcity of space, had once simply indicated a very harsh living environment that they were very eager to get rid of, so as to embrace the betterment brought by modern space.

Nevertheless, it is impossible to fully discard tradition, as it is resilient and complex. It as residue has partially remained in the physical space and everyday life in NRD, as demonstrated earlier. Indeed, as mentioned by Lu (2003, 2006), tradition is not simply handed down from the past; it is actually coexisting and being entangled with modernity. Modernity brings new conditions to tradition's transference, and with new conditions, tradition influences the performance of modernity (Lu, 2003, pp.212-213). Tradition is

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[93] This discussion is also focused on people lived in gated communities in towns.

constantly "constructed and deconstructed in a perpetual flux of historical practice." (Lu, 2006, p.125) Although sometimes temporarily being held back in socio-political changes, tradition can reappear and renew itself in new guises in new contexts as 'the latency of tradition'(ibid.). This 'residue' and 'latency' have been engraved in people's mind and constantly affecting people's practices in forming lived space. In fact, for people having accepted NRD as a socio-spatial change, other than unwittingly bringing into traditional life styles, there has been a growing mentality among them of reviving their traditional living environment, exemplified by the fact that many middle-aged residents in NRD have expressed a desire to build a house in their home villages, with some having deliberately implemented this idea. However, this mentality of revival seems not to purely point to the past as a nostalgia; it is constructed with new conditions. It could be explained as one kind of conceptual scarcity of space, but with the 'better place' not indicating to the city. As newer conditions have improved villages a lot, with the 'unbalanced and inadequate' situations being greatly alleviated, more and more practical 'growing needs' could be met in villages. Hence the conceptual scarcity of space has become divided in terms of choosing 'positions', which in fact have been increasingly balanced across urban and rural areas. Those who experienced the changes of living space by moving into NRD from villages may now prefer villages where they can build their traditional spaces to enjoy retired life, whilst most of their next generation are still eager to stay in towns and cities.

Nevertheless, how these new needs could be met in reviving the individually imagined 'tradition', and how tradition would be revived, are yet to know. For a closer examination of this mentality, two short life stories telling the local experiences are collected and presented below.

Mr. F, a civil servant born in 1970, came from a remote Huizhou village where he grew up in a one-story building made from rammed earth. "It was not in Hui style, and had

no individual room for every sibling, which was a luxury demand. In an adjacent shack we inserted our kitchen, together with my other two uncles' kitchens, which was very narrow," he recalled,[94] "the condition got better in 1985 when my father built a more spacious home where we had our own rooms. Since then, I was determined to stive for a better living space." He bought a small apartment in towns after the housing reform in 1999, although he then still worked in a village 100 km away from the residence that he thought was the key for his son's education. In 2004, after being promoted to the town, he changed the apartment to a semi-detached house also commercially developed. "It was a huge step forward; it has four rooms and it is spacious," he mentioned pleasantly. As his son graduated and started to work in another town near city centre, he offered him the initial payment of a new apartment in a NRD there in 2017. Now, as becoming fifty, he seems to be quite satisfied with his situation, with "key problems solved," such as the son's work, house and marriage. "Thus, I gradually pick up a mind," as he explained:

> To move back to a village. It is popular in people with my age. I am 'in system' having a stable pension, and also a typical Huizhou people, so in my heart and bones I hope to return to a Hui-style house in village with courtyard and garden. Like the Huizhou merchants before, earning money outside in young age and coming back when being old, building houses to have an elegant retired life in home villages. However, for me it should not be an authentically ancient one. I actually have my own thought of it and I may not need a special designer.

Two days later after the interview, he showed his 'design' with a rough 2D drawing on a paper, which is telling (Figure 7.22). On the paper there is a detached house. Obviously, a central space is resumed, with rooms set around, but it is no longer in a

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[94] Interview by the author, on 16/07/2019. All the interview with the interviewee happened on this day.

systematic settlement (house units and clusters) which is based on clan system. The surrounding environment is not provided. It is essentially a plain but popular recognition of traditional dwelling in the local mind. He described it with an open mind: "I can make some rooms into an inn, or share them with my friends, or they can build similar houses around mine." However, he expressed concerns as that:
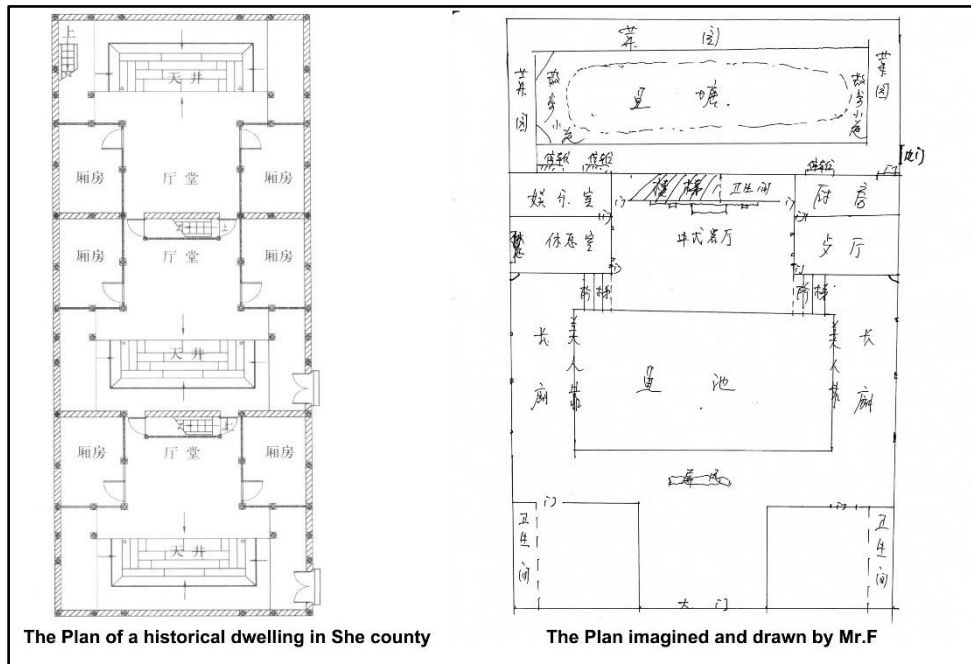
Figure 7.22. The plan of a historical dwelling in Huizhou and Mr. F's design of his Hui-style house (source: the left image: Shan, 2010, p.69; the right image: courtesy of Mr. F).

It however, depends on the rural policy, the land attribute, as I may be not entitled to do so as I have no rural *hukou* anymore. Indeed, the government do need to lead people like us to build like this, as opening an exit, also as a mean to protect the traditional living culture and of course these ancient buildings — a 'protective development' probably, isn't it?

Compared to Mr. F who is only conceiving the revival, Mr. C, born in 1979, has already built his village home and is living in it with his family. He is not 'in system', coming from a village near the central town of She county, with the old house built by his father

in 1980s, in brick-concrete structure, which was also not an genuine Huizhou layout yet only with *matouqiang* on the roof. He went to another town centre since primary school and after graduating from a vocational school he started work and got married there. For the marriage, he bought a small apartment with around 77 m^2 in a work unit. "I could only afford this second-hand home and the place is good," as he recalled that:[95]

> It is in one of the two residential buildings originally built by the tax bureau for its staff, right behind the bureau's office, with a wall enclosing the three buildings and some green land. When I bought it, the bureau staff had almost moved out to new locations. People were all in a mix then.

He had stayed there for five years and still keeps it as a second home. In there it was easy to see residues of these traditional habits. As the work unit was not controlling, his mother ploughed some green land for growing vegetables, and made a concrete desk for daily wash; his father built a chicken house and a shed for parking. Around 2018, he had an ideal to build a house at home village as he said that:

> The village is different now. A main road is passing by, with a rural hospital built at the entrance. The county's CRH train station is only 3 km away, also the broadband internet has reached there. I think it will only get better and better, with more hope. Another key thing is my children's education, as schools in She county has better reputations in the city. With a car, it would only take me ten minutes to reach the schools and town centre. Also, my parents are getting old; they prefer to live here.

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[95] Interview by the author, on 21/07/2019. All the interview with the interviewee happened on this day.

Figure 7.23. Mr. C's new house with a big yard in his original village; the two-story building on the right side of the new one is the old house (source: Author).

Figure 7.24. The setting of *zhongtang* is on the left side; the modern living room is on the right side (source: Author).

With his father still having a village *hukou*, he managed to build the new house in their original homestead, next to the old house that was not tore down (Figure 7.23). "Probably the value of the old one will appreciate in the future," he guessed. The new

house has three stories, being a normal design prevalent in the region, but again not the genuine style which, as he mentioned, is "too dark, damp and wasteful." In the modern plan the family accommodate their everyday life hybridizing with traditions, with the whole setting of *zhongtang* established at the ground floor, next to the modern living room, modern kitchen, and the arc stair leading to upstairs rooms (Figure 7.24). At the east of the enclosed yard, the old house is now for storage with part of it raising pigs, and the old firewood-burning kitchen is kept as sometimes they prefer to use it. The direction of the new main door, as advised by a *feng-shui* master, is not in the same line with the yard door, and not due south. "I really like here. It is a proper investment, also a face issue as a culture. It proves you have earned enough money to contribute to your family. No matter whether or not my kids will move out, I will live here." He concluded.

The two revivals of tradition have been two solutions of the conceptual scarcity of space that has shifted towards the tradition with new conditions, proving that the better place is not always the city, instead it is where these growing needs can be better met in these mixed conditions. For Mr. F, it is more of a nostalgia under an individually conceived Huizhou mentality, with a concern closer to design, whilst for Mr. C, it is more of choosing a practically better place that is as good as somewhere in cities, to gain 'face' from tradition as well as rewards from the future.

7.6 Replacement as betterment — a special trend of space production for growth

In county central towns of Huizhou, the space production for growth brought by housing have been mainly contributed by commercial gated communities and supplemented by indemnificatory gated communities. Nevertheless, on the periphery of these towns that is nearer to villages (usually non-central towns of each county), there has been another popular mode of growing production of NRD since the beginning of BNSC. This has created 'rural concentrated living districts' (new rural residential communities), forming regulated yet non-gated communities, as mentioned in earlier discussions (Sub-section 1.3.2 and Section 7.1).

This kind of living space supplied from top down has been mainly promoted by local governments' political logics with public funds, similar to those efforts in other areas of China. Although it has not been driven by economic logics either, it has differed from the indemnificatory housing in towns in many respects. For example, the land attribute has been more likely to be 'rural construction land' belonging to village collectives rather than 'allocated urban construction land'; the living district has been open rather than gated, with the blocks and plots being smaller yet more scattered; the house types have been largely comprised detached or terraced buildings rather than apartments; the design regulations and codes have been vaguer and looser than those controlling urban ones, with a more flexible and mixed construction process; and more importantly the inhabited people have been mostly directly from villages without *hukou* (registered permanent residence) in cities and towns. They have been usually situated at the edge of built-up areas of towns, being not far from town-government buildings

as these towns' central areas are small (usually within 2-3 km^2),[96] or they could be placed near big administrative villages, where the infrastructures are better than smaller villages in these towns' territories.

These particularities have thus contributed to a fairly special growing production of NRD, which can be seen from the roles of different stakeholders involved. As suggested by the field findings, the top-down political logic and related behaviours has been more complicated and compromised. First and foremost, the promotion of such concentrated living space has been a true concern on rural people's well-being, which has also been a key responsibility in series of supporting policies. For example, the better infrastructures in these districts have cohered with BNSC, and the resettlement of people for their convenience has been a grassroots concentration of population responding to local urbanization. Although yet to change *hukou*, these residents can better join town industries rather than remaining in less-efficient agriculture. This effort is crucial for 'poverty alleviation' in the Rural Revitalization, helping people living in remote and mountainous villages with very low living standards, which is caused by harsh geological conditions with higher risk of related disasters. The change in turn has essentially consolidated the power legitimacy and the grassroots democracy (Bell, 2015), with villagers trusting local cadres and hence positively engaging in decision-making processes, and similarly projecting their self-actualizations onto the grand cause of rural development.

Nevertheless, another level of political logic has seemed to be influencing as well, which is that the strong sense of responsibility and accountability have been understood by governors as political tasks, whose implementations need to be physically demonstrated (discussed in Sub-section 1.3.2). Hence, it seems that most of the towns have had or will have at least one such 'concentrated living district' as a model or initial

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[96] For this reason, sometimes the land attribute for these non-gated communities could be urban construction land.

project showing the governments' efforts, which can also respond to local people's collective expectations of 'development', as it as a physical achievement that can be seen through their own eyes.

In addition, these concentrations of living space do have similarly contributed to squeezing out the land quota for gaining more urban construction land through the aforementioned quota channel (see Sub-section 1.3.2), but the demand of urban construction land has not directly pushed this kind of resettlement through this channel like that in cases in Shandong. According to a local cadre having experienced these projects, the land quota squeezed has been integrally controlled and allocated by upper-level land departments, and transferred between counties. It would not directly benefit the 'Land Finance' in local towns, but instead may have contributed more to the limited expansion of industrial zones. More likely in this case, the land quota has been a by-product rather than the main logic.

The process of this special space production has expressed the eclectic feature of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' in the most basic level. For example, the government has been always strongly leading the form development, whilst the nongovernment capital has not been totally absent as it has been tentatively introduced into relevant projects. This practically eclectic feature that has been recently supported by the loosening of rural land policies conforms with the trend of policy development from BNSC to Rural Revitalization.

Particularities have also existed in the roles of other stakeholders. For example, the nongovernment capital was not positive at all even it was allowed; the designers have been detached still even facing much less design restrictions; the people showing similar responses have been able to bring in more traditional lifestyle in the lived space; the cultural construction from the power logic has been similarly shallow even the

context has been more rural and traditional.

The following discussion records a detailed process of such a form change in a normal town in Huizhou — XG, showing the features of this special kind of space production for growth in detail.[97] The project is a new concentrated living district that is still in its phased construction, with the location being near the town government, yet it relates to a whole space-time continuity across the town and villages. The built environment in XG has full Huizhou characters, yet it has not been specially 'looked after' by both conservation and development causes due to its lack of physical heritages that some other parts of Huizhou have been famous for; hence this project is proper to represent more general cases in this region. The following record, however, does not statically dissect the three levels of the analytical mode; it is rather a diachronic narrative, with the roles of contributing groups and their relations naturally explained.

Figure 7.25. The old built-up area of XG town after *Gai Hui*, situated to the north of a river (source: Author).

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[97] The explanations and narratives in this section are mainly based on the interviews with the official involving the development of new concentrated living district. The data from interviews with some residents living there and field observations are also helpful.

7.6.1 The old image: an ordinary tradition

XG is an ordinary town in eastern Huizhou, being one of the 94 administrative units at town/township level in Huangshan city. It is about 25 km away from the central town of its county, with most of its old built-up area situated to the north of a river flowing from west to east. Indeed, if a national motorway was not constructed on the southern side of the river 16 years ago, XG's development probably would have still been confined on the northern side of that river.

The form structure of its old built-up area has been obviously influenced by the legacy of historical layout, so it looks similar to those of typical traditional settlements in Huizhou. However, most buildings had long lost any 'authentic remains' from the historical dwellings, and was overtly made up in the face by awkward collages mixing symbolic languages. The complicated facades again, were hectically unified by the *Gai Hui* movement (mentioned in Chapter 8), with the walls whitened, tiles blacked, cornice re-stretched, and *matouqiang* re-erected, all of which now successfully project a standard Huizhou image onto those 'outside' passengers rapidly flowing on the motorway (Figure 7.25).

On the periphery of many Huizhou towns, newly-built concentrated living districts have appeared since the start of BNSC, responding to the local expectations and understandings of 'development' (Figure 7.26). Unfortunately, XG was not a pioneer of them, due to the 'depth' of its location in the mountains. The belated arrival of new district of its own, was a contingency.

Figure 7.26. The newly-built concentrated living districts in other towns of Huizhou (source: Google Earth).

7.6.2 The unexpected origin: a contingent reason from outside

In 2003, an opportunity was created by the construction of a motorway. For mixing concrete, the construction team rented a piece of agricultural land (around 60 *mu*) from a local collective group, which was along the southern bank of the river. However, when they finished the project, the arable land was irreversibly contaminated, and the local government had no funds to 'acquire' it to compensate related villagers, leaving it abandoned for years (Figure 7.27). The villagers kept complaining about it because they not only had not been benefited by the motorway (no exit and entrance being set there), but also had had to bear the cost. Moreover, the idle land had, from time to time, triggered people's anxious thought of 'development', intensifying the bottom-up dissatisfaction. "To take it over, we had no money, but if let it be, the people did not agree," sighed Mr. L,[98] a major cadre in charge of this project. "For years, XG had no

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[98] Interview by the author, on 13/08/2019.

obvious development, and for that ugly piece of land, the situation was worsened."

Figure 7.27. The land for building the new district of XG, which was developed from the piece of contaminated arable land on the southern bank of the river, to the north of the motorway (source: Google Earth).

7.6.3 The key turning point: building the new socialist countryside (BNSC)

No proper solution had been available until around 2008. The key turning point was brought by the implementation of BNSC ('Building a New Socialist Countryside'). "BNSC was an overarching policy, but how could it be grounded in XG? Everybody in the offices were considering and exploring; yet at least it meaned such efforts started to be considered seriously from upper levels." Mr. L recalled.[99] Thus, backed by the political trend, XG started to relate the abandoned land to the cause of BNSC, to set an experimental project there by building a modern and concentrated living district, which could resettle villagers from remote mountains, and accept people from harsh living environments.

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[99] Interview by the author, on 13/08/2019.

7.6.4 The tentative preparation: 'wading across the river by feeling for the stones'

First, the plan was disseminated to the locals to clear the doubts, and then through the meeting of 'two committees' of related villages (village party branch and villager self-governance committee), the assembly of representative villagers, and the meeting of household heads, a series of voting procedures were democratically held to seek for wider supports, to remove potential misunderstandings before action. According to Mr. L, the communications were conducted almost to every household, who had showed a double-layer trust: one was believing in their personal relations with L and his colleagues, and another is being confident about the bigger government behind.

Second, the land needed to be acquired from villagers and its attribute had to be changed. Through a systematic process of quota allocation operated by land resource departments from the county, city and province, the rural arable land was turned into rural construction land. However, due to the financial strain then, the limited compensation for people losing the land was not sufficient and hence was complemented by the old-age insurance. For example, according to the land certificates held by the people, those who lost one *mu* land within the boundary could receive one such insurance for free, which guaranteed them a monthly income of 200-300 *yuan* then. For the local government, it means it could pay part of the compensation in instalment, which could be guaranteed by its credit, whilst for the people, it was a sustainable source of income plus a promising development project. Thus, the land acquisition was done smoothly.

Third, the construction fund needed to be provided, which was the most challenging part. 'Attracting nongovernment capital from outside' was the final decision after many hard discussions held in offices at different levels. Nevertheless, within the political context then, to introduce nongovernment capital into a project on village/rural land,

compared to those in towns and cities, was essentially an exploration and experiment. Thus, following a politically cautious procedure, the XG government started the plan, with the county government bearing the full responsibility. Step by step, it was hence recorded and backed by the *fagaiwei* (Development and Reform Commission) at various levels, and was officially listed in the provincial agenda of key projects. However, on the other side, when Huizhou village/rural land was not fully opened to nongovernment investment, and such investment still preferred county central towns, developers seemed not to see any prospect in operating this project. So, the result was not positive at first, with developers introduced all showing hesitations, suspicions, and even disagreements, although the piece of 'rural construction land' was adjacent to town centre. "They came and leave, with more than 10 of them, all went away. The entrepreneurs from local Zhejiang Chamber of Commerce also came, but most of them gave up, saying it was too risky," recalled Mr. L,[100] "but at last, only one, the head of the chamber, agreed to have a try, after persuasion."

7.6.5 The mixed process: a compromised production of space

Through a continuous process of land right affirmation, land acquisition and attribute change, a piece of 'rural construction' land parcel was well prepared based on the abandoned land, with the area growing from 60 *mu* to 114 *mu* in total. The length was about 1 km, and the width was about 70 meters. Being long and narrow, it lies alone the southern bank of the river. The planning and design then followed. "Design needed to be done by an officially qualified company," said Mr. L.[101] Indeed, in discussing with him about design issues, the regulation, qualification, certification, and economy were his key points. When talking about the topic of form, he turned to a more conventional and vaguer concept of Hui style, without mentioning any specific

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[100] Interview by the author, on 13/08/2019.

[101] Interview by the author, on 13/08/2019.

standards.

After a quick design process offered by an official institute belonging to an adjacent city, the construction began. The developer first built the revetment and prepared the land (access to electricity, water, road and land levelling), and following the design, it divided the new district into 8 blocks for constructing house foundations in stages. According to the design report, in total roughly 440 house foundations will be built in plots, organized by these bigger blocks. These foundations have similar plans, and the area of plots ranges from 90 m^2 to 120 m^2. The finished foundations have been 'handed over' to villagers interested (not necessarily those lost land there). They joined in to construct structures above the ground through self-building, exchanging labour, or group-hiring other construction teams. Following the regular framework designed, the buildings have hence been situated in grids, and made into three-story terraced houses with similar plans, so the architectural form has been in a cosmetic uniformity as well, as evident by the ubiquitously erected *matouqiang*, which are widely understood as the 'modern Hui style' (Figure 7.28).

Figure 7.28. The new concentrated living district of XG in design text (source: courtesy of Mr. L).

This special kind of space production being 'half others-developing, half self-building' has been essentially a compromised method adopted by the grassroots government, so as to make best use of advantages and bypass disadvantages in dealing with realities. In this micro-level 'eclecticism', the half others-developing can cut one-time investment, which can consequently lower the risk and keep the sustainability of funds, whilst the half self-building can also foster villagers' subjectivity and positivity during the construction, which at the same time has tended to be recognized by them as a self-actualization process implementing those decisions made democratically before. More, this can lower the cost, making each house affordable to more people. Mr. L made a simple comparation:[102]

> In this way the villagers can save much money. They do not like apartments for sure, and these terraced houses with three stories would only cost them 160-180 thousand *yuan*, which means spending less than 200 thousand *yuan* for a space of around 240 m^2, so it has been very welcomed. As a comparison, there is a commercial housing project nearby, with the land being in a commercial process of 'bid, auction and listing'. The threshold of construction cost, not price, is above 1000 *yuan* per square meter. So, it is not sold well and the project are not even finished.

Nevertheless, despite the cost being lowered, this 'mixed development', at the beginning, needed to keep a distance to the market. "We could not say to 'sell' the house foundations, as strictly no trading relationship was allowed. We had to say they were 'handed over' to people to build their own houses, with the developer claiming back basic cost and profit. We government would scrutinize it, for example keeping the profit under a certain rate, such as 15%." Mr. L pointed out,[103] "honestly, however, it

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[102] Interview by the author, on 13/08/2019.

[103] Interview by the author, on 13/08/2019

appears that the project is not so profitable for the developer." Not being commercial in theory, the mixed process, however, in practice has had its allocation of foundations adopt an obvious market rule, under which different locations would cause different fees for the handing over. The better places, such as those facing the county road, or lane intersections, would naturally have higher prices. Hence, this production of space has seemed to pragmatically apply relevant market rules, reflecting the eclectic feature of 'socialism of Chinese characteristics' at the grassroots level.

It has been almost 10 years since this space production began, and more than 150 families has moved in. They have not been in large number but have had diversified origins and backgrounds. Not all of them are locals; many are from neighbouring areas. Generally, they are people from remote mountains with extremely harsh living environment, bad transportation and high risk of geological disaster, people from nearby whose old houses had been demolished due to the town expansion, and local people who positively wanted to move into an improved living space.

Part of the housing plots, as a change of the original design, were taken by the town government for building special indemnificatory houses for those too poor to afford a new home, and some plots were also changed to a rural health-centre with supporting facilities. Therefore, the abandoned land has been successfully turned into a new concentrated and mixed living space, contributing to the 'concentration of population' that has been politically promoted. Fortunately, the power logic of this space production has not borne the pressure from 'Land Finance' through the land quota channel and has not arbitrarily triggered a hectic movement. More likely, it has showed a kind of practical politics at micro level that cares details, improves occasions, guides people democratically, systematically and patiently, and bears full accountability — a paternalistic nurturance rather than exploitation towards villages through conceiving space there.

7.6.6 The reality — a silent balance

Figure 7.29. The new district as a foreground of XG demonstrating the development and enhancing the impression of Huizhou (source: Author).

Figure 7.30. The compromise between Hui style and the regulatory constraint of per capita building areas (25 m^2 per people, one story or one and half stories) (source: Author).

The reality is that, through a complex but smooth process, the widely expected 'development' in XG has been being materially produced in the new district with a grading layout and a unified Hui-style symbol. As a foreground of XG, it does better help to enhance the motorway-passengers' impression of Huizhou (Figure 7.29).

However, if seen from a conventional design perspective, then it is not impressive at all in terms of form and space. What it represents is one example of those very monotonous new districts commonly yet randomly formed in the countryside, and what is even worse is that the part of indemnificatory houses has further uglified the form proportion due to the regulatory constraint of per capita building areas for such houses (Figure 7.30). Nevertheless, if putting conventional design concerns aside temporarily and lifting the view higher to see the bigger picture, it has been a moderate success in many more respects, because it has created an effective and lasting balance it has created in facing various negative conditions. The government has solved a tough problem, fulfilled its duty, and well responded to relevant national policies, whilst greatly helping the people in need, and hence avoiding potential contradictions, which has enhanced their confidence in their ways of development and governance. The people have greatly improved their living environment, gained subsequent benefits and met the demand of their development and self-actualization. The developer has had a basic profit under a lower risk, and more importantly has gained valuable experiences of operating projects there. For the designer, it seems that they have just realized another design scheme safely and smoothly.

To focus on the bottom-up space receivers again, the people relocated to there, have showed a very similar satisfaction and acceptance to those moved in the gated communities in county central towns. Especially the poor ones, they have been very grateful to the government for the homes supplied to them. In the field conversations,[104] the space receivers did not express the problems usually presupposed or constructed by designers' theories, such as dissatisfactions with the space quality in new places, and nostalgic feelings towards their old living environment. When asked how do they understand the reasons for what is changed and delivered, they similarly tended to start their personal narratives by telling about their own choices and experiences pointing to

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[104] Conversations happened during the observation between 13/08/2019-14/08/2019 and 19/08/2019-20/08/2019.

their individual pursuits for a better life, rather than about having housing imposed upon them. When asked about the driving forces from top down, "to develop" again came to be a shared concept in their collective mind, which connects the self-actualization and the grand cause of rural development, exemplified in some positive narratives like "a place must develop, especially villages like here;" "the change is just the development;" and "my choice of moving just conforms to the development." However, design was largely neglected by them, as if its significance was not well acknowledged. For example, the only problem they complained for several times about design was very practical — the floods from the river had flowed in parts of the districts in summers. Admittedly it really related to design — the vertical design and engineering, but there was little concern about the quality form and space and wider socio-spatial implications.

The significance of design has been covered by the spatial scarcities and gratifications parallelly existing in this case. The people' notions have seemed to still be in a shifting process from being contented with receiving a much better living environment, to prioritizing the positions of place over the quality of space. What they have done after acceptance have been similar to those in NRD — adjusting the everyday lives, and modifying the space to demonstrate the 'representational space' (lived space). However, in this case, the everyday practices have been looser and closer to their traditional life style. In facing the form change, the traditional life style has been defending themselves by moving one step forwards, with the control from physical environment retreating one step backwards. The little shops at corners are naturally cores of public life, and the *zhongtang* settings have been easier to be set in these houses than apartments (Figure 7.31). Even more, in many homes, the traditional cooking benches burning firewood have been directly moved into new kitchens, being juxtaposed with modern gas stoves regardless of the fire protection codes, and the people have seemed to prefer use the traditional one (Figure 7.32). The gardening, vegetable planting, and poultry raising have been organized much more commonly and casually, within private

courtyards, at the bottom of exterior walls, along lanes between houses, or just within plots that are yet to be 'handed over'. It has been essentially a vernacular community still, yet in a modern shape.

Figure 7.31. The revival of the setting of *zhongtang* and the juxtaposition of traditional *zhongtang* (left) and modern living room (right) in one terraced house in the new district (source: Author).

Figure 7.32. The juxtaposition of traditional cooking benches and modern gas stoves in a kitchen (source: Author).

This case of 'production of space' is still in process. For Mr. L, there are still many critical problems left unsolved. For example, more demands for compensation have been raised by some who lost land there when they have seen the project is going well, and the problem of *hukou* (registered permanent residence), mentioned a lot by him,

seems to be difficult as relevant departments have still had contradictory policies in registering *hukou*, leaving the *hukou* of those people moved in still unsolved. "I have to say, the authorities need to put the people first; (there is) no need for them to set obstacles, because this effort of concentrating the population — what we are doing, conforms to the trend of development," he stated,[105] "and more, some of villages where these newly settled people came from, cannot be all abandoned or demolished; if the conditions are good and landscapes are beautiful, we can continue to introduce nongovernment capital to develop rural tourism, with the infrastructures enhanced properly." These worries and suggestions show that Mr. L is more like the manager or operator of such a project yet without a profiting logic. As he holding a full accountability, the key things in his eyes are the policy, the people's livelihood, the sustainability of what he leads to do and the supporting fundings, but yet to be design. Indeed, the first important design problem he would lead to solve, will seem to be the flood issue caused by design errors.

7.7.7 The design

Seemingly in the middle level, the designers[106] of this case have actually been quite detached in the whole form transformation. There was no enthusiasm, also no thorough understanding of the contextual space production. This indifference could be read from the design reports made more than 10 years ago, in which the architects' limited comprehension of conceived space and lived space was merely included in few pages of rendering and description that roughly promoted a shallow form value and vague space quality before conventional technical drawings. Their understanding and interpretation of Huizhou identity were unsurprisingly presented in the repeating symbols of *matouqiang*. What they claimed in the text was ideal: building a community,

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[105] Interview by the author, on 20/08/2019.

[106] In this case designers mainly refer to architects.

creating a lifestyle, cultivating an environment and erecting a model, so as to connect the neo-traditionalism with BNSC, to stress the quality of 'all nice', the sense of belonging and the calculation of value. Nevertheless, what they did was a blank-filling job, lining up plots and buildings regularly, pursuing the maximized efficiency of land use, and collaging cosmetic Hui style in the building form. Worse, in real, what has been constructed was another distant picture. The symbolic form design has been even more simplified; the building quality has varied a lot under a very loose management and design control; unexpected design changes imposed from top down also have impacted the consistency of form, such as those ugly indemnificatory houses made for the poor. However, interestingly, compared to the situation in designing gated community in the central towns, there have been no strict planning regulations, no heavy economic pressures (from government and developer), and no rigid time limits in this case. So, this raises a key question as why this district has been designed in a way similar to that for those gated communities? The reasons seem to be that the architects' thoughts have been hampered by inertia when the context has totally changed. They have seemed to be too contented with the low-paid conventional role in designing gated communities in towns and cities (discussed in Sub-section 5.5.2), which is essentially a secondary instrument influenced by planners and the top-down forces rather than a positive consultant or negotiator, and the 'copy and paste' stereotypes of a superficial Hui style have dominated their aesthetic of these contextual developments.

7.7 Conclusion

In the growing production of NRD in Huizhou, the roles of stakeholders at the three levels have demonstrated their general features, yet meanwhile they have been also influenced by the special conditions in the context.

The local government power has been adopting a nationally popular mode of Land Finance to pursue economic development, but this logic has been limited in Huizhou with the economic pressure intensified, due to the shortages in the local geographic precondition, industrial structure, and managerial mechanisms. The political responsibility has been implemented through promoting indemnificatory housing programmes, which has not had similar 'location' and 'mixed habitation' problems compared to those in cities, due to that these Huizhou towns have had more compact built-up areas. However, this process has also met managerial problems. Cultural construction has been superficially related to promoting traditional symbols in the form and space showing the Hui style. Under this shallow cultural logic, although these NRD with organized designs and constructions have indeed offered a better chance to the top-down control of Hui style compared to the scattered projects, the focus of the relevant form control efforts has not been put on them. The literally largest portion of new produced space has received the least attention in this regard.

Indeed, in this case the three faces of power have been relatively independent from each other, and seemed to be parallelly implemented. For example, although economic considerations have dominated the effort, the economic gains made through this space production have been initially monopolized by government power and developers. This has probably made the political responsibility into a direct compensation (of living space) compared to the shared and indirect compensation in the second case, which has no direct connections with the other two logics.

Capital/developers have been also facing special challenges from the context. A smaller market with a lower access threshold have caused problems, the main one of which is the concentration of unsophisticated developers with fewer experiences. Their intrinsic problems of not being familiar with local policies and regulations, of neglecting design and sale strategies, and of being weak to face risks caused by external errors, have all posed more uncertainty and irrationality on to the form change.

Seemingly situated in the middle, designer have been following what they usually do in NRD in cities, fixed in relevant procedures and regulations. The planners have helped to produce new space through producing land parcels for NRD in 2D master and detailed plans, and architects have followed them to fill the parcels with buildings yet have their visions limited in these parcels, being reluctant to consider the space quality, the people and the lived pace. They have mainly passively responded to the two space suppliers, but the uncertainties caused by power and lower design reward offered by developer have all challenging their efforts. They have not started to reflect the stereotypes, which has been done by some pioneers of them in facing problems in city NRD, and in the fixed procedures and regulations that is still influencing locally, the Huizhou tradition for them has only been the conceptual justification for copied stylistic interpretations.

In this process, the space receiver — the local people involved, however, have been rarely influenced by the indifference of design. They have been more influenced by the top logics and their self-interest. The congruence between their practices (with meanings) and larger social progresses as well as the power and profiting logics has been very strong and has hence deemphasized design's significance and impact. After receiving and accepting the produced new living space, the locals' spontaneous responses have been very resilient, showing a modification or an appropriation of the

form results with a sense of 'bottom-up design', with a harmony between the people generated under a shared identity of 'being related to villages'. Interestingly, in this circumstance, the tradition they have expressed is more genuine than that upheld by other roles. It has been unwittingly brought into the bottom-up space production as remaining traditional lifestyles and has even been individually imagined and revived into newer living space by some locals, rather than being the symbols, labels and concepts which were deliberately or indifferently related to a shallow comprehension of Hui style.

Underlying the form growth has been essentially the growth of power, the growth of market, the growth of design (planning) and the growth of people's self-interest. Design has not well connected the three kinds of space, and was not able to do so, but the connection has been naturally made by the consensus of growth without designers' negotiation. This consensus has been more conceptual, with the quality of space overtaken by the benefits gained from the growth, such as the fiscal revenue, the profit, the design fees, the better living environment, the better public services and resources, and the better housing prices. It is benefits that connects conceived space and lived space in the spatial practice.

The vignette from Section 7.6, however, has showed a fairly different picture of such a space production at the very grassroots village level. For power logics against the backdrop of rural development, the compensation has been the main tone, not revenue creation and cultural construction. With a full accountability, the efforts under this logic have been a series of situated fulfilments of political tasks, which are more likely a paternalistic nurturance towards the villages and people, indicating a trend of sustainable development and compensation with the benefits and gains becoming more sharable. The capital was skeptical and hesitate due to the initially conservative political context, and the people have had a similar shift of spatial scarcity in their notion, being

from a material one to a conceptual one. However, their responsive practices have brought in more traditions into the new environment. Designers have shown a similar detachment when facing such a more rural place that has offered more freedoms and possibilities to design, still imposing conventional design methods on it; designer's significance has been again downgraded in this organized space production in a more compromised balance supported by stakeholders other than design.

The results of this form growth, if seen from design perspective, is not satisfying at all, as the space quality in this 'spatial practice' is low, with few place-making goals achieved. The space production for growth lacks an integrated and effective control from a regional design guide which could be created and promoted among these stakeholders by urban design wisdoms. However, the fact is that these form results have been uniformly accepted by other groups in this compromised process. As the theme of 'growth' continues in all the stakeholders, design quality would seem to be continuously covered and overlooked. However, form growth in traditional towns will eventually be overtaken by form renovation one day, when the urban-rural integration has been generally achieved with the mode of Land Finance abandoned and construction of NRD greatly slowed. Then the space quality and profile of design might be emphasized more.

Chapter 8: Relocation and Renovation of Dwellings and Houses in Inventory as a Form Renovation

8.1 Introduction

This case explains a different pattern of form transformation relating to the living space in Huizhou, which has been caused by another kind of contextual space production — the space production in inventory against the background of local urbanization and rural development. Indeed, as a phenomenon whilst the form is still growing around towns in Huizhou, the existing stock of form across towns and villages there has also been altered, upgraded and renovated, and this latter trend has been especially evident in villages.

Nevertheless, compared to the space production for growth, the space production in inventory in Huizhou has not been as evident. Although it has been increasingly popular and creating significant changes in an evolutionary manner, it has maintained a relatively low profile. The form changes have had a number of common characteristics: they are slow in pace, cheap in investment, unconcentrated in distribution, inconsistent in process, un-unified in design, and focused on more individual buildings or smaller districts. However, for these same reasons, the changes have had an effect being more radical and thorough, creating an increasingly fragmented built environment outside cities.

This kind of contextual space production has been mainly driven by two local causes — preservation and revitalization, all promoted by the local government and was started from its cultural logic. Preservation has aimed at conserving and utilizing the form and space carrying Huizhou cultural identity (the unique Huizhou culture, tradition and character), through relocating some historical or traditional buildings (dwellings) to other environments to have them protected, repaired, and utilized, or just renovating and utilizing more of them 'on site'. It has pioneered the introduction of nongovernment funds into relevant efforts.

Revitalization has aimed at opening more buildings (most of them houses) towards investment to have them upgraded, utilized and hence revitalized, many of which have been in Huizhou villages and not necessarily being historical or traditional. When this cause meets rural properties, it closely connects with the Rural Revitalization and can be a reification of this grand policy. Revitalization has been extending the measures of renovation to a broader range of buildings to have them accommodate new functions. In general, thus, relocation and renovation has become two main themes (practices) of this space production. Indeed, they have been closely related to the industry of tourism held in local traditional towns and villages.

Relocation and renovation were first comprehensively promoted by a local policy called '*Baicun Qianzhuang*' (one hundred villages and one thousand buildings, 2009-2014) (BCQZ), which listed a great number of historical dwellings in Huizhou to protect. With the help of market forces officially introduced in, it allowed the practice to relocate some of these old dwellings from their original contexts, causing controversies regarding issues of authenticity and sustainability. Renovations also allowed these houses to be rented/adopted by new owners (operators/developers), who could considerably alter the inner space and functions following their own visions. In these two themes under the cause of 'preservation', 'utilization' was promoted, as a mean of positive preservation rather than passive preservation. When renovation has been further extended beyond preservation later, a growing number of outside operators/developers (investors) and designers have come to Huizhou towns and villages to seek for opportunities from the buildings in inventory with local people largely supporting or joining them. They together with the locals have had their own understandings and interests regarding the renovation of the contextual form and space, evident by the boom in the conversion of existing buildings into rural guesthouses/inns, clubs, cafes, restaurants, studios, and museums. However, there have been few attempts

inspired by urban design wisdoms to lead and coordinate such efforts to achieve better form results. As a consequence, the overall quality of space, the place-making, and the broader socio-political implications relating to these form developments have often been misunderstood or neglected.

In addition, the two local causes of preservation and revitalization have been interrelated in a sequence. Preservation was first raised to tackle the demolition of traditional built environment and the consequent loss of local cultural identity during the development. and this cultural identity related to physical form has been continuously cherished in revitalization, as for rejuvenating and enriching the traditional culture (Huizhou culture) against the background formed by the strong Huizhou mentality and the greater course of 'cultural confidence', and also for place promotion efforts in local tourist industry. Actually, the renovation measures in preservation have actually pioneered relevant methods that have been later learned and promoted by renovation efforts in revitalization, such as methods for repairing and reutilizing the listed ancient dwellings having typical traditional plans and structures. Also, those later renovated projects, represented by a growing number of rural inns and bars, have often been built around the preserved historical ones, as they tend to be the cores of related built environment, being able to attract people and create places. Revitalization could not be better implemented without the preservation of historical buildings and preservation needs to be continued in the revitalization. There have been shared values among both causes regarding the form changes: retaining and nurturing the local culture, tradition, and character carried in the built environment, and utilizing them for developing local tourism and economy, so as to contribute to local urbanization and rural development.

The following discussion hence explains the roles of different stakeholders underlying

this two local causes driving this form change, based on the field findings[107] and analytical mode built earlier.

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[107] Field findings indicate to the data collected in various forms selected by the methodology (e.g., documents and texts, interviews, observations, second hand materials, personal experience). However, it is not possible to indicate the data origin for every piece of information presented in the following discussions as writing reference notes in the bottom of pages. Indeed, the explanation and narrative are based on comprehensive and integrated analyses of the 'field findings', which is a synthetic process for understanding and answering research questions. Many components of the discussions are hard to be individually related to a single form of data.

8.2 Top-down level — the role of local government power

The local government has been influenced by a more complicated combination of power logics in supplying conceived space towards the inventory of built environment, compared to those in offering space in the change for growth. The subordinate three faces of power logic have been more entangled without any of them being at a dominant position, like the economic logic in the first case. The three have concurrently driven this form development and there has been a subtle balance, compromise or tension between them. Indeed, as the sub-logics have formed integrated mechanisms, it is even harder to isolate their individual contributions, yet the following discussion still tries to explain each of them as only for the purpose of analysis, being aware of that every face of power logic has been corelated with other two.[108]

Economically, as always, fiscal revenue has been a key for local governments, yet for seeking revenue in this case they cannot relied on 'Land Finance' that could easily cause huge form changes. The logic goes back to nurturing local industries, especially tourism, but with limited tax generated. Hence, it seems that the political and cultural considerations have had stronger influences on the form change initially. Economic gains have been expected to be sharable and achieved in a longer term; cultural logic has aimed to sustain the local cultural identity and brand the places, which would help develop tourism and other related industries; political responsibilities have acted as the foundation, having aimed to improve the well-being of local people and support local development through supporting the other two considerations. These responsibilities are represented by the fundamental improvement of infrastructures in local villages,

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[108] The explanations and narratives in this section are mainly based on the interviews with officials involving the relocation and renovation of dwellings and houses, and on relevant documents. Yet the data from second-hand materials are also helpful.

special policies for preservation efforts, and the gradual opening of rural land to activate relevant properties. The political support has not totally become a direct compensation as that in the first cause.

Overall, the local government has tended to take a back seat in the relocation and renovation processes, without any direct participation in influencing this space production, yet they have sought to control, manage, regulate and service relevant efforts merely by setting policies and regulations.

8.2.1 Preservation, utilization or promotion? — the compromised cultural construction

The logic has been to sustain Huizhou cultural identity through its influence on this space production. It started the local preservation of historical built environment, and has then promoted the continuation of cultural identity in form changes in a broader and newer inventory, linking preservation and revitalization together.

The cultural logic has well reflected the long-existing Huizhou mentality, and was stronger and more systematic than other sub-logics at the beginning, because the local efforts of saving the declining tangible culture was urgent and comprehensive. These efforts also manifested the role of Huizhou cultural identity in forming the backbone of local tourism. Indeed, from a broader point of view, the cultural logic has been continuously enhanced by an increasing awareness of the significance of cultural identity among Huizhou authorities and people, which has been demonstrated by the national and local efforts in establishing an Experimental Zone for Huizhou Cultural Ecology Protection in recent years.[109] From another perspective, in a global or domestic

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[109] As mentioned by Fang and Wang (2015, p.56), the tangible culture was seen as the foundation of this zone.

tourism market being increasingly competitive, whilst other places have fewer tangible heritages left and hence manufactured those heritages to cater to consumers' growing interests (ed. Alsayyad, 2001), Huizhou is lucky enough to have inherently inherited plenty of such precious resources from the past, most of which are the ancient dwellings remaining in its towns and villages. There is no reason to abandon it. Thus, the following discussion tries to restore the local governments' minds and behaviours during their exertions of the cultural face of power.

8.2.1.1 The necessity — the declining tangible culture

Figure 8.1. The historical dwellings mixed with modern houses (source: Author).

Although the geographical and historical conditions in Huizhou had helped many of its ancient buildings to survive ups and downs, this kind of tangible culture had still suffered significant destruction in the local process of urbanization and rural development.[110] A number of reasons could be held accountable for this problem:

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[110] In 2007, there were 6079 historical dwellings in the region (Huangshan Social Science League, 2007), yet their number had been decreasing quickly by 5% annually (Zhao, 2013).

First, many local rural people left villages and abandoned their houses in the urbanization process, many of which were historical dwellings (Huangshan Social Science League, 2007; Sun and Tang, 2013). Those post and panel structures decayed quickly for lacking sufficient maintenance, and the complicated and dispersed property rights of these houses brought by the first land reform (Ni and Wang, 2014, pp.55-56) has made maintenance more difficult. Second, people's desire for modern life has caused bottom-up alterations as the ancient living space were too dark and damp due to its outdated configuration (Huangshan Social Science League, 2007; Sun and Tang, 2013). Many locals tended to tear down the old for building new ones as an achievement of new life (Figure 8.1). Also, big families (clans) had broken into to smaller ones (nuclear family) (op. cit., 2014, p.56), with new homes being modernized, simplified and isolated, yet partly collaging some old symbols like the form of *matouqiang*. Third, many outside buyers had purchased the historic buildings or their components and smuggled them outside Huizhou for private collecting or exhibiting (Gao, 2012; Sun and Tang, 2013; Fang and Wang, 2015, p.151, p.158, pp.162-174) under vague and immature legal regulations.[111] The grey trades were once supported by some local villagers as a source of income, with the government lacking effective enforcement powers to stop this (Gao, 2012). Fourth, the rural construction since BNSC had also damaged the traditional environment, as they initially focused on the rural infrastructures rather than the tangible heritages, whose value were greatly underestimated by the organizers whilst hurriedly fulfilling the construction assignments (Yao, Na and Cai, 2016).[112] Fifth, during the early stage of local tourism, many historical villages were often separately packaged to investors, many of whom had enclosed the villages with short-sighted views. For attracting visitors, they tended to carelessly change some heritages into new buildings, resulting a lot of pastiches

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[111] Those for sale were not treated as relics and thus not fully protected by law.

[112] This organized destruction was also caused by the expansion of town centres.

mixing with authentic ones (Huangshan Social Science League, 2007, p.4; Fang and Wang, 2015., p.158). Sixth, before 2009, there were no comprehensive, grounded and effective legal regulations to deal with this crisis (Gao, 2012). The existing regulations then had not covered the whole Huizhou region.[113] They were not supported by effective enforcement bodies and punishment mechanisms, and relevant local authorities did not clearly understand the territories and boundary of responsibilities (Wang, 2008). The lack of public funds had also exacerbated the predicament (ibid.).

However, as the Huizhou mentality was still strong among local authorities and educated people,[114] an organized campaign for saving the crisis of the tangible culture was thus launched in 2009.

8.2.1.2 The pioneer of a method — a brief introduction

The project of *Baicun Qianzhuang* (one hundred villages and one thousand buildings) (BCQZ) was such a campaign across Huangshan city. It was implemented through a system of local regulations. The key one was: *The Implementation Plan of 'Baicun Qianzhuang' — Preservation and Utilization Project for Historical Dwellings in Huangshan* (Huangshan Municipal Party Committee and Government, 2009). It aimed to have 101 ancient villages and 1065 ancient dwellings protected and utilized in two phases within 5 years from 2009-2013, with 30 villages equipped with tourism-related new business types, 10 protection sites for concentrating relocated ancient dwellings built, and the tourist number doubled.

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[113] A provincial level regulation — *Regulations of Anhui Province on the Protection of Ancient Dwellings* (People's Congress of Anhui Province, 1997) does not cover the other two historical Huizhou counties (Jixi and Wuyuan) outside Anhui province.

[114] For example, the *Huangshan Social Science League* did a comprehensive survey of the historical dwellings and offered pertinent recommendations early in 2007. See Huangshan Social Science League, 2007.

According to the implementation plan (ibid.), the main value of this project was to integrate preservation and utilization, and to combine tourism and culture through exploring connections between government leadership, market operation and society engagement. It aimed to achieve 'functional transformation' built on preservation and utilization, 'characteristic transformation' based on cultural accumulation, 'spirit transformation' rooted in context inheritance, and 'capital transformation' promoted by market operation. The plan's significance was to benefit the conservation of cultural resources, the upgrading of local tourist industry, the construction of new socialist countryside (BNSC) and the improvement of Huangshan city' image. And its implementation needed to uphold five principles: the connection of foremost preservation and appropriate utilization, the combination of scientific planning and law-based implementation, the cooperation between government leadership and market operation, the connection of targeted guidance and graded responsibility, and the coordination between public opinions and official promotion.

Principal one further mentioned that the purpose of preservation was to have a better utilization. It aimed to change 'passive preservation' into 'preservation and utilization with innovative protecting mode and flexible developing ideas', so as to form a dialectical relationship, virtuous circle and interactive development between preservation and utilization (ibid.).

Principle three further stressed the leadership of government, and suggested to actively seek financial and political support from upper governments whilst employing market methods under relevant rules. It emphasized the branding of projects and introduction of investment, so as to tap out the potential of market force (ibid.).
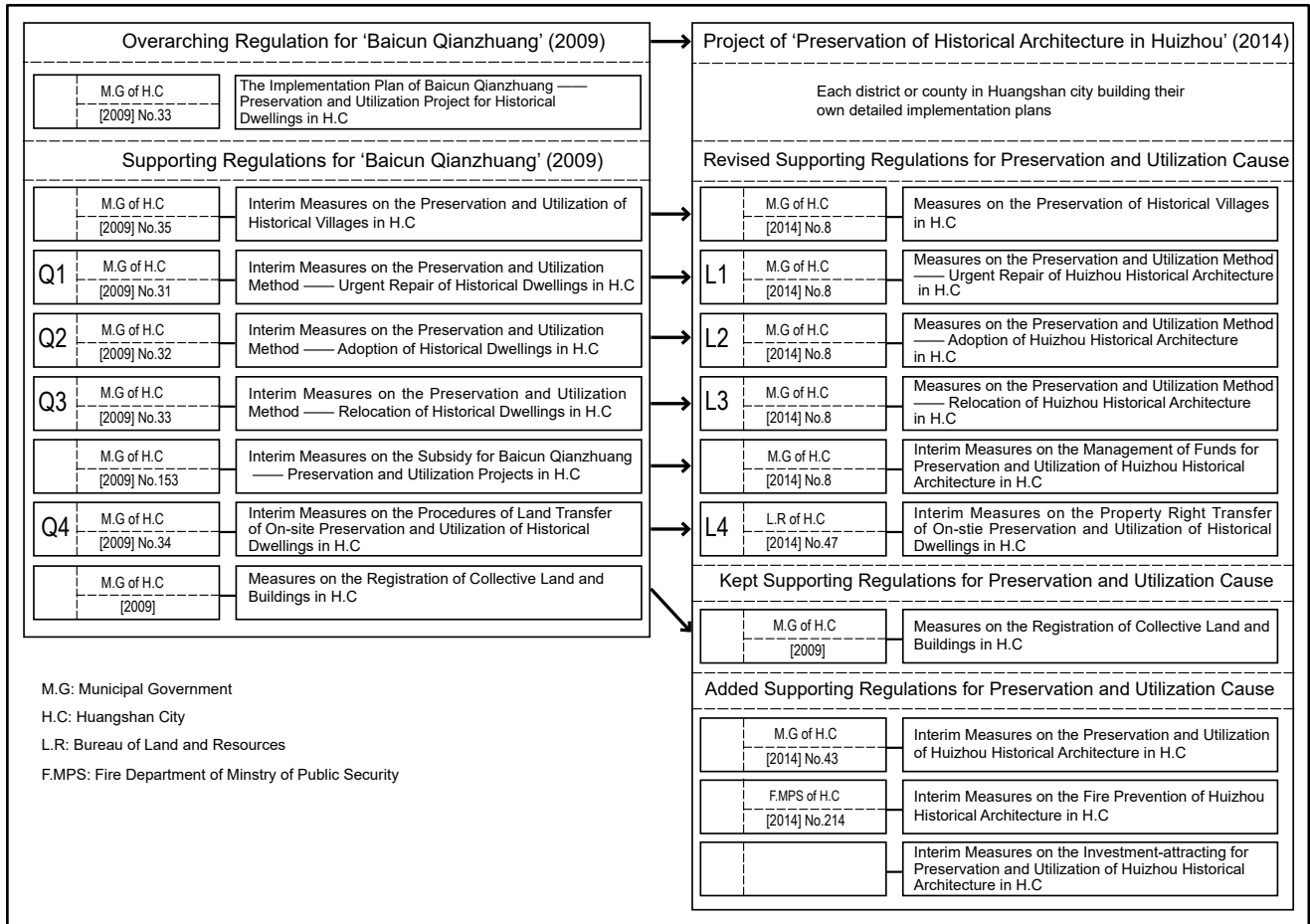
Figure 8.2. The whole policy system of BCQZ and the development of the system (source: adapted from Yao et al., p.18).

The plan treated preservation and utilization as one combined effort whilst dividing the effort into two modes: the on-site one and off-site one, which was the origin of the two themes: renovation and relocation. Also, however, in defining the content such an effort, it separated preservation and utilization as two operations and endowed them different details. For the content details in each preservation and utilization, the plan further divided them for two objects: the historic village as a whole area and the ancient dwelling as individual buildings (ibid.) (Figure 8.4).

Indeed, in practice, the plan was supported by seven regulations (Figure 8.2), and the whole policy system could be understood in three parts as objectives, technical measures and supporting measures (Yao et al., 2016) (Figure 8.3).
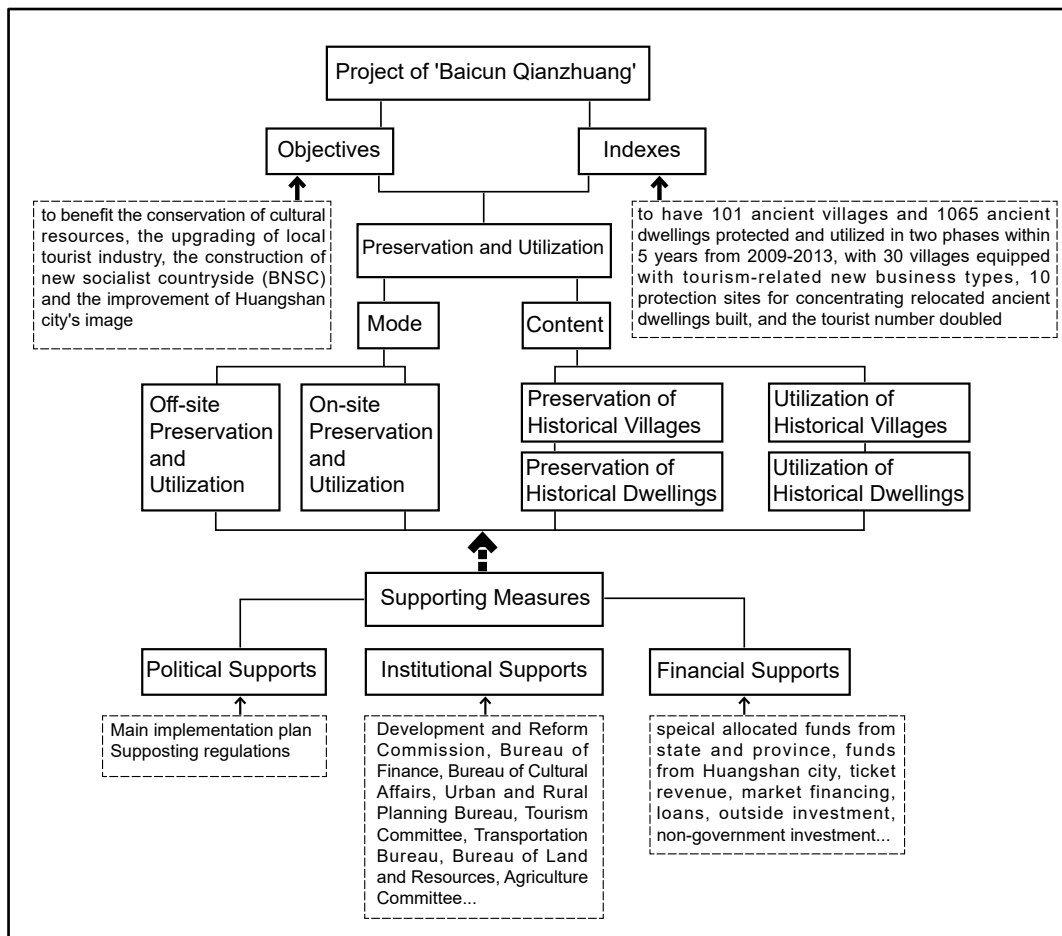
Figure 8.3. Three parts of the policy system (source: adapted from Yao et al., 2016, p.18).

The achievement of this five years' effort was large. More than 6 billion *yuan* were invested into the campaign with 2/3 of them from nongovernment sectors. 101 historic villages were offered preservation and utilization plans with their built environment beautified, and 1325 historical dwellings were repaired. More than 50 historic villages were opened to tourists, and 13 off-site 'relocation' districts were built. Also, nearly 900 local craftsmen were trained to form a professional group having relevant high-end craftsmanship (Qiao and Jin, 2014). In addition, in terms of economic returns related to tourism, 19 kinds of new business types were created in more than 900 places, attracting nongovernmental investment of more than 2.4 billion *yuan*, and in 2013, the number of visitors reached to 25.5 million, bringing about a total income of 15 billion *yuan* (Jiang and Zhou, 2014).

The merits and drawbacks of this project could be further concluded based on the summary of Yao et al. (2016) and Fang and Wang (2015, pp.145-154). For the merits, first, it pioneered a multiple funding channel, allowing nongovernment funds to join in the government-led cause. Second, it developed the conventional mode of preservation into 'preservation and utilization' with new business types introduced into the practices of renovation and relocation. Third, the project was an integrated approach, aiming at both tangible and intangible heritages and also promoting wider cooperation and coordination between different local authorities rather than merely relying on local cultural-relic departments. Fourth, it helped to inherit and improve many traditional techniques and crafts in protecting and restoring historical architecture in Huizhou. These included not only skills hiding in old documents and personal experiences, but also specific skills being updated to connect with modern construction conditions. Fifth, it facilitated local tourism through improving the tangible culture, raised local people's income and increased the public awareness of cherishing Huizhou cultural identity.

Nevertheless, the drawbacks could be found in mainly three aspects. First, the public funds were far from enough, letting nongovernmental investment with commercial mindsets challenging the balance between preservation and utilization, with the latter often overly emphasised and inappropriately implemented into commercial developments (Fang and Wang, 2015, pp.150-152). Second, the practice of renovation and relocation were both controversial. The former was often sometimes fulfilled by unsympathetically adding exotic functions and irrelevant components into the on-site dwellings whilst the latter totally cut the root of the relocated ones, being against to the significance of 'authenticity' (ibid., p.151, p.158, pp.162-174). Without a clear criterion on the selection of 'to be moved' ones, 'relocation' was often mistakenly and maliciously implemented, reversely offering a false legitimacy to cover some illegal 'trading and relocating' activities (Yao et al., 2016). Third, the supporting institutional

and managerial system was still lagging behind. The coordination between this project and other rural policies was not satisfying with contradictions often occurring (ibid.). The dwellings outside the 101 and 1065 listed ones were hence often 'rationally' overlooked (op. cit., 2015, p.153, p.109; Gao, 2012). The allocation of public funds was not well balanced between relics and non-relics, discouraging those individuals living in the latter from supporting preservation (Yao et al., 2016). In addition, the illegal transfer of rural land use right was not strictly prohibited, allowing many 'adoption' cases in on-site preservation and utilization not to fulfil full legal procedures(ibid.).[115] Also, the social sustainability was sometimes neglected by the 'movement' sense. For example, in those preserved areas, self-build activities from locals were either strictly prohibited, being against their real demands for new living space, or loosely controlled, damaging the traditional context (ibid.).

In 2014, the project of BCQZ was developed into a more general campaign called 'Preservation of Historic Architecture in Huizhou' (Huangshan Daily, 2014a, 2014b; Huang, 2014) that is still being promoted currently. Instead of the unified implementation plan of BCQZ, each district or county in Huangshan city can build their own detailed implementation plans under this new campaign (Figure 8.2). Those supporting regulations were still kept and updated, with three new ones joined them and the term 'interim' in their titles removed (Figure 8.2). According to Yao et al. (2016), the main updates of the system were: the grassroots role of collectives and villagers was highlighted; the subject of responsibility for each case was clarified to be the property owner; the utilization of historic properties through commercial was further promoted. However, the three measures of adoption, relocation and urgent repair have not been changed a lot in the updated regulations (ibid.). In 2017 a more overarching local regulation — *Regulation on Preservation of Historical Architecture in Huangshan City* (Standing Committee of People's Congress of Huangshan city, 2017)

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[115] In many cases, the related land was rural homestead land which could not be transferred on market.

was launched based on the experience of BCQZ. It still adopts the 'on-site' and 'off-site' preservation mode, yet with the 'off-site' operation being the last option. The term of 'utilization' has been removed from the title, yet with the content about utilization still largely kept.

8.2.1.3 The two practices

As a key embodiment of the cultural logic, the two modes of preservation and utilization raised in BCQZ has formally introduced 'renovation' and 'relocation' as two practices driving this space production from top-down.

According to the *Implementation Plan of 'Baicun Qianzhuang'* (BCQZ) (Huangshan Municipal Party Committee and Government, 2009), 'renovation' originated from on-site preservation and utilization, whose objects were divided into on-site key ones and on-site general ones (Figure 8.4). The former were those historical and cultural towns & villages and cultural relics that were listed above provincial level. Relevant operations were strictly controlled to not altering their original states to keep their integrity and historical authenticity. The latter were the rest of such towns, villages and dwellings. For them, "on the basis of keeping the styles and features of historic villages and dwellings, partial and interior alteration can be approved, for expanding space and developing tourist projects, with the form, height, volume, colour harmonizing with the context." (ibid.)

'Relocation' came from off-site preservation and utilization, aiming for off-site concentrated ones and off-site scattered ones. The former were those historical dwellings that were treated unsuitable for on-site operations. They thus needed to be moved together to be protected and utilized, in principle, within Huangshan city. This needed to be based on scientific discussions and planning and to form additive and

combined effects. The latter were those single dwellings to be moved from their original places to somewhere else for more effective preservation and rational utilization (ibid.). As mentioned by this plan, relocation had to be assessed and discussed by experts, and reviewed, recorded, approved by relevant departments, and in principle, dwellings within the 101 villages and relics listed above provincial level must not be moved (ibid.).
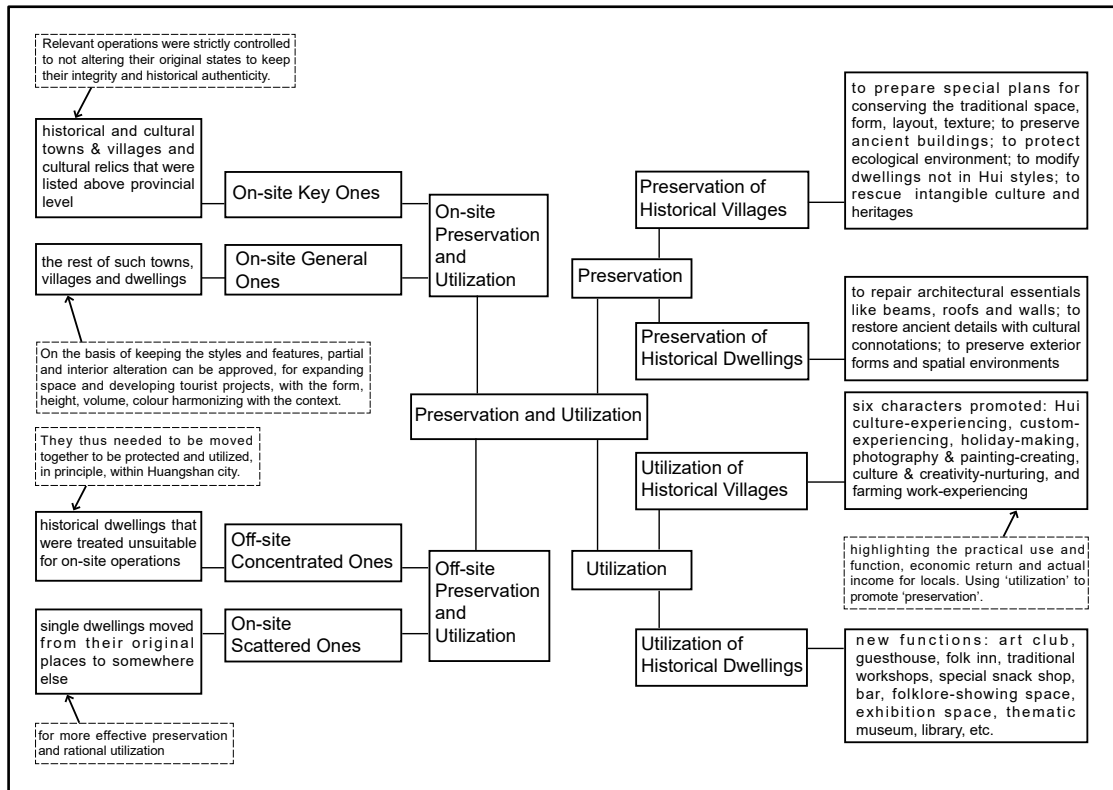
Figure 8.4. The two practices in the policy system (source: adapted from the *Implementation Plan of BCQZ*).

However, the operational contents of 'preservation' and 'utilization' were separately defined, with each group aiming for both villages and dwellings (ibid.). For preserving historic villages, the requirements were: to prepare special plans for conserving the traditional space, form, layout, texture and related characters; to preserve ancient buildings therein; to protect ecological environment as ancient trees, rural landscapes and village bayous; to modify dwellings not in Hui style; and to rescue relevant intangible culture and heritages (ibid.). For preserving historic dwellings, the repair work was highlighted, such as to repair architectural essentials like beams, roofs and

walls; to restore ancient details with cultural connotations like the 'three craftmanship of sculpture';[116] and to preserve exterior forms and spatial environments (ibid.).

In terms of utilization, the plan inclined to the practical use and function, especially the economic return and actual income for locals. Using 'utilization' to promote 'preservation' was the main topic. For using historic villages, it promoted six types of character for them: Hui culture-experiencing, custom-experiencing, holiday-making, photography & painting-creating, culture & creativity-nurturing, and farming work-experiencing. For utilizing dwellings, it suggested a wide range of new functions: rural art club, guesthouse, folk inn, traditional workshops, special snack shop, bar, folklore-showing space, exhibition space, thematic museum, rural library, etc (ibid.).

For historical dwellings, preservation and utilization were supported by three 'interim measures' (Q1, Q2 and Q3 in Figure 8.2) with relevant action types stated in their titles — urgent repair, adoption and relocation, and have been similarly supported by the 2014 updated three measures (L1, L2 and L3 in Figure 8.2). The first two largely related to the practice of 'renovation'. Nevertheless, these practical actions have proved to be controversial, with relocation being more problematic.

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[116] This includes the carving of wood, stone and brick; these three kinds of decorative art have formed a special Hui school.
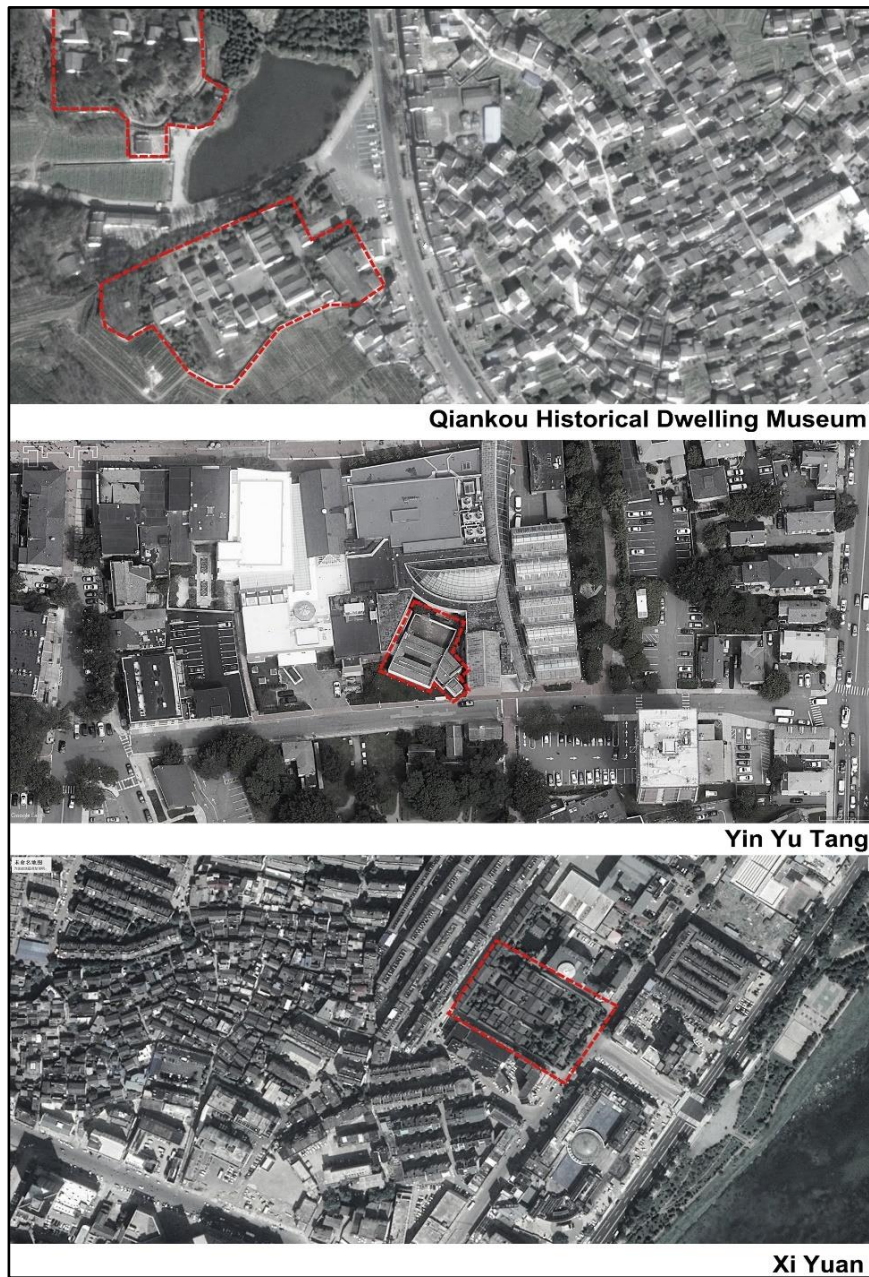
Figure 8.5. Qiankou Historical Dwelling Museum was assembled near Qiankou town; *Yin Yu Tang* is now in north Boston; *Xi Yuan* was assembled concentratedly in the town centre of She (source: adapted from Google Earth Image).

For relocating the dwellings, 'why' was vaguely answered by 'not suitable for on-site preservation' and 'how' was simply outlined in the procedure from application to inspection and punishment (Q3), but 'who' needed to be moved was not specifically defined in detail. Without explicit and strict criteria, a door was officially opened for

relocation activities with various standards. Before BCQZ, the trade or move of non-relic buildings could not be stopped as they were not on preservation lists with effective enforcement mechanism for protection, and for some famous cases, the reasons seemed quite reasonable. For example, Qiankou Historical Dwelling Museum — probably the earliest relocation case (in 1980s) — was officially organized for setting a sample for this trend of protection (Fang and Wang, 2015, pp.162-163); *Yin Yu Tang* (Hall of Plentiful Shelter) (in 2000s) was incidentally moved to USA for cultural exchange (Li, 2014); and *Xi Yuan* (Huizhou Merchants' Grand Mansion) was deliberately assembled for a powerful one's private collection (op. cit., 2015, p.163, p.166) (Figure 8.5). The BCQZ seemed to regulate the behaviours and carved out a right way for these inevitable relocation cases. Nevertheless, it only focused on those non-relics and relics below provincial level and within the 1065 ones (yet outside 101 villages), setting a vague selection rule and allowing "all individuals and organizations with capacity for civil conduct and liability" to join in relevant operations (Q3, article 3 and 4; L3, article 3 and 4). No clear subject was mentioned to be responsible for the selection, so the criteria were easily to be discriminatively made and unfairly applied, potentially pushing the effects to the opposite side with those heritages being more suitable for on-site preservation unwittingly moved or commercially traded.

Under this quasi-official promotion in BCQZ, the number of relocation case had exceeded the target, with 13 of them built with various standards. More, it insensibly drew a line between the listed and unlisted ones. For those outside BCQZ, the relocation could literally happen to them without restrictions. Later, the 2014 updated measure of relocation (L3) added a rule treating the on-site preservation as the principal and preferred option yet still not including more detailed selection criteria (L3, article 3).

Both official measures (Q3 and L3) stressed the principles of relocation like 'preservation and rescue first' and 'not to alter the original state', for protecting and

continuing the authentic information from history. However, related technical requirements were loosely defined as only 'mapping, recording, photographing' those to be moved and documenting relevant files (article9 in Q3 and L3), with details of how to keep the information in the moving and rebuilding process not included. The issue of authenticity (despite its debatable significance) was not respected enough in due course. If the relocation cases before BCQZ were to fake an authenticity, ironically, the relocation for preservation did not seek an 'authentic' authenticity; sometimes it evoked a worse 'creative destruction' compared to previous Qiankou Museum and *Yin Yu Tang* cases keeping much higher standards and more respects in treating the buildings during a much longer time range. For some cases during or after BCQZ, the rebuilding process was less rigorous. New settlements gathering historic buildings were quickly finished, and scattered dwellings were unsympathetically dug out and assembled into hybrids. Hubian Ancient Village, a famous government-run relocation project near city centre, moved 14 historical buildings to jointly creating a nostalgic waterfront settlement with 26 newly-built pseudo-historic ones (Wang, 2015) (Figure 8.6-8.7). Liyang Old Mansion, a private cultural village for tourism, grafted an unsourced ancestral hall and some old components onto other buildings with various historical backgrounds, arbitrarily mixing them into a reappearance (Fang and Wang, 2015).

The action of 'rooting buildings out' was most controversial in terms of preservation values and ethics as their context was totally cut off. Even *Yin Yu Tang* as a relatively successful case was criticised as it was after all transplanted outside Huizhou as a perfect simulation deliberately choreographed, despite all the dedicated efforts to sustain the aura of authenticity in all aspects (Li, 2014). For the Qiankou Museum, although it strictly respected 'authenticity' under experts' guidance and became a benchmark of relevant techniques (Fang and Wang, 2015), it still walled different houses and disconnected them from original contexts, with their value not being

effectively conveyed in the new site (Li, 2014).

Figure 8.6. The bird's-eye view of Hubian Ancient Village. The buildings have been developed into shops, tea houses, bars, restaurants, inns, studios, etc. (source: courtesy of Du Wei).

Figure 8.7. Hubian Ancient Village assembled with dwellings relocated from other places. The project is situated in a new site on a river bank, to the South of a commercial gated community near Huangshan city centre (source: Google Earth).

The movement sense of BCQZ (being a huge cultural task within a limited time) and the commercial motivations of utilization could be accountable for the neglect of authenticity. Especially, utilization was often used to justify related actions. For example, the Hubian Ancient Village was set to both present Huizhou culture and explore their economic value through commercial operations maximizing the financial return (Wang, 2015). Under this mindset, its promoter prioritized 'public demands' over the interrogation of 'authenticity', as he believed that if the current form of these non-relic historical buildings already became accepted symbols, there must be no need to dig out the original faces — repair on the status quo being better to meet public demands and interests(ibid.). Also, a local designer from a design institute (with a government background) who was involved in relocation cases had a similar opinion:[117] "Authenticity has to be achieved in a compromise. If not utilized, the buildings may not be preserved at all, and also the relocation sites sometimes are good for promoting Huizhou." This showed an inevitable contradiction between authenticity and development, as what Alsayyad has cautioned, "...where the global industry reigns supreme, the notion of authenticity has sometimes been cut completely loose from its moorings." (Alsayyad, 2001, p.25)
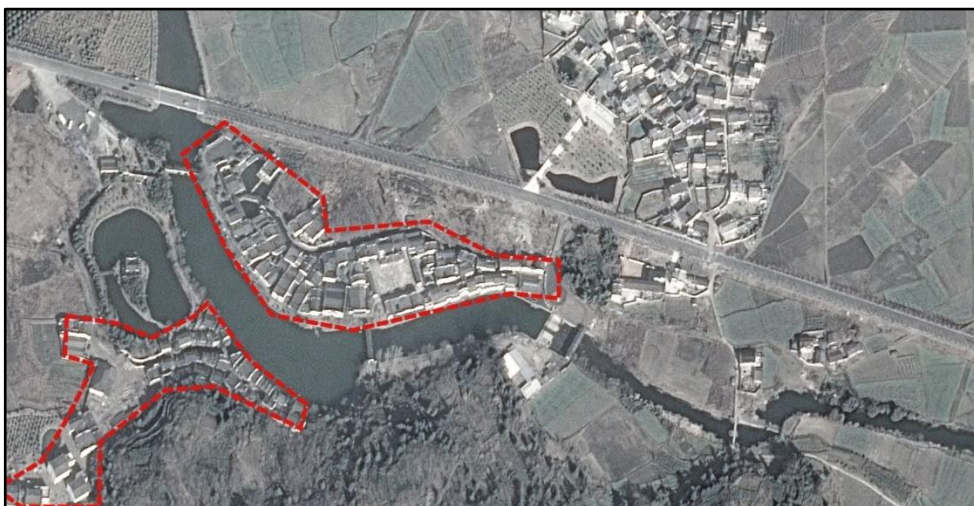
Figure 8.8. The location of Xiuli Studio Village for the film industry, located to the North of Yi county centre (source: Google Earth).

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[117] Interview by the author, on 06/05/2021.

Besides the problematic issue of 'authenticity', the locations of relocation cases were more intolerable for breaking the form consistency. Many of such sites were suddenly created in isolation. For example, Hubian Ancient Village was built along a natural river bank (Figure 8.7), Xiuli Studio Village was assembled to the south of a county road (Figure 8.8), and Liyang Old Mansion was arranged among hills near a motor way. They were more likely to be stage settings, form collages, and montages in enclaves, rather than continued parts of existing traditional form texture. The selections of location were under conventional planning frameworks without integrated urban design considerations, having further fragmented the form of Huizhou towns and villages.

These relocation cases have been welcomed during the Rural Revitalization as they formed new 'authentic', hybrid, and noted places being helpful for branding tourism and starting up new projects. However, the intrinsic contradictions, the outside criticism, and politically complicated property right issues have cool them down.

Another two actions — urgent repair and adoption implementing the practice of renovation did not root out the historical dwellings. Instead, they focused on repairing structures, walls and roofs, refurbishing inside space, expanding functions and attracting funds from investors and adopters. Unfortunately, 'authenticity' similarly gave way to utilization as Q1 clearly said to "expand the function and space to create economic benefits" (article 3) after repair work and Q2 and L2 all welcomed adopters voluntarily funding historical buildings for the purpose of preservation, management, development and utilization. The adopters or investors' interests and views were not strictly checked, and many 'repair' and 'adoption' cases were encouraged to be done through 'renting' or 'purchasing' deals (Q1, article 9). These deals were politically supported, especially in terms of property rights and land attributes.

Figure 8.9. The modern room in a historical structure in Xixinan (Weiyanfu Hotel of Shi Lili Group) (source: Trip.com. Available at: https://hk.trip.com/hotels/huangshan-hotel-detail-5767961/shilily-hotel/).

Figure 8.10. The modern bathroom in a historical structure in Xixinan (Weiyanfu Hotel of Shi Lili Group) (source: Trip.com. Available at: https://hk.trip.com/hotels/huangshan-hotel-detail-5767961/shilily-hotel/).

However, the contradictions between modern lifestyles or commercial functions brought in by adopters/investors and ancient physical configurations especially the inside form and space were hard to solve (also discussed in Section 8.3). This put the

inner parts of these repaired and adopted houses in the danger of discriminatory alterations following the various new functions, because such alterations were actually not prohibited if not changing the original state or framework, and if having minimal interventions (Q1, L1, Q2, L2)[118] (Figure 8.9-8.10). Preservation has been essentially overtaken by utilization, and the local preservation cause — the initial implementation of cultural logic has largely gone into a process similar to 'consuming tradition and manufacturing heritages', or it has been more likely to be 'optimizing the utilization of heritages within heritages'. The value of authenticity has been after all fabricated and compromised rather than reflected, as "the value of a historical product cannot be debated without taking into account both the context of its production and the context of its consumption." (Trouillot, 1995, p.146)

For renovating a broader range of properties other than historical ones, as promoting the revitalization cause, the renovation operations have been allowed to be even more anarchic, because the alterations of both inner and outside form and space have had fewer sensible controls, especially in the absence of integrated urban design considerations across local towns and villages, which could offer appropriate design codes and guidelines. Not for fulfilling preservation, the cultural logic underlying renovation could become shallow understanding of Hui style again, and was once implemented in an extreme manner.

8.2.1.4 The mentality is strong: a top-down extreme renovation

Interestingly, when BCQZ allowed personalised influences on the contextual form and space in inventory through opening the relocation and renovation practices to individuals or organizations from nongovernment sectors, another parallel form

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[118] This measures again did not offer the criteria of 'not changing the original state' or 'minimal interventions'.

campaign dominated by the power of government control happened. It was called '*Gai Hui*', aiming at creating a unified Hui style and feature in the built environment of all important areas, so as to enhance and promote the Huizhou image from top down. The campaign emerged around 2006 and reached its climax around 2012. Literally, '*Gai Hui*' meaned 'changing to Hui style'. In its application, it generally required that any building seen from main view angles that was not in Hui style must be changed mainly by adding *matouqiang* and repainting the wall. This was an extensive yet shallow renovation effort promoted by an urgently and comprehensively implemented cultural logic showing a stronger Huizhou mentality. However, compared to the cultural logic overseeing concentrated and organized form changes for growth in the first case, it faced more difficulties in creating a unified narrative of cultural identity in form inventory because the targets were very scattered and transient. Nevertheless, the local governments still tried to exert a full control. A report in Huangshan Daily (Yuan, 2013) offered a vivid description of *Gai Hui*:

"A city's style and feature with thick regional character is the most important resource and product of local tourism. To continue and promote the culture of Huizhou architecture is of great significance for Huangshan city's development." A related officer in the planning department has suggested.

…[The government] planned to spend three years to comprehensively regulate and modify the illegal constructions, non-Hui-style buildings and messy environments along main transport lines and tourist routes (within their 300-meters visual scopes), along Xin'an river banks and around important scenic spots.

...every building included is offered a *Gai Hui* plan, and their files are created based on the rule of 'one building one file'. By coordinating matouqiang,

sloping roof and black-white-grey colour, a target being that 'symbols can be seen nearby; colours can be seen from afar; styles can be felt in general' can be achieved.

…

"Three years' work has been finished in two!" The chief engineer of urban planning bureau Mr. Liu told the reporter: " In Huangshan city, the number of *'Gai Hui's* targets was 16000, which was to be covered in three years, yet more than 9000 ones had been finished by 2012, and another 8200 has been done by this November. The proposed task has been outstripped in a shorter time."

Later, a larger environment regulation campaign aiming at areas in 'three lines and three edges' (the edges between cities, provinces, scenic spots and the lines alone railways, roads, rivers) was extensively lunched as an expansion of *Gai Hui* (Hangshan Daily, 2014). Indeed, many towns and villages in Huizhou had thoroughly incorporated *Gai Hui* into their respective developments and constructions. The municipal government also connected it to bigger causes like Urban-Rural Integration, Building an International Tourism City, and Construction of Beautiful Village, with a sense of fulfilling a political task (Qi, 2013). *Gai Hui* thus has been officially reported to have greatly improved people's living environment, contributed to the boom of rural tourism like agritainment, and raised local people's income (e.g., Huangshan Daily, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c).

However, the culture logic underlying *Gai Hui* was still shallow. Whilst efforts in BCQZ had nominally strived to universally achieve an authenticity, this attempt to revive cultural identity only in facade had lacked any sense of authenticity. Essentially, *Gai Hui* was a cosmetic with many of its cases creating pastiches. It neither strictly complied with the style control zoning (in the *Temporary Regulations of Huangshan*

City on Managing and Protecting the Hui style in Architecture mentioned in Sub-section 7.2.3) to rationally continue the Hui style, nor resorted to conventional renovation measures. The form results produced can best demonstrate its problems. *Matouqiang* as a key element was hastily and awkwardly added on the roofs, being at strange positions irrelevant to structures below (Figure 8.11). In many non-discriminatory operations, no matter what style and function the building originally was, *matouqiang* and black/white/grey colour were imposed on them, as long as it was treated as 'an eyesore.' Many non-house buildings like offices were forced to added such symbols without proper design. In this sense the *Gai Hui* movement became an extreme and alienated renovation. More, significant amount of funds was poured into it and corruptions happened (Wu, 2016). A retired local officer involved in *Gai Hui* has commented that:[119]

Figure 8.11. The nonsensical addition of *matouqiang* on some buildings along the street as the result of the *Gai Hui* movement. These buildings were not originally built in the Hui style (source: Author).

It was totally a surface movement and to some extent only symbolic. The government paid a large bill, but the locals did not always buy it, and

[119] Interview by the author, on 21/07/2019

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corruptions and contradictions also happened, yet with the result being not so effective in forming Huizhou identity. We need to be more confident and honest to the tradition, as well as to the changes made by historical conditions.

8.2.2 Supporting, nurturing rather than giving — the political responsibilities towards sharable benefits

As a foundation to support the local development and ensure the well-being of local people through driving the space production in inventory, the political responsibility can be explained in three aspects in Huizhou: lifting the rural infrastructures and living environment in villages, facilitating the preservation and utilization of physical heritages across towns and villages, and promoting the opening and activation of rural land and properties in a wider range. For the latter two, the political logic has not been a direct compensation; it rather has taken effect through supporting related cultural and economic logics, which promote the development of tourism-related industries through changing the existing stock of form and space. The benefit brought by these industries can hence be well shared by the people there. The logic has been reflected in both local implementations of some national strategies and local political innovations in facing practical conditions.

First, the enormous supports offered to rural developments since the start of BNSC has fundamentally changed the infrastructure and material environment in the mountainous areas of Huizhou.[120] The improvements have been remarkable, such as the new rural concentrated living districts built in better lands, dilapidated houses reinforced and rebuilt, motorway exits set near villages, CRH stations placed near towns, bus lines linking more rural places, more tourist routes planned for cycling and self-driving,

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[120] This fact was also mentioned by interviewees and relevant documents.

broadband plugged in rural households with e-commerce and expressage available, and sewage, refuse treatment, hygiene condition being perfected. Additionally, with more supports put into other aspects like the financial, social, industrial and managerial progresses to more systematically lift the rural area, the foundation for this areas' wider and deeper 'opening up' and industrial development has been achieved and consolidated. This is particularly important for tourism or rural tourism, a major sustainable industry being crucial for local towns and villages.

Second, the local government has timely offered systematic supporting regulations to facilitate the preserving and utilizing of large amounts of historical dwellings, and especially it pioneered the employment of market forces. As exemplified in the names of aforementioned supporting regulations for BCQZ, green lights were tentatively turn on for some innovative measures to manage the form in inventory. This not only immediately relieved the cultural burden of local authorities (lacking funds to protect decaying heritages) and directly benefited local people ('selling' or 'renting' their decaying ancient houses), but also, through supporting underlying cultural and economic considerations, it has promoted local tourism and related industries and hence ultimately benefited the people in a longer term. Politically helping reactivate the obsolete heritages can sustain the cultural identity, nurture wider awareness of their value, and establish a unique tourist brand of 'Huizhou Historical Dwelling' for place promotion, and set a political example for operations under wider circumstances.

Third, in the cause of 'revitalization', 'renovation' has been expanded to other local buildings where appropriate, especially those in Huizhou villages. The political support has been the growing political trend to open the rural area and its resources, such as to loosen the rural land control through land reforms and to reactivate the idle construction land and properties through national or local promotions. It has actually helped to achieve the goals of Rural Revitalization in background: the revitalization of rural

industry, talents, culture, ecology and organization. More particularly, based on the achievements of BNSC and BCQZ, the political support has been able to help revitalize tourism-centred industries through promoting the reactivation of land, properties and resources, contributing to attract and anchor people, raise their incomes, raise the resources value, and further achieve 'Ecological Civilization'. In rural Huizhou, especially the political support is best illustrated by the promotion of *minsu* (homestay/guesthouse) and related hospitality industries during a fast-growing rural tourism.

A key of the political support has been the loosening of rural land control through relevant land reforms. The rural land largely refers to two categories, all owned by village collectives: agricultural land and rural construction land. The latter forms rural built environment and influencing the form change. It can be further divided to three kinds: homestead land (for house sites), non-profit construction land (for public facilities) and profitable construction land (secondary and tertiary industries).

Indeed, the rural land and urban land have been in different tracks, with different management systems. Whilst the paid transfer of use right of stated-owned urban construction land has been maturing for more than three decades, the rural construction land has been strictly kept away from market, with their reform towards marketization far lagging behind.

The rural profitable construction land had been exclusive for TVE (township and village enterprise) with its use right prohibited to be transferred on market (since 1998). Projects other than TVE had had to use state-owned construction land, much of which was created through expropriating rural land and changing their attribute (Qu, Qiao and Huang, 2018). However, along with the developing rural economy, especially in the developed regions like Guangdong and Jiangsu province, the illegally transfer of this

construction land grew quickly and was hard to control. Thus, the reform started to gradually open the direct transfer of such land's use right by conducting years' experiments in these developed regions (Ye, 2017, pp. 262-264). In 2004, the direct transfer of its use right was first nationally legitimised (ibid.; State Council, 2004), and in 2019 the latest amended *Land Administration Law* (NPC Standing Committe, 2019) further lifted the rural profitable construction land to a similar position to the state-owned urban construction land for establishing a unified construction land market across urban and rural areas (Li and Zhang, 2020). This construction land has thus been allowed to directly go to market to have its use right leased, rented to organizations or individuals from cities for industrial and commercial use (except real estate), and the use right can be further 'transferred, exchanged, priced, gifted or mortgaged.' (op. cit., 2019).

The reform of homestead land has been even more slow and cautious, as mentioned by Liu and Xiong (2019). According to them, the use right of this land had not been full, as it was exclusive for the collective members with one household only using one piece of homestead with limited areas, and it could not be transferred to urban people (ibid.). Nevertheless, for the house built on this land, interestingly, the ownership right, the transfer of use right had not been specifically limited. Ironically, however, the house and land cannot be split up in practical situations. This complexity prevented rural people from having a full property right and value of their homes (ibid.). Many homes thus had been abandoned when villagers migrated to cities, or illegally transferred to urbanites for immediate benefits. Not until recent years did the reform started to experimentally open homestead land to market, making its use right more completed. The paid quit or transfer of use right within village collectives was earlier allowed to these original holders having gained urban *hukou* (registered permanent residence) (ibid.). In 2018, the land was further opened by raising three usufructs: a right of ownership, a right of qualification, and a right of use. Its ownership must still be held

by collectives, whilst the right of use can be sold on market. Meanwhile, the right of qualification still belongs to villagers to ensure their interests (CPC Central Committee and State Council, 2018a) The *2019 Land Administration Law* has officially admitted the paid quit and promotes the reactivation of idle homestead land and houses (NPC Standing Committee, 2019).

From a broader perspective, the reform of rural construction land has fundamentally supported the 'Three Changes' (mentioned in Section 5.4) as an ideal economic consideration for raising the value of rural resources and making rural people rich.

In Huizhou, the limitation of use right transfer of rural land first challenged measures adopted by market forces in BCQZ. Most of the heritages were on homestead land, so the legal procedure for 'renting and purchasing' them needed to first change the land attribute. The regulations did support this as Q4 and L4 all provided a process to expropriate the homestead land and change it to stated-owned one to offer a full property right in market, and Q4 also mentioned that villagers can cede the use right of homestead land to collectives for them to optimize the land use in rural planning. Nevertheless, the attribute-change process was complicated and slow, and the original use right of the land was in fact dispersed and unclarified. The legal procedure was thus not welcomed by both adopters/investors/developers and locals and was against the 'movement' sense, so many renovation cases did not go through legal land-attribute transfer with grey contracts for renting and buying the land and house widely existing. According to Yao et al. (2016), until 2014, only 7 cases had fulfilled the legal procedure to obtain a full property right, whilst other 129 cases in Yi county and 30 in Huizhou district had not been legally registered. Moreover, the relocation cases were even more problematic in terms of land issue, as the buildings were in fact rooted out from their original homestead land and moved to other land that was either state-owned or collective-owned, with relevant rights even harder to be clarified.

The grey contracts have still existed during the developing *minsu* (homestay/guesthouse) industry in local Rural Revitalization. Although *minsu* has been strongly promoted towards wider rural properties, many of the land use right have yet to be legally transferred.[121] Also, as Huangshan city was not in the land reform experiments, the change of situation had to follow the national land reform process. Hence after the *Land Administration Law* was amended in 2019, the rural profitable construction land in Huizhou can be directly leased to investors to develop *minsu* and related hospitality industries, or even rental houses for a growing number of urbanites wanting to move there (Ministry of Land and Resource, MOHURD, 2017).

For the reform of homestead land, the local authorities have quickly followed the political trend, as demonstrated by a supporting document from the She County Government (2020) — *Pilot and Demonstrating Implementation Plan for Activating Rural Idle Homestead and Related Houses in She County*:

> …
>
> ...To explore the paid use of collectives' ownership of homestead land, to allow the collectives to collect annual rent from operators who utilize the homesteads and houses to run inns, restaurants, cultural & creative and healthcare industries…
>
> …To support collective economic organizations or its individual members to activate the idle houses and lands in the form of self-operating, leasing, sharing and cooperation. To promote transformations as resources to assets, money to capital, villagers to shareholders, to support collectives to transfer natural resources and landscape like idle homesteads and houses, historic

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[121] According to the interviews with officials and designers involving the relocation and renovation of dwellings and houses.

villages and buildings into measurable capitals, to develop shareholding cooperation in various forms. To support villagers returning from cities, people from cities, graduates, veterans to develop rural tourist associations, rural cooperation bodies, family farms, rural guesthouses, agritainment and creative space based on their own houses or other idle houses.

Therefore, those who want to operate *minsu* in Huizhou villages can either legally purchase the use right of profitable construction land from collectives, or rent the houses and homestead land from individual villagers.

There are, however, several drawbacks of the situated political logics. The latency of rural land reform and the official tolerance for the semi-legal transfers of rural land use right had caused many grey contracts in a relatively short period, which would cause conflicts, undermine the enthusiasms of more potential investors desired in the two causes of preservation and revitalization. For those already being contracted, it discouraged them from bringing additional investment to expand the businesses. The uncertainty of legitimacy was exacerbated by some experimental political supports. For example, in Xixinan town that developed from a typical historical village (Xixinan village), once to facilitate the legal land attribute transfer the local district-level government had the core village's whole land directly managed by the county, transferring all the rural land into stated-owned land. Those historical dwellings and their land thus can be comprehensively regulated and conveniently transferred, but soon it was stopped due to the radicalness being inappropriate for other villages.[122]

Besides land problems, other technical regulations have been loosely implemented. For example, some renovated historical dwellings with post and panel structures could not meet current fire-prevention code's requirements for holding hotel functions, but

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[122] According to the interview with a local cadre involving the relocation and renovation of dwellings and houses.

indeed, there has been no specific fire-prevention code made locally for guiding these renovated buildings to hold hospitality industries to bridge the legal gap. Hence local authorities have had to require complementary measures so as to authorize the operators to have business licenses, such as adding fire hydrants or regular inspections, yet which may not be scientifically verified.[123]

8.2.3 Promoting tourism-centred industry — the economic considerations in a convention

Although economy has been the key for local development, in this contextual form development, the underlying economic logic from local power has been much milder, and more indirect and intricate than the mode of Land Finance. It has responded to the 'back seat' attitude taken by the government in this process.

The way to make fiscal revenue from the space production in inventory has been continuously tied to local tourism, and entwined with cultural and political logics. From 'preservation' to 'revitalization', the logic has indeed developed, matured and potentially expanded. It has been a single conventional mode that aims to nurture tourism-centred industries through changing existing stocks of form and space, and hence to seek tax revenue whilst sharing the benefits with local people. Recently with more political supports towards villages (e.g., rural land reform), it could have become a multiple mode attaching more targets to the form changes besides industrial tax, such as raising the value of these space renovated in inventory, promoting new business types in operating them against the backdrop of 'Three Changes', and raising the income of collectives and its members in more flexible ways. It would be thus easier to convey the political logic (compensation) through this multiple mode.

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[123] According to the interview with a designer involving the relocation and renovation of dwellings and houses.

Indeed, as the Rural Revitalization develops, with 'Three Changes' bringing more opportunities, the economic considerations do have come to the front of a scenario — a good operation of form of rural buildings (an important kind of rural resource) creating a better built environment towards market will contribute to a capital appreciation of these buildings, and bring a potential added value to other surrounding resources against the backdrop of Ecological Civilization.

Under the conventional mode, relevant buildings including the historical dwellings have been the basic resource of developing tourism-centred industries. And regarding the core — local tourism, as mentioned in Sub-section 7.2.1, it developed from the mode of 'sightseeing' and 'ticket-dependence' and now has been growing towards the mode of 'tourism plus', 'all-for-one' and 'experience-based'. It has been being promoted to the whole region of Huizhou, incorporating more villages with more types of industry connected and more kinds of resource utilized,[124] and the distinctiveness of villages is also highlighted under the slogan of 'one village, one character' (Liu and Yu, 2017). Although tourism has been upgraded to a leading industry regionally, its development in more general villages has been lagging behind that in tourist 'unicorns' (e.g., Huangshan Mountain and Hongcun village), with 'sightseeing' and 'ticket selling' mode remaining strong.

The key in the conventional mode has been to *zhaoshang yinzi* (introducing industries and attracting investment), or in other words, to utilize these natural or cultural resources in Huizhou. As tangible cultural resources, the form and space have been naturally utilized to create profit through being arranged to present a distinctive built-environment, to express the unique culture and life, and hence to attract tourists. Indeed,

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[124] The resources also include intangible life styles offering unique experiences like Huizhou ceremonies, ritual and customs.

the 'utilization' effort in BCQZ had well reflected the mindset of *zhaoshang yinzi*, and in the same mindset, the fast-growing rural tourism supported by renovating a wider range of rural properties needs more extensive investment.

Usually, an entire tourist spot like a whole historical village or district has been packaged to a larger and more integrated company, or scattered properties have been leased to smaller and different developers (more common in BCQZ and Rural Revitalization), or sometimes the two ways have mixed. For example, Tangmo village in Qiankou town is operated by Anhui tourism group being state-owned; Tangyue villages in Zhencun town is largely held by a private enterprise; and Xixinan village (core village of Xixinan town) has a very mixed composition of developers. In there, BCQZ earlier brought in individual adopter/developers; Deshui Tourism Development Company has invested the most and operated many key assets there; the collective-owned firm (cooperative) manages the parking and inner transportation; and many individual investors operates scattered houses or buildings as doing *minsu* businesses.

Similar to industries in case one, tourism as an industry has been subsidized by local governments. For example, they have supported public facilities and services in scenic areas such as cleaning, security and garbage disposal. This subsidy is from public expenditure, or transfer payment from upper governments, or even land-lease income from urban areas. Compared to the fact that driving space production for growth (creating and leasing residential land) can bring quick lump-sum land leasing income, changing the space in inventory (relocating and renovating scattered buildings) has no direct and abundant return. Essentially, in the Land Finance circle of Huizhou, the latter has tended to be the target of subsidy rather than the source of subsidy.

The form operation not being the direct engine of fiscal revenue has made the economic logic less radical and positive, and even sometimes its efficiency in supporting local

tourism industries has not been satisfying. For example, for larger companies operating integrated villages, besides the requirement of paying tax and sharing a minor portion of profit to the collectives, they have not been required to substantially make the villagers rich, yet sometimes have been left in competitions with locals in making money from 'utilizing' the tangible resources (discussed in Section 8.3). Even in many occasions, local governments have had to help solve their profiting difficulties, as an officer from local tourist department commented:[125]

> Ticket-selling cannot fully balance the management and operation cost, unless they are very famous ones like Hongcun village. It is not easy for an ordinary tourist spot to make ends meet. They are making profits though, yet it is based on the precondition that most of the public facilities and services are offered by the government with they only taking a minor part of relevant responsibilities. Tangyue village, for example, can only profit slightly in its operation. Hence with less net income, most of the operators would not share more profit with the locals.

More, according to Sheng (2018b), there has still been a homogenization in developing these tourist villages, and The *Master Plan of Development of Rural Tourism of Huangshan City (2007-2020)* (Huangshan Municipal Government, 2007) is not well implemented with integrated development and promotion not formed. 'One village, one character' is yet to be realized.

Those more scattered projects with individual and smaller investors are still in a primary stage, such as the fast-growing *minsu* industry[126]mentioned by The *Development Plan*

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[125] Interview by the author, on 22/04/2021.

[126]According to this development plan, the number of guesthouses has mounted up to more than 2000 by the end of 2018, accounting for 80% of the total amount in Anhui.

of Minsu Industry in Huangshan City (2019-2030) (Huangshan Culture and Tourism Bureau, Tourism Planning and Research Centre of Anhui University, 2019). The plan has pointed out many problems, indicating that the major reason is a weak top-down organization. For example, these *minsu* are very scattered in distribution, having a low efficiency in sharing infrastructures and public facilities, and they lack connections with other industries. Their qualities vary a lot because of the low threshold for access, also they lack a unified image and brand like 'Huizhou *Minsu*' for scale promotions. All these have affected their ability of profiting and contribution to tax revenue.[127]

Especially for promoting scattered projects in villages, the economic logic has seemed to temporarily stop at the stage of attracting investors and subsidizing them, or more likely the stage of nominally unloading the cultural burden and conveying political responsibilities. It has not fully focused on more effective and sustainable ways to seek a better sharable economic return from the results of huge subsidy governments have already paid to rural areas (e.g., the huge improvement of rural infrastructures), although ways like the 'Three Changes' have been recently promoted from top down. The fixed mindset has been not easy to be upgraded to a multiple mode, and seemed to be considerably affected by the political logic, but the key of political responsibility — to make every villager richer from the form change cannot be effectively achieved only through compensation, investment and tax. The aforementioned officer expressed the economic logic with a strong sense of compensation:[128]

> *Minsu* is a good way for alleviating poverty, as we can guide and support the poor ones to do it. For example, two of them opened such guesthouses around 2018, bringing them an annual income of 30-50 thousand *yuan*, a very

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[127] The plan does have acknowledged the business problems, yet it has been still situated in a conventional mindset of managing tourist industry.

[128] Interview by the author, on 22/04/2021.

considerable amount in villages...from government's view, to develop tourism is to help more rural people...it is actually a project to enrich common locals. Government spends a lot; the tax is little. A scenic spot, for example, the investment is 20 million *yuan*, the tax will only be 1 million. If it is a *minsu* operated by villagers, there is basically no tax as the small transactions would not be invoiced…Rural tourism is more likely for social benefits, a public program bringing employment and income. The economic return is hence more likely to be embodied by local people's income. The government serves people, even the land leasing income would be ultimately paid back to them. The return is essentially re-invested into them.

The most grassroots level in local villages — the collective economic organization that best represents rural people's interests, has been even slower to fully understand the development and possibilities of this economic logic from top down. Actually, throughout the country many village collectives have been in a dilemma in terms of running business and making connections to the market for the past 40 years, due to the vague subjectivity, weak ability, chaotic right registration, and stereotyped mind (Li and Xu, 2021). Those collectives in Huizhou have been similar; they are still not sophisticated at operating rural assets at all. Not only they could only capture a low amount of returning, but they also see more burden than benefit from the process, as one related official has mentioned that:[129]

Many *minsu*, or roughly rural tourism, pays no money to the collectives if they are not stakeholders, or shares very limited income with them, who thus usually have low enthusiasm. Also, many troubles would come to them like cleaning, disposal and conflicts between tourists and villagers. They have responsibilities but not income...if rural tourism gets better, their pressure

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[129] Interview by the author, on 29/04/2021.

grows...The biggest problem is safety. If the infrastructure is not good and brings safety problems to tourists, the reputation will be affected. Especially in a boom of self-driving tour, the drivers go everywhere, but what if they get lost? Same thing happens to the hikers, with emergency rescue often seen.

Another village head has repeatedly stressed questions of sewage, toilet and fire safety in the interview and complained that[130] "all these were done by our village; the *minsu* hosts are too dependent on us." The grassroots leaders have seemed to devote more in fixing troubles, following orders and fulfilling policies for the time being.

However, things have begun to change. 'Three Changes' has after all been implemented in Huizhou villages, with strengthening the role of collective economic organization being an important principle. Homesteads with the use rights have been in a comprehensive procedure of clarification and affirmation, and ways for people to become stakeholders is being considered. Voices like 'learning from Zhejiang villages' are getting stronger, as the local bottom mind is catching up. Nevertheless, currently, the more popular and easier way for villages to get benefits is still largely waiting for the bonus from tourist enterprises, and the local government is still introducing in developers, especially bigger ones like state-owned enterprises, which are able to operate more integrated areas. However, this convention will possibly lead to a wrong direction in the opening up of rural areas, indicating to a new 'enclosure movement' towards the rural land around rural tourist spots, which will be discussed later.

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[130] Interview by the author, on 13/05/2021.

8.3 Top-down level — the more diversified capital

The stakeholder of capital (developer) in this case has been diversified regarding their sources and detailed motivations, due to that the access threshold has been much lower than that in the first case. However, despite this, these developers have closely followed the power logics and been affected by them. They have initially conformed to the strategy of *zhaoshang yinzi* (including adopting, renting, or buying historical dwellings during BCQZ), then highlighted experiences and interactions in their tourist businesses for better profiting, and a growing number of them have come to operate hospitality and cultural industries promoted by the governments, with a majority of which based on rural properties. Recently they have even tended to hold the properties to wait for their value appreciation.

As mentioned in the preceding section, the developers have comprised both larger but more integrated companies and smaller yet more individualised operators. The former usually hold an entire tourist area and has grown with the development of local tourism, whilst the latter tend to manage scattered projects and has developed from investing into BCQZ to joining the Rural Revitalization.

For the larger companies (private or state-owned) to profit through influencing the form change, the convention has been preparing and providing sightseeing resources formed by distinctive built environment for ticket revenue. The resources have been kept or modified and then exhibited to tourists to present and narrate Huizhou history, culture and tradition, together with local souvenirs and specialties sold, but interactive activities as tourist experiences were barely organized in early years. Villages of Xidi, Hongcun, Tangyue, Tangmo, Chengkan and tourist district of Huizhou Ancient City (in She county centre) are such typical sightseeing spots selling tickets or ticket packages. Indeed, for better profiting some of the bigger developers tend to exert mild

influence on the form, such as repairing heritages and reviving traditional built environment, yet some have been more radical, creating many pseudo-classic forms as 'manufacturing heritages' for 'consumers' (Alsayyad, 2001). The extreme local case could be *Hui Yuan* (Huizhou Garden), a flagship component[131] of Huizhou Ancient City built next to its entrance around the year of 2000. In *Hui Yuan* a whole district of faked historical buildings in Hui style covering an area of 2 hectares was created to match with few genuine relics nearby (the ancient gates and archways), so as to jointly form an 'authentic' traditional Huizhou street and neighbourhood around the entrance yet with various shops and restaurants set in the ground floor. The developer of *Hui Yuan* also once built *Xi Yuan* (Huizhou Merchants' Grand Mansion) nearby as his private architecture museum (Figure 8.12, mentioned in Sub-section 8.2.1), which relocated heritages across Huizhou into an enclave within She county centre and assembled them, juxtaposing them with faked components, selling a ticket for 60 *yuan*.

Figure 8.12. The approximate area of *Hui Yuan* in the scenic area of Huizhou Ancient City, situated in the centre of She county (source: adapted from Google Earth Image).

Gradually, some such developers started to incorporate regular promotional activities

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[131] *Hui Yuan* has contributed to the package ticket of the whole 'ancient city', which is sold for 100 *yuan*.

into sightseeing like traditional rituals or modern assemblies to emphasize tourist experience, especially those who lately came to develop villages in the 'tourism plus' era. Take Xixinan village for example, although the franchise and key assets were packaged to Deshui Company, it is fully opened to visitors with no entrance tickets. Experiences and interactions have been emphasized there, like rural market day, village concert, agricultural studios, forest walking, river tracing, and other thematic events.

However, in the process those tourist companies as major operating entities have been controlling and dominating, obviously causing tensions in their relationships with the local people and collectives. The question has been not only about how have they changed the form and space, but also about how the space production they drove have influenced the social relations therein. Indeed, the situation has been that the bigger developers/operators have monopolized the resources and discourses within areas they enclose.

Two examples can well demonstrate this situation. One is Tangmo village. It has been contracted to a subsidiary company of Anhui Tourism Group since 2004. The company did contribute significantly to the improvement of village infrastructure and revival of traditional built environment, landscape and intangible cultures, conforming to the locals' expectations and thus has been largely recognized. Nevertheless, there have still been significant competitions between the company and the people in utilizing the physical resources. This has been well recorded by Dai's ethnographic account of the development of Tangmo's rural tourism (Dai, 2017), indicating a 'symbolic competition' in the tourist practices. According to Dai, for better profiting, the company lunched a boutique hotel project in the key position of Tangmo in cooperation with the Federation of Gîtes de France, by employing both renovation and relocation measures as implementing BCQZ, which was nevertheless doubted and criticized by villagers for cutting the original context and transplanting buildings and structures from outside. It

also planned to introduce a cheaper youth hostel in addition to its high-end boutique one, which would inevitably compete with local people's lodging and agritainment business that was undertaking the complementary role in the micro market. More, for the reason of preservation and tourism development the local people were strictly restricted from building new houses or altering historical ones they lived in (for small businesses, even for merely improving their daily living space), whilst for the same reason, the company could add buildings and transform houses they held. Dai has also revealed the same monopoly happening in constructing the cultural discourse (ibid.). The boutique hotel was labelled as the first Gîtes de France outside Europe, a Sino-French cooperation hybridizing French symbols in the inner settings to create a 'French romance' as a key selling point of Tangmo, but the local people did not accept it at all; they resisted this 'exotic romance', seeing it as a gimmick stunt, whilst sticking to their simple and honest imagination of homeland. Nevertheless, they have still hoped the company's operation can bring Tangmo, or simply their own small businesses more visitors as consumers. The most direct competition existed in profit distribution. As mentioned by Dai (2017), although the people at an inferior position had been already limited to change the form and space for doing business, the company still deliberately reduced the portion of ticket revenue paid to the collectives by covering the accounts, excluding those ordinary people outside the key positions from being benefited. Worse, the collective group was situated in an awkward place — on one hand it needed to make the villagers rich, on the other hand it had to bow down to the company dominating the tourism (ibid.).

The development of Xixinan village is also another vivid demonstration. The village collective and town government have seemed stronger, but they still cannot seize the initiative as the village's franchise was initially contracted to Deshui Tourism Development Company controlled by a design group from Beijing. Some key assets as the empty town hall, former grain supply station, obsolete cinema, old primary school

and some other properties at good positions were all packaged to the company (Figure 8.13-8.14). Admittedly, they had played a key role in paving the way for transforming and upgrading the village tourism and contributed to it significantly. As a sizable outside investor with an academic background they made a model for other developers in terms of staying long and investing heavily in the then 'backward' village. They offered a development plan for Xixinan town in its critical stage of tourism, including spatial structure, functional layout and promotion strategies, as well as some insightful ideals such as to foresee the value of surrounding ecological resources like the Fengle river, the wet land and the Chinese ash forest, and to incorporate them into the tourist theme (Yu, 2017; Turenscape, 2018). This was later proven to be very effective in creating extra popularity whilst protecting the ecology.

Figure 8.13. Deshui's *Hetian Li* renovated from the obsolete town hall of Xixinan (source: Wangshan Life. Available at: http://www.wangshanlife.com/col.jsp?id=115).

Gradually, however, as Xixinan has gained more fame, they contribute less and less. They became to only focus inside on its own business and neglect issues from outside. For example, along with the tourism growth they delicately built four boutique hotels by renovating the key assets, and specially tailored interactive studios, design academies, business conferences, fine restaurants and other experience-based events

there for attracting high-end consumers, which have been all recently put in Wangshan Life, their ambitious internet platform selling poetic rural lifestyle, within which Xixinan is one big name of their rural destinations.[132] Nevertheless, they have recently seemed to stop looking beyond their property circle and contributing to more public issues of the village. An anecdote about them is interesting.[133] The town government was about to hold a rural market fair in 'Labour Day Golden Week Holidays' and invited Deshui to join in, but they refused at the last moment in the preparation. However, ironically when they later heard the CCTV (China Central Television) journalist would come to site the changed quickly, lowering their attitude to ask for a place just before the market opened.
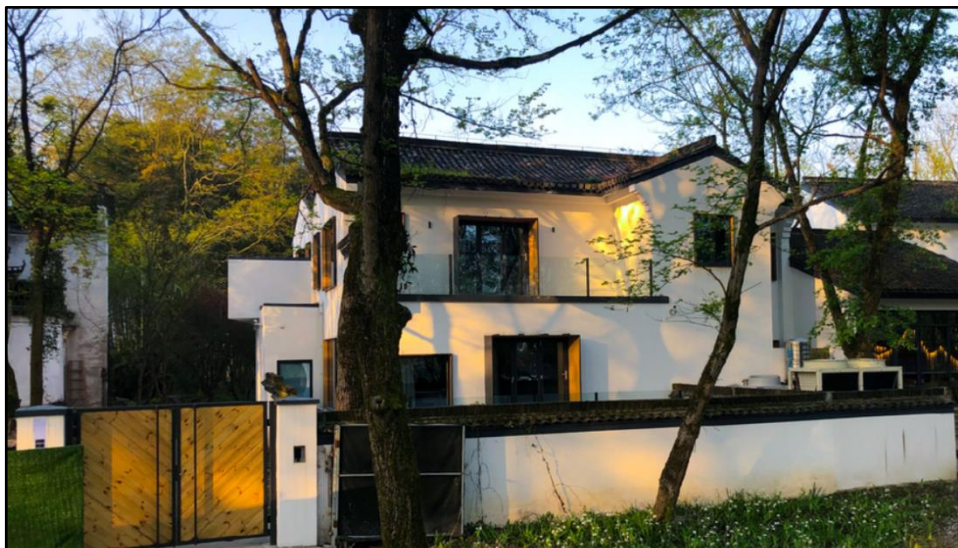
Figure 8.14. Deshui's *Diaoxue Yuan* renovated from an ordinary house from Xixinan (source: Wangshan Life. Available at: http://www.wangshanlife.com/col.jsp?id=115).

"Occupying resources but not contributing to them," the local cadre has criticised it, and further explained the problem:[134]

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[132] See the business contents from the platform at: http://www.wangshanlife.com/col.jsp?id=115

[133] According to the interview with a local cadre involving the relocation and renovation of dwellings and houses in Xixinan.

[134] Interview by the author, on 15/05/2021.

Commercially, selling rooms and activities may not be their key mode of profiting; the key is they occupying these key assets whose value have appreciated enormously as the brand of Xixinan getting increasingly hotter. They may have paid 10 million *yuan* to hold those properties, but they may sell the use right for 100 million *yuan* now. As the franchise holder they have never really operated the village systematically except for managing issues within their own walls. The long-term contract makes it difficult to change them for a substitute. The operation mode has basically stopped to progress, with many related work and cost undertaken by the government, which is not sustainable.

The current situation is that one big but inactive player dominates the micro tourism market, whilst many small ones separately operating scattered buildings are too weak to lead, and new willing investors can hardly come in as very few properties are available on market — the villagers have also begun to operate their own houses or just keep them for value appreciation.

Small developers, from BCQZ to Rural Revitalization, have been also encouraged by *zhaoshang yinzi* and attracted by relevant political supports. The even lower threshold and further opening up of rural land have made it possible for anyone to fund this space production. From professionals to novices, from local villagers to outsiders, even solo designers, a great variety of people have been able to operate projects and change the form and space. These projects, represented by *minsu,* have been scattered across Huizhou town and village. However, the distribution is not random, as many of them tend to gather around scenic spots already being famous (e.g., historical villages and natural attractions).[135] Also, a growing number of them has appeared in more general and ordinary villages.

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[135] BCQZ projects as historical dwellings naturally concentrated in historical districts.

Those outside developers, [136] interestingly, prefer to call themselves 'New Huizhouneses' co-inhabiting with the indigenous people. Underlying the name and behaviours there have been two major trends of motivation: feeling or profiting. Those prioritizing feeling for Huizhou over profiting from there come for pursuing a poetic lifestyle and beautiful environment different to those in cities. Retirees and people in financial freedom have been often seen. *Deiweier* Café (German Flavour Café) in Yangchan village is a typical case. The owner, who resides in Germany, felt in love with Yangchan in a journey and 'bought' an obsolete dwelling there, then spent two years to stay with the villagers to build his cafe and small guesthouse with their help. Now he has authorized the neighbourhood couple to operate it and he regularly migrates between Germany and Huizhou. He said,[137] "my dream came true here, as I have had a place for my parents from Hefei and my small family in such a peaceful place, and I have become a member of the local community, getting along well with the people."

Those emphasizing profiting have been either established influencers with sophisticated management experience or newer players with active and open minds such as creating business platform on their projects. Shi Lili, a very influential rural hotel chain from Shenzhen has opened two high-end hotels renovated from historical dwellings in Huizhou villages, with the room price all being above 1000 *yuan* (Figure 8.9-8.10). The 'platform-creating' mind tends to use *minsu* as a physical and conceptual node to link valuable clients to foster businesses relations. The designers' *minsu* is an example. *Mengxi Fanghui* (Dream Brook Club) in Xixinan village, held by interior designers, often holds small celebrations, exhibitions, meetings, studios for companies or designer/artist/musician groups (Figure 8.15-8.16). Making friends, creating relations in addition to selling rooms has been its strategy. Likewise, *Yuyin Raoliang*

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[136] To not complicate the explanation, the following discussions focus on developers of *minsu* as a popular example.

[137] Interview by the author, on 17/04/2021.

(Tune Lingering House) in Yuliang village was opened by Shanghai fashion designers with only 5 rooms, yet their design studio and clothing shop are set next to the accommodation for meeting like-minded clients or investors. Indeed, Wangshan Life of Deshui is both a mature influencer and platform.

Figure 8.15. *Mengxi Fanghui* renovated from an idle, newly built house in Xixinan, which was 'oversupplied' as the result of 'Building a New Socialist Countryside' (BNSC) (source: courtesy of Li Song).

Figure 8.16. The interior settings of *Mengxi Fanghui*. There are a series of historical civil deeds and documents from Huizhou's federal age pinned on the walls (source: courtesy of Li Song).

Those indigenous people operating *minsu* are mostly locals having stayed in their homes or come back from cities. They have tended to refurbish their own houses (being historical or later-built with brick-concrete structure) to accommodate visitors for a more ordinary purpose of adding income. This kind of *minsu* usually has 3-5 rooms with much cheaper prices (100-200 *yuan*) and offers home-cooked meals tasted more 'local and rustic'. They have sprung up in villages with the inner decorations plain, basic and economical, yet less modern, exquisite and designed than those held by outsiders.

However, there has been another small group of local insiders labelling themselves as 'True Huizhouneses' relating to *minsu*. They are better educated and financed, embracing deeper feelings of their hometown and people with broader visions. They have also put feeling over profiting, yet their feeling has not been a similarly nostalgic 'otherness', but a constructed responsibility to continue Huizhou tradition and culture imagined by them. They own or tend to rent ancient houses across Huizhou, trying to realize and share their feelings in the form and space like layout, facade, inner spatial order, furniture setting and decoration, and in cultural activities held there like relevant rituals and customs. However, their more conservative mentality has seemed to amplify the contradiction between modern uses and traditional configurations and they have to accept a compromise in between. For example, the owner of *Banshan Xianke* (Hillside Comfortable Guesthouse) in Shuyuan village is also self-labelled 'True Huizhouneses'. She 'bought' a half-dilapidated house being more than 300 years old and spent 2 million *yuan* to repair and renovate it into a 6-room *minsu*, but has tried to conserve the old settings and decorations (Figure 8.17-8.20). 'However, changes are inevitable,' she told that:[138]

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[138] Interview by the author, on 14/05/2021.

The front half collapsed, and hence the dining room and kitchen was built on its foundation. The old main stair in the middle of the back half had to be moved aside and new bathroom suite needed to be added in rooms upstairs. But luckily the courtyard, main middle hall (*zhongtang*), two side downstair rooms and their settings are kept to form this 'native Huizhou home' satisfying myself, friends and clients.

Figure 8.17. The exterior environment of *Banshan Xianke*. (source: courtesy of the owner of *Banshan Xianke*).
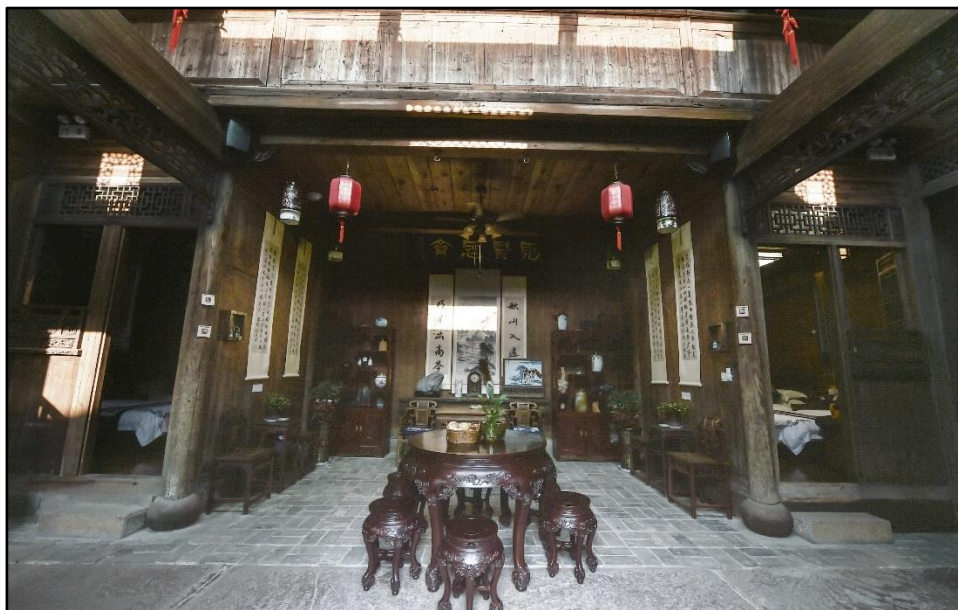
Figure 8.18. The interior settings of this *minsu*. The traditional central hall was largely kept (source: courtesy of the owner of *Banshan Xianke*).

Figure 8.19. The bathroom suite has had been added in rooms upstairs, which did not usually exist in the second floor of such historical dwellings (source: courtesy of the owner of *Banshan Xianke*).

Figure 8.20. The central patio hall, which should be open in traditional Huizhou dwellings, has been closed with glass roof, and the main stair was moved aside (source: courtesy of the owner of *Banshan Xianke*).

In the absence of urban design wisdom that could sensibly and efficiently integrate the form change and promote place-making and design profile, the form and space have been understood and modified anarchically by those developers with diversified

backgrounds and motivations, and the role of design has hence been acknowledged and employed to very different extents (discussed in next section). Many developers would continue to stare inside their walls like numerous Deshui companies, wittingly or unwittingly further fragmenting the form in towns and villages.

8.4 Middle level — the more positive designers

In this case the designer's attitude has been more active yet more complicated compared to that of designers in the first case, which has been simple, passive or indifferent as being dominated by more direct and powerful logics from government and capital, and confined by stricter regulations towards urban areas.

The design regulations have been less influential towards scattered projects in Huizhou towns and even more loosened for them in villages, and the two space suppliers at the top level have had more entangled, conventional and milder logics. Also, these projects have been smaller, simpler and cheaper. These all have made designers' idea more feasible, contributing to the fact that planners' influence has receded, with architects' value and impact becoming manifest. When opportunities proliferate and become controllable and more grounded, designers (mainly architects)' enthusiasm would greatly rise, and consequently, 'problems' of form and space have been constructed more individually with 'responsibilities' and 'solutions' similarly composed. The designer's positions, values, and approaches have hence become more diversified.

Nevertheless, during this contextual production of space, designer's mediating role linking conceived space and perceived space has been also not well performed. As revealed in earlier discussions, they have largely brought their experiences from cities into the environment, together with their anarchic values and interpretations, causing a possible 'destructive creation' without sensibly caring the social sustainability.

8.4.1 Designers' three positions

The field findings[139] have suggested three kinds of position taken by designers in this space production, with designers' values fairly differing from each other: as a pure instrument, as both a designer and a developer of a project, and as a leader and key operator of an entire area.[140]

At the traditional position of 'instrument', designers have been employed by developers for offering technical service. However, if the client is local governments aiming at rural construction as compensation tasks, the designers are usually chosen from local design institutes with government backgrounds like Architectural Design Institute of She County or Urban Planning Institute of Huangshan City, with design attitude being more conservative. They stand for governments, exporting technologies to villages or towns, yet without a bottom-up view seeing subtler issues in the context. The work has been general and extensive rather than careful and sensible, like abstract master and construction plans for villages, or unified architectural atlas to guide house construction under the Hui style.[141] If serving for nongovernment clients, designers become more open, active, and individualised, although being influenced by clients' interests. Cooperation can be easily established upon their purposes: sponsors use designers to help create distinctive form and space, whilst designers employ their funds to realize ideas that may not be viable in cities, which could build their fame and portfolios. However, without effective design controls and reviews, related form changes would

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[139] The findings here mainly indicate to data from interviews with relevant designers, yet data from interviews with officials, developers and residents have also helped the analyses, and data from second-hand materials are also supportive.

[140] Indeed, as there are often no formal designers involving the alteration of properties individually owned and operated by local villagers, the following discussion thus mainly focuses on design issues influenced by outside forces (including local governments) or those 'True Huizhouneses'.

[141] Currently planners are required to aim at more rural areas to build the new 'National Territory Spatial Planning System' which is even more extensive and comprehensive.

be 'smooth' and unjustified under achieved consensuses, often with the people and society left unconsidered. Examples can be found from projects with large and sophisticated developers, such as the manufactured heritages within *Hui Yuan* and around Hongcun village, the exquisite Gîtes de France and *Qi Tianjin* (Seven Courtyards) *minsu* in Tangmo, and recent boutique hotels of Shi Lili Group. Interior design has been sometimes prioritized, especially in renovation & utilization cases in BCQZ as outside configurations has had to be largely kept. This trend has gone into more recent renovations of non-historical buildings, such as the No.1 West Street Hotel built in a group of old office buildings once used by the party committee of She county. The investor invited 9 noted interior designers to create its 18 thematic rooms, forming its biggest selling point (Xu, 2017). However, a small group of designers have served charitable capitals; they contribute to a shared humanitarian concern towards rural areas through design whilst also treating this as opportunities. Taking Shuanglong Primary School for example, the designer — WSP Architects experimented with a light structure system and fast construction mode to help donate the school to a village in Xiuning county (WSP Architects, 2013). In addition, the instrument role has sometimes reached an extreme, as they are used to evade some necessary regulations. For example, in some relocation projects designers helped developers to escape fire-prevention controls through changing the attribute of historical dwellings by defining them as 'traditional wooden structures being not for functional use' in the design specifications.[142]

In many circumstances, designers have been able to fund themselves to operate projects. They hence can fully control the space production to be designer and client all at once. Especially in villages with even fewer design restrictions, the sites have become their dreamland to claim problems and offer solutions against commercial calculations; they hence have been more liberated or even indulged to realize their fanciful visions in a status of self-reference. The aforementioned designer's *minsu* — *Mengxi Fanghui*, as

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[142] According to the interview with a designer involved.

an example, was renovated from an obsolete house 'oversupplied' by the campaign of BNSC. The design rationally defined functional zones and orderly arranged the interior space, combining abstract languages, modern materials and antique items, which well serves its theme of 'designer's hotel' and local motto of 'five stars inside, one thousand years outside'. A series of historical civil deeds and documents from Huizhou's federal age were pinned on walls around the reception hall, showing the designer's very personal taste of collection (Figure 8.15-8.16). Another case — Yuyin Raoliang (Tune Lingering House), was set into a historic townhouse along Yuliang village's riverside street. The designer chosen cloths and fabrics they design and produce to form the interior materials and bedding sets. This trend can also be found in Deshui's hotels and workshops serving bigger ambitions in Wangshan Life. A narrative from *Mengxi Fanghui*'s developer & designer is telling:[143]

> We were interior designers from big cities specialized in premium hotels. But around 2014, we felt our design business had touched the glass ceiling, so we tried to avoid the intensifying competition in cities and started to look for opportunities in villages. It is also a dream for us to escape the busy life for a while and to be our own client to freely realize our design ideas in such a beautiful place, and we later discovered our choice fits the national strategy of Rural Revitalization… However, apart from our initial affection for the rural, profit logic and a long-term market plan is still the key for our sustainability.

In some other cases, especially the development of villages, designers' role has grown from controlling individual projects to leading a whole development. They seem to become the most influential among stakeholders, as CEOs operating the holistic built environment and related issues. They could potentially integrate the government,

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[143] Interview by the author, on 06/08/2019.

capital, people and other relevant resources to direct the development. At this level, designers have had two sub-values. Some of them are literally idealists hoping to bring experimental changes to the rural society against rural constructions, yet they mainly rely on their own vision, wisdom and influence whilst keeping a critical attitude towards capital and power, often putting aside economic calculations and rewards. Others, realistically, just embrace capital and power whilst simultaneously being welcomed and trusted by them. They have respected and represented the interests of the two space suppliers, as standing for a joint adventure, yet they still target their own fame and revenue.

A famous case showing idealism happened in Bishan village in Yi county. In 2012, Ou Ning, a noted artist/curator/activist, and Zuo Jing, a scholar/curator, launched a utopian social programme called 'Bishan Project', leading like-minded designers, artists, writers, directors, influencers and so on to create a 'Bishsan Commune' in the village, to revise and revitalize it into an ideal sample of rural society imagined by them to suit (or rather resist) the contemporary era. Their commitment was to continue Yan Yangchu's rural construction cause and Klopotkin's anarchism mind to re-activate the public life in rural areas to resist the compelling urbanization reality and solve the crisis of traditional agriculture that was triggered by global capitalism, as a way of Rural Revitalization (Sun, 2014). The public life they proposed would practice mutual aid, reduce dependence on the public services prevailing in cities, and hence contribute to the rural politics, economy and culture in a variety of ways (Sanlian Lifeweek Magazine, 2012).

The realistic design leaders have been more popular and successful against the backdrop of Rural Revitalization. For example, Deshui Company in its earlier stages had been welcomed and supported by Xixinan's government for setting and sharing common goals with it. Another typical designer is SYN, a design-led group that was

partly owned by a developer called 'New Pastoralism' — an expert to develop and operate villages and towns through building agricultural, cultural and tourist industries (whose founder was also an architect). [144] They have jointly developed several integrated projects they call 'rural complex' in different parts of China outside Huizhou, which includes comprehensive and complete built environment with systematic built-in industries.[145] These powerful designers have helped to set up a community of shared interests formed by power, capital and design. For Deshui, it has explored a way conforming to the green production modes in the Rural Revitalization and Ecological Civilization, with five key themes promoted: poetic dwelling, ecological agriculture, integrated tourism, inspirational education and artistic & cultural creation.[146] For SYN, it has offered all-in-one solutions to local governments promoting development in towns and villages, which range from preparing design to supervising construction, from attracting investment to accompanying management.[147]

The designers at this position have seemed to have deeper understandings of related developments. Ou Ning (2015) has well acknowledged the logics of power and capital, and the main constraints to his project, especially the difficulties to form shared interests with local people, yet his team seemed too cautious and conservative to accept outside forces. Yu Kongjian from Deshui has earlier acknowledged the significance of the new trend of "up to the mountains and down to the countryside" against the backdrop of Rural Revitalization, and revealed the challenges, opportunities and strategies in urban forces' engagement with rural built environment (Yu, 2017). Nevertheless, practically they chose different values and received different results. The idealists in Bishan strived to educate and represent the people, and devoted themselves to help the village like buying houses, building the bookshop and educational centre,

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[144] See the official website of New Pastoralism at: https://www.tydfjt.com/.

[145] See a summary at: https://www.bau-jl.com/article/193/.

[146] See the introduction on the website of Wangshan Life at: http://www.wangshanlife.com/.

[147] See the contents on SYN's website at: https://www.bau-jl.com/.

promoting local products, organizing events and publishing magazines (Sun, 2014). However, they failed because their high idealism of 'art and design saving villages', with a suspectable elitism (Fu, 2014), intrinsically refused to bend to the practical logics of space production. On the contrary, the realistic design leaders have better employed these logics and thus been more successful. The New Pastoralism with its 'rural complex' has expanded significantly recently, and the SYN design has also incubated many sub-brands relating to its ideas like SYN coffee and SYN college.[148]

However, when designers become integrated investors, they still have to face contradictions between them and other stakeholders there, like what have happened to Deshui. Their values have to be questioned, like whether or not they are doing enough for the local people.

8.4.2 Designers' three steams of professional operations

Designers' influences on the space production would in the end be realized though grounded design operations of form and space. According to Zhou's conclusion of design approaches (Zhou, 2015) to rural construction nationally, there are mainly three streams of professional design operations towards the form and space, respectively focusing on local culture, technique and society. The following discussion hence borrows Zhou's conclusion into the context of Huizhou, especially the villages, to further explain and examine the design operations (interpretations) across aforementioned three positions.

Culturally, as Zhou suggests, designers use architectural forms to portray special cultural images through either looking back or looking forward. The former makes

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[148] Indeed, in this space production, governments want investment and GDP, or cultural and political scores; people like money and rich life; capitals need rewards and fame.

nostalgia, trying to echo all aspects of historical architecture. The latter creates extraordinariness, bringing experiments to traditional environment to implement radical concepts in less restrictive areas (ibid.). In Huizhou, both tendencies have seemed to refer to the traditional form, space, material and construction, yet they have, to different extents, exerted typological changes. The nostalgic ones have been doing evolutionary typology. Those involving relocating and renovating historical dwellings have been more restrained and conservative. They have continued or modified relevant types of those buildings from outside in, with essential modern alterations. For example, Shi Lili's designers inserted luxurious rooms, spas and canteens into a series of old dwellings,[149] and *Qi Tianjin*'s architects assembled seven collected Huizhou courtyards into a house cluster conforming to the compact spatial texture of surrounding settlements (Jianzhu Zhishi, 2017). Those renovating younger buildings or constructing new ones have been more open and innovative in creating the Hui style. Deshui's *minsu — Diaoxue Yuan* (Snow-Fishing Garden) and *Hetian Li* (Lotus Fields) have typically blended modern languages and materials into the ordinary village properties (Figure 8.13-8.14), and Liyang Street, an isolated, debatable place-making attempt near Huangshan city centre, has juxtaposed smaller historical house prototypes and their larger modern variants next to each other (Figure 8.21). Some radical designers have been trying revolutionary typology, mainly involving new-built or re-built projects being not only dwellings. They have done experiments there by abstracting traditional elements and testing new types, subverting conventions in systems of space, structure, material and experience. For example, for New Fourth Army Museum, Xie Yuda Tea Culture Museum and Huangshan Library in towns, designer deconstructed prototypes and scales such as the sloping roofs, courtyards, *matouqiang*, gateway, axes and orders, and regrouped them through new logics (Figure 8.22). This deconstruction seems to be a satisfying way to break the masses of public buildings to have them align with surrounding textures.

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[149] See an introduction of their boutique hotels at: http://www.shilily1314.com/.

Figure 8.21. The commercial project — Liyang Street mixes traditional and modern form and space; the red part are historical dwellings kept, whilst others are all newly-built ones being variants of old prototypes, holding functions such as shops, restaurants, studios, cinemas, church, cafes, etc. It is situated to the West of Tunxi Old Street in Huangshan city centre (source: Author and adapted from Google Earth Image).

Figure 8.22. The New Fourth Army Museum deconstructing and regrouping certain prototypes, situated in Yansi town centre (source: Author).

Figure 8.23. The Clan Hall X in Taoyuan village (source: Gooood, 2018. Available at: https://www.gooood.cn/clan-hall-x-china-by-atelier-lai.htm).

Figure 8.24. The branch of Shanghai Joint Publishing Company in Taoyuan village with a double curved slap (source: Gooood, 2021. Available at: https://www.gooood.cn/bridge-gallery-shanghai-joint-publishing-company-bookstore-at-taoyuan-huangshan-by-atelier-lai.htm).

For some individual buildings, designer's radical aspirations have been even stronger, exemplified by Atelier-lai's work in Taoyuan village of Qimen county. For Clan Hall X (Figure 8.23), not only the Hui-style facade has strange scales and materials (translucent glass bricks), but a novel "overall timber structural carpentry system" (Gooood, 2018) developed by the designers was experimentally adopted as the main structure and deliberately emphasized, seeming overly strong to hold the small and light roof, overshadowing the basic function they defined as village 'reception centre'.

Similar operations happened to the village coffee shop, as a total overturn of the original building. Also, the sole bookstore labelled as a branch of famous Shanghai Joint Publishing Company is the object of a more 'intentional' experiment (Figure 8.24). Putting functional relevancy aside, the form type was allegedly developed from Huizhou covered bridge as a "homogeneous heterogeneity of spatial types," (Gooood, 2021), and the structure was utterly a choreographed novelty: being cast in situ, single-span, no columns, with the double curved slap integrated with shear walls, suggesting "a certain spirituality" and responding to surrounding symbolic *matouqinag* (ibid.). However, its relevancy has seemed to be covered by the strong intention of experiment, as it was only stated by designers' discourses rather than justified by the people. The necessity and effectiveness of this extraordinary structure and its high-end content in this plain and remote village with limited number of villages and tourists are very questionable. This has reflected the general problem of this culture-based design stream as an extreme case, which is that, as Zhou (2015) cautions, these cultural images they created and upheld, cannot usually be appreciated by the local people with practical demands.

In comparison, the design stream based on techniques has been more pragmatic. In this approach Zhou (2015) also suggests two tendencies: the green trend and the tectonic trend. In Huizhou, the former has strived to utilize local materials like bamboo, wood and rammed earth to express their "advantages in energy-saving and environmental protection;" the latter has tended to "explore and inherit traditional construction skills and craftsmanship, promoting a kind of technical aesthetics." (ibid.) For using natural materials, two small typical cases can be found in Shangcun village of Jixi county. In there, a bamboo column-roof system covering a historic house forms a semi-open public pavilion called 'village lounge', co-fabricated by architects and local craftsmen (mentioned in Chapter 1), whilst another structure with bamboo poles and hats covers an entrance corridor linking the car park and the village, erecting a 'hat porch', as a tiny

place to "protect the people from bad weather." (Gooood, 2019) (Figure 8.25)

Figure 8.25. The bamboo 'hat porch' (source: Gooood, 2019. Available at: https://www.gooood.cn/the-bamboo-hat-porch-in-shang-village-china-rural-culture-d-r-c.htm).

Figure 8.26. Huangshan No.1 mansion (source: Zhang, 2010, p.62).

They are all low-profile, temperate, micro and green intervention into local contexts. Cases exploring tectonics are also not rare. The two bamboo structures could also be tectonic attempts, and Huangshan No.1 Mansion, a villa renovation is another such effort inspired by material logics and structural systems of traditional Huizhou architecture (Shou, 2018) (Figure 8.26). However, another noted case — the

aforementioned Shuanglong Primary School is not traditional at all, but being a light tectonic intervention in the environment with prefabricated structure system made from lightweight steels and essential insulation and waterproof materials (Wu, 2013) (Figure 8.27). As a donated school, the construction that is cheap, convenient and fast with industrialized systems was believed to least impact local environment as a "basic architecture." (WSP Architects, 2013; Gu, 2013, p.1) However, these two tendencies would easily become merely low-tech solutions, and when low-tech become a 'moral high ground', the spatial, material and thermal qualities would be deemphasized. For example, the bamboo pole curtain of one Deshui hotel renovated from a school has deteriorated quickly with no replacement offered (Figure 8.28), and the actual thermal performance and durability of Shuanglong Primary School is very much lower than expected. Also, similar thermal problem existed in the 'bamboo pavilion' as the 'openness' conflicts with the 'publicness' (mentioned in Sub-section 1.3.2).

Figure 8.27. The prefabricated structure system of Shuanglong Primary School (source: WSP Architects, 2013).

Figure 8.28. The hotel renovated by Deshui Company from a school, with low-tech bamboo pole curtain added (source: Author).
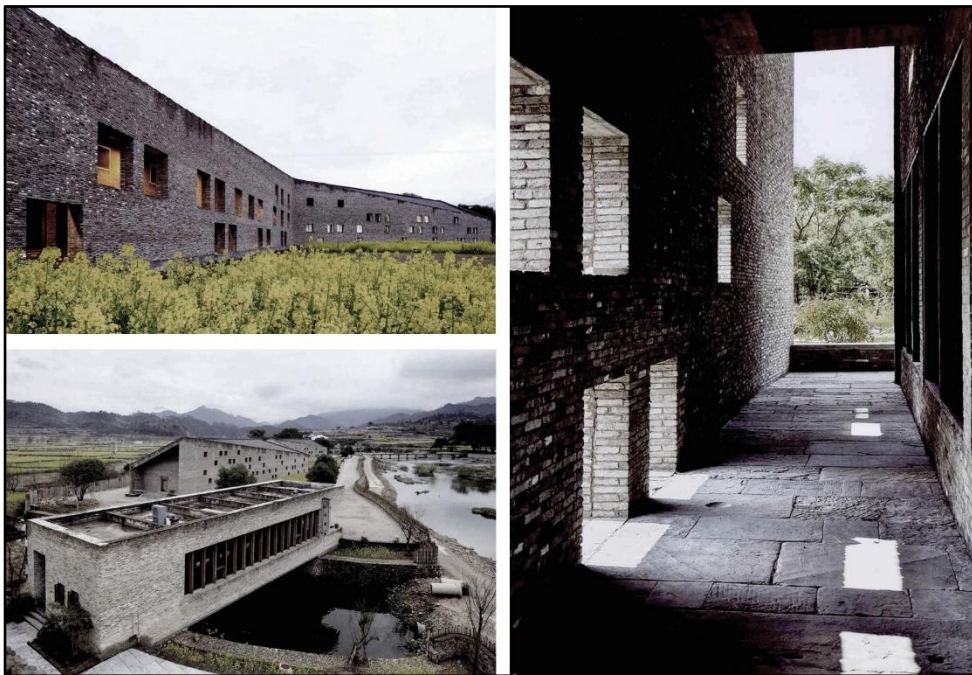
Figure 8.29. The oil factory pole responding to the environment (source: adapted from Luo and Zhou, 2015, p.73-76).

Sometimes experiments and tectonics have been combined, like the designs of Songfengcui Camellia Oil Factory (in Wuyuan county) and Jixi Museum. The factory

case built an abstract environment system showing respects to the site condition and function content (Luo and Zhou, 2015). Its Z shape body follows the natural topography of mountain and water and answers their visual momentum, creating a vivid place together with the bridge hall, the house and dwellings nearby (Figure 8.29). The free fenestration in the long walls facing west and east answers its functional layout and sun light exposure, and the surface materials were largely recycled from villages as a sustainable consideration (ibid.). The Jixi Museum broke its mass by inserting courtyards, corridors and waterscapes at various scales to make an experiencing system evoking a feeling of walking through historical villages (Li et al., 2014). Its continuous roof echoes the distant mountains whilst answering neighbouring texture, with the trusses exposed inside to implicate the fluctuate form trends and lead the visual order (Figure 8.30) (ibid.).
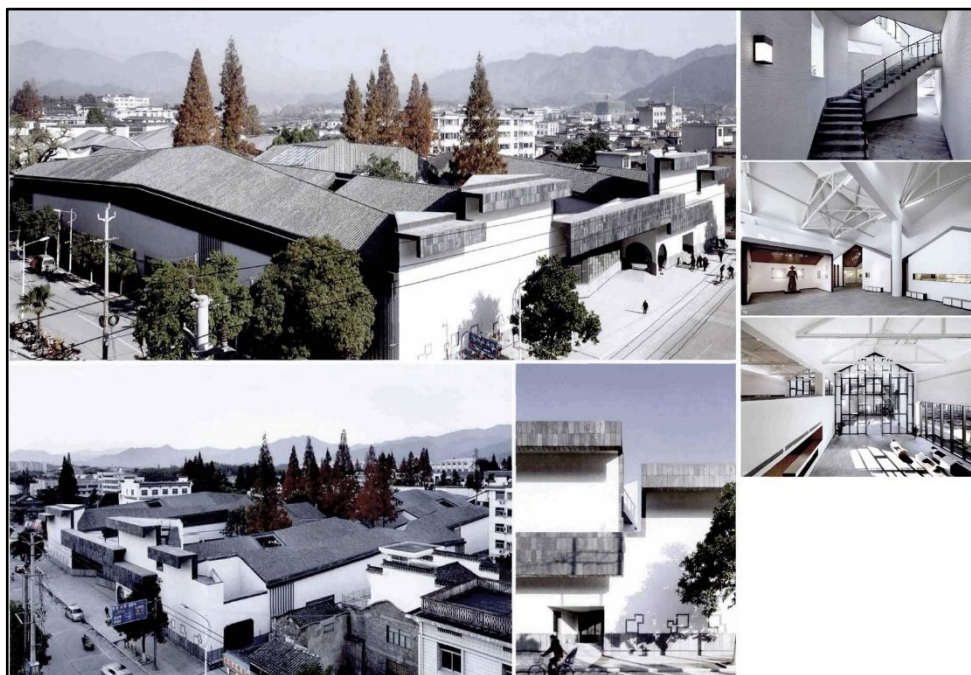
Figure 8.30. The continuous roof system and the trusses inside (source: adapted from Li et al., 2014, p.34, p.39).

The above two design streams have been after all partial, resulting in unappreciated cultural images and overemphasized techniques. The designers in self-references or even design fetishes have been focusing on solving self-constructed problems that may

not be contextually genuine, with the real complexities and contradictions in the context indicating broader social issues not sufficiently considered.

The third design stream, however, have integrated social and spatial factors, and it might be the most appropriate one in villages during the Rural Revitalization. In Zhou's conclusion (2015) towards village, it is a socially responsive design, whose results should reflect the social organization and guide the social activities therein, and the key is to reconstruct rural communities differing from urban social organizations through creating contextual space and place. This approach nurtures a strong sense of identity within community members rather than presenting architects' personal interests (ibid.). However, this trend is yet to be seen in Huizhou.

Figure 8.31. The Jinmei pedestrian bridge in Yilan (source: Youfang, 2010. Available at: https://www.archiposition.com/items/20180525100651).

In Yilan of Taiwan, Huang Shenyuan's long-term practices is a typical example of this trend. 'Being at local places and at ease' (Zhou, 2014), he treats design as a mean of accompanying, which is dystopian, people-centred, case-based, pragmatically focusing

on issues currently happening and changing. His designs have been moderate, sensible and socially inclusive, caring about not only the local weather, history, culture, but more the everyday life, social relations, contingencies and possibilities (ibid.). The designs emphasize community's voice over architect's will, making situated responses not for architectural styles but actual values and attitudes (ibid.). For example, Jinmei Pedestrian Bridge — an inconspicuous walking path was formed by light-steel structures, green skins, and lively settings, silently offering locals a safe, easy and familiar path and place (ibid.) (Figure 8.31). The social welfare centre was designed to have a fragmented volume expressing a distance from bureaucracy and a subtle intimacy to the public (Sanlian Lifeweek Magazine, 2011). Also, the repetitive covering structures in his projects shelter the people physically and mentally (op. cit., 2014).

Another similar approach is Huang Yinwu's long-term (more than 15 years) design-led revitalization of Shaxi, an ancient town of Yunnan province. He criticizes the top-down design views and self-referential attitudes like "writing a song pretending sadness" and imposing urban experiences on rural context (Wang, 2016).

To end designers' detachment and arrogance, he has led to become an insider, as becoming the 'director of rural cooperation centre of Shaxi to accompany the local community to honestly face the realistic difficulties and find appropriate solutions (Huang, 2017). He first aimed to revitalize local culture by renovating heritages based on a pragmatic authenticity.[150] Then he strived to reactivate the economy and life through improving the infrastructure and fostering the industries like tourism. After that he tried to revitalize the local people who tended to move out for not being competitive in the tourist market. This was started through renovating the grain depot into a

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[150] The archway of Xing Jiao temple, as an example, was not repaired to the originally grand structure but kept in the existing height and width to not break the integrity of street space, as a recognition of historical process and reality.

community centre to serve locals' business and education to nurture their endogenous power, creating a true sense of belonging (ibid.). Shaxi's renovation is a design-led development[151] towards social sustainability, yet being co-driven by local government, people, and investors, based on a shared cultural identity emerging and evolving during the process (ibid.).

As Huang suggests, rural construction's fundamental goal is to improve local production and life, to revive the vitality of industries, to rebuilt the cultural confidence, and design in villages is far beyond merely changing the form and space, but an integrated creation relating wider social participation, within which the local people's subjectivity is the key (Wang, 2016). He hence has been implementing this view in Mapinguan village, trying to 'develop' the people by sending them out of the village to learn relevant experiences, whilst inviting experts to there to train them, to stimulate ideas and wisdoms growing from bottom up (Zhongguo Wenming Wang, 2018).

Indeed, Huang Yinwu has been luckier than Ou Ning for he has had international and domestic funds, as well as political and civil support. In comparison, the Bishan Project lacked funds and refused funds, more importantly, it had lost the support from government and people (Ou, 2014).

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[151] 'Design-led development' in this thesis indicates the spatial development/regeneration in which designers take the role of leader among stakeholders, as CEOs operating the holistic built environment and related issues (see Sub-section 8.4.1). Designers could potentially integrate the government, capital, people and other relevant resources to direct the development, but they should hold the right values. As seen by Barnett they can "write the rules for the significant choices that shape the city." (Barnett, 1974, cited in Carmona, 2016, p.725) See a detailed discussion in Sub-section 5.5.4 and 9.2.1.

8.5 Bottom-up level — the more positive local people having an attitude change

The people involving the space production in inventory have had a more complex composition than those moving to expanding NRD. They include people having not left their home towns and villages during urbanization, and those who left for cities but has now moved back, as well as a growing number of former urbanites having left cities to live a new life in Huizhou. As a consequence, during the process of this gradual form transformation, the meaning of 'local resident' is often not what it appears to be. Some who make this claim are not local at all, whilst many real locals have been forced or tempted out of their original homes. For example, there are literally no real local people in relocation cases, as most of those newly assembled settlements have been occupied and utilized by new operators from elsewhere aiming at commercial purposes rather than residence. Also, in renovation projects, a growing number of outside developers come to become neighbours of real locals.

However, the following discussion focuses on the group of people who have not left their original living space yet have been involved with this kind of form change.[152] A majority of them still live in villages, including some of them having been migrating between their villages and nearby towns yet still owning rural houses on homestead land and sometimes living there. They have all experienced the change of their original living space in inventory.

In facing this form change, they did not show a similarly unified acceptance from the beginning compared to those moved in NRD, although being at the same bottom

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[152] This group of people is treated as 'local people' by following discussion.

position and hence not dominating the trend of change. Nevertheless, they later have become more eager to join the space production with more positive attitudes and behaviours rather than giving similarly passive responses, as they have been able to get benefited through funding, altering and operating their own houses or joining other utilizations of form change in inventory happening nearby. However, their participations have not happened in organized ways.

This section, likewise, tries to explain the contextual 'lived space' at bottom through seeing the picture from an 'on-site' perspective. It traces and discusses the people's genuine experiences and responses during this space production through examining their notions, behaviours, and their situation of co-residency with people from outside. The findings[153] have demonstrated that although the formation of lived space has not shown a similarly diachronic phase to that in the first case and not well coincided with the power and profiting logics, the individual pursuits for a better life, and the self-actualizations in this process have also been conforming to the greater trend of urbanization and rural development, but the congruence has been longer and more complicated.

8.5.1 In notion

The local people's notion of this form change has been similarly dominated by their self-interest. The interview and observation have suggested that most of them have not had a comprehensive view to comprehend the space production and the underlying logics of power, capital and design. However, there has also been a concept change, reifying the shift of 'principal contradictions' in respect of living space, and this has been again embodied in the two kinds of spatial scarcity — the material one and

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[153] The findings here mainly indicate to interviews with residents living in relevant villages, however, the data from second-hand materials and from the author's personal experience of visiting these villages are also very supportive.

conceptual one. However, this time the two scarcities have not been solved in a similarly smooth way, compared to those of the people in the first case. Indeed, these space receivers have showed an attitude change in the evolution of their notion. Many of them was initially restricted from solving their material or conceptual scarcity of space 'on site', so they resisted surrounding form changes not benefiting them, and when the material scarcity was solved and the conceptual scarcity of space formed a stable competition over space, they all began to support and positively join in the form change with those outsider developers.

The solution of material scarcity of living space was once in a predicament. The people lived in old dwellings had relatively harsh living environment (being dark, damp or deteriorated). They wanted to make modern changes to their homes, but as they chose to stay in situ or keep owning the old properties even when moving out, they had to do so on original sites. Nevertheless, many of these bottom-up rebuilding/repairing demands were either limited or prohibited.

The reasons for this condition lied in the implementations of cultural logic — the local preservation efforts towards tangible heritages, represented by BCQZ. The preservation once had limited government funds, impeding authorities from holistically undertaking the repairment and maintenance of all historical dwellings in Huizhou, and the lack of clear criteria for selecting buildings into BCQZ had let discriminatory choices occur, often with dwellings with shorter histories considered as not valuable enough to be listed to receive repair funds. However, interestingly, when a whole district or village was listed into BCQZ, a one-size-fit-all preservation was usually carried out, roughly with no self-alteration allowed in any of the buildings in there. Also, as mentioned before, the dispersed ownership rights of these old houses made the bottom-up alterations more difficult to happen. In addition, the rural tourism under larger companies' integrated managements also restricted the individual changes.

Li (2014) has offered a revealing example about the dilemma happened in Huangcun village of Xiuning county. The whole village was listed in 'BCQZ' to be preserved entirely. As mentioned by her, a house there was built in 1920s, so its shorter history prevented it from being selected into the conservation list for "officials to compensate the family for ceding ownership to the government," (ibid., p.61), yet the self-renovation and reconstruction was prohibited as it was in a holistically protected village. More, it could not be adopted/rented in BCQZ as it was the family's only residence with no other 'relocated home' offered yet then. Although the family sympathized the governments' effort, they still hoped to tear down the old house for a new one because the worn-down structure was undesirable (ibid.). As seen by Li, it was a discrepancy between the grand cause of preservation and "actual less-than-desirable living conditions" as the family's "central fact of everyday existence." (ibid. p.61) However, for many similar cases in other villages, the residents could not similarly sympathize the significance of preservation or accept the 'discrepancy' as those in Li's case.

This predicament caused by the neglect of social sustainability in the top-down campaign formed the main barrier for related people to solve their material scarcity of living space 'on site' by their own efforts. However, other organized form changes in inventory nearby were still promoted by the same campaign or allowed to be made by tourist companies. This inequality inevitably raised emotions among local communities; unsatisfactory, resistance or even hostility occurred towards the changes not benefiting them, in conjunction with their grassroots mindsets having not seen the potential value of the old dwellings in both cultural (as heritages) and economic terms (as assets).

As local rural development and urban-rural integration progressed, and preservation effort and tourism development continued on track, the material scarcity of living space has been gradually solved. On the one hand, more historical dwellings including

younger ones have been repaired or taken over with more funds raised by added government subsidies or through diversified money channels (adoption or rent) during or after BCQZ. On the other hand, along with the urbanization (or New-Type Urbanization), a growing number of NRD have been available for those who could not make on-site changes and wanted to move out, like the non-gated communities (rural concentrated living districts) and gated communities (commercial or indemnificatory residences) and. And recently the political support has offered related villagers more freedom and legitimacy to cede the use right of homestead land to collectives, or lease it together with the properties to outsiders who can better operate them.

These solutions have let many of those inhabitants who faced the material scarcity of space move out of their original ancient homes, but still some of them chose to stay to live in or own their improved homes. They thus could join those who had not had such a material scarcity or been limited to solve their material scarcity of space (e.g., those living later-built houses) to participate in the space production against tourism-centred industries. Whilst coexisting with the outside developers, the material scarcity of living space has started to shift to join a more comprehensive and conceptual one — the desire to utilize the space production and its results to realize self-interest as a self-actualization. This concept has later triggered a competition between them and other outside developers for changing and operating the form and space as profitable resources.

However, people solving the concept scarcity of living space was also initially limited. For example, in some listed historical villages the bottom-up individual alterations of houses for doing tourism-related businesses (e.g., agritainment) were still strictly restricted, so under this inequity resistance to form changes not benefiting locals still existed (exemplified by aforementioned Dai's example in Tangmo). Nevertheless, when the cultural logic has later become more sophisticated with conventions in

controlling relevant form changes established and accepted across the context,[154] and when relevant businesses have been gradually dispersed to areas outside protected districts with less confinement from government and tourist company, such demands for individual form alterations have been orderly met, with the resistance shifting to the aforementioned 'competition'. However, the locals started from an inferior position in contending for utilizing these resources, as they were initially monopolized by those larger tourist companies. Examples can also be found in the Tangmo village, as mentioned in Section 8.3. Similar situation happened in Chengkan village (core village of Chengkan town), as a group of locals has strived to break a private company's long-term monopoly of the resources through protest and arbitration, yet they still have not succeeded.[155] Nevertheless, as local tourism developed towards 'tourism plus' and 'experience-based', especially when it has entered the stage of Rural Revitalization, the influence of companies' domination has been diluted, because channels for locals to join in tourism-centred industries (or in other words solve the conceptual scarcity of space) have been greatly expanded, such as emerging new self-employed business types (e.g., *minsu*, studios, workshops) and various kinds of service jobs, and also many smaller outside developers have entered to break the monopoly whilst creating more opportunities for locals. The competition has been hence softened to a balance and there has existed an dialectic relationship between the locals, the outsiders, and the village collectives, showing an interdependency in this space production: the outsiders need the locals and collectives to cooperate (e.g., providing essential labour); the locals want outsiders, especially tourist companies to enhance publicity to bring more visitors and income; and the collectives need both of them to develop well as an achievement of development and stabilization. In this milder contention, the people have hence tended to accept their positions, and their everyday life in this process has actually been

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[154] This also means the 'movement' sense of cultural logic and related efforts has faded away.

[155] According to the interview with a local resident who used to live in Chengkan village, who is nominated as Mr. P.

involved deeply in serving the tourism-centred industries through all kinds of ways. Also, the contention has seemed to reach a higher level — the discourse, raising a question about whose voice and expression can represent Huizhou's cultural identity.

8.5.2 In behaviour

In this space production, the appearance of local people's everyday practices has not seen a fundamental change compared to those of people in NRD. They have been similarly reactive but with more active meanings, and they have been conducted in more positive ways. Whilst responding to conceived changes, the locals' practices have been more quickly adjusted to follow their notions and attitudes to suit challenges and opportunities in new themes.

Earlier, locals did show resistance to the tourism-related development through action. For example, one conflict about self-construction in Tangmo raised collective resistance. According to Dai's record (2017, pp.7), an old mother and her 40 year's old son tried to expand their shabby single-room house into a three-bedroom home with limited savings. However, the tourist company required them to build the structure with timber but they did not obey so as brick-concrete was much cheaper. When having finished two floors and preparing the roof they were forced to stop by the company, who later tore down the structure for the reason of destroying the landscape of the water street of Tangmo. The local witnesses all cursed this unfair demolition, which left them a bad collective memory. Later when the company built and changed many more assets in the village, the locals complained heavily by putting up accusing letters, expressing angers to media, or even sending petitions to upper governments. The people became more reluctant and noncooperative in later projects led by the company (ibid., p.127).

Also, in Chengkan village, there occurred more hostile activities, as mentioned by Mr.

P,[156] a local college graduate who used to live there:

> Misunderstanding, resistance, anger, and envy were common in the earliest stage of tourism. They opposed the changes of living space, as their own interest was impacted. The sudden arrival of rules imposed great restrictions on them. For example, they could not raise pigs and chickens for hygiene reasons; they could not place stuffs freely in the environment. Their free, casual and loose living habit was forced to change, yet without enough benefits received. They vented their anger by destroying tourist facilities, scolding or slandering relevant programmes. These were a striking contrast to their later behaviours like willingly setting up stalls, snack bars and products shops, as digging practical benefits based on what they had got.

Another more vivid example is the local responses to the construction of *Banshan Xianke*. During the process the neighbours did not accept the investor, and quarrelled with her frequently. The owner recalled her difficult experience,[157] as that:

> They blocked the lane to my construction site, and I was even sued for they deemed that I had encroached in their land, for just placing several stone slabs on their plots of muddy land in a rainy day for walking through. Issues also happened in buying land from them. For example, we agreed a price of 10 thousand *yuan* for a small piece of land in front of my door, but three days later they suddenly raised the price to 100 thousand *yuan*, which was ridiculous. However, they could not stop me because it was approved by the government, but they were just expressing their emotions.

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[156] Interview by the author, on 18/04/2018.

[157] Interview by the author, on 14/05/2018.

But interestingly, she also mentioned that the same neighbours had later become friendly and deeply involved in her *minsu* business because their income had been raised significantly by this 'station' bringing in visitors.

In competing for utilizing (changing and operating) the form and space, locals have been using their own ways to distinct their contextual businesses from those of rivals. They have tried to tell a grassroots 'genuineness' through offering a more natural, grounded and simper vernacular sense in the space and its changes, so as to create a stronger 'otherness' for visitors. For example, in Tangmo, as showed by Dai (2017, pp.122-125), the locals tried to express some real, basic and casual features of their products. The menu of their restaurants showed collections of *tucai* (rustic dishes), which was distinguished by ingredient home grown, hand-made, simply cooked, and non-additive, differing to the delicate Hui-style or Western cuisines prepared by the Gîtes de France. Same strategy was used in promoting their special products as pickles, ducks, fermented bean curds, hams, rice cakes, oils...etc., which "are all the most rustic, authentic, and wildest food stocks for the festivals." (ibid., p.123) Also, they highlighted the different life style they could offer in the environment. As recorded by Dai as well (ibid., p.124), in Mingzhu restaurant, the selling point was a narrative: "a cup of tea, a local snack, or various home cooked dishes will let you to find the taste of home...to stay here, where every facility is prepared, to say goodbye to the hectic life and work for a while, to feel the simplicity of the rural people." In Xu's agritainment, the similar saying was: "If you are tired of the noise of big cities and its abundant foods, come to Tangmo, which will be your best choice."

Indeed, not only foods and products, in such evolving living space the locals themselves do have showed a natural genuineness in their basic everyday practices which is unchoreographed. However, intentionally or incidentally, it has sparked an empathy among those 'nostalgia' and 'otherness' seekers. As Dai has observed (ibid., pp.124-

125), in spring they are stocking and cleaning bamboo shoots they dug in front of their doors, hanging up salt meat or vegetables on wooden frames or under roofs; in summer they are spreading out broad beans and rape seeds they harvested in small open plots between houses; in autumn, they are drying more colourful crops like chilies, corns, sesame seeds collected from their farmland. In the village water system, they also rinse rice and clothes whilst chatting and gossiping, also in there they catch fishes, shrimps and snails. However, meanwhile, in the eyes of visitors, the series of real-life scenes, are exactly like shows of the natural and traditional life (ibid.).

Their lodging businesses (later also called *minsu*) have been more genuine too, for the buildings and rooms are never decorated and altered in ways like those offered by designers, but these home-like places can better offer a real-life experience compared to those deliberately made modern or Hui-style settings operated by other developers. They supply plenty of relaxing and comfortable options and these real-local owners are usually very hospitable, willing to join the visitors' experiences, like creating casual conversations or sharing life stories. This can build senses of intimacy and familiarity that attract customers, many of whom are returned ones (ibid., p.125). These features have made their lodgings closer to the authentic meaning of *minsu* — vernacular accommodations with genuine local experiences. Also, in there the locals can offer cheaper prices for buying these more genuine 'products and service', which could be another strategy to enhance competitiveness.

More, in some tourist areas they and the tourist companies have been also competing with each other over tickets. In Tangmo, the tourists having booked company-run rooms could have free admission into the village, whilst others booking rooms from locals needed to buy a half-price ticket, which raised murmurs of anger again (ibid., pp.127-128). In many other such villages, whilst facing dominant control of tickets, the locals sometimes evade relevant rules. As a tacit competing strategy, they bring visitors

having booked their restaurants or rooms to sneak in their villages by pretending they are welcoming friends and relatives to homes.

Later, as the competition has become soften with the balanced relationships between locals, investors/developers and collectives gradually formed, the locals have participated more widely and deeply in utilizing the form and space against tourism, with appearances and meanings of their everyday practices updated. Service, as a dependent work has become a common choice, like catering and cleaning. For example, in *Banshan Xianke* the neighbours later came to help the owner to provide catering service for a stable and considerable income, and more frequently people take cleaning or maintaining work in tourist villages' public spaces ordered by companies or collectives. "They can earn 80 *yuan* a day for cleaning. It is a daily-paid work, not a permanent one. The people, especially the house wife like it when they have spare time." A local cadre has mentioned.[158]

Some new business types and service roles have also emerged in the space production, being closely related to the unique tradition and culture in Huizhou, conforming with the trend increasingly highlighting tourist experience. Independently or dependently, for example they work for souvenir shops selling traditional items or even faked antiques and some are hired as teachers or trainers in studios opened by the 'New Huizhouneses', to present local cultural skills like making Huizhou desserts, preparing tea ceremonies, showing Hui-style paintings, or even delivering local farming methods and cuisine recipes in different times of a year.[159]

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[158] Interview by the author, on 15/05/2021.

[159] These are also treated as local 'intangible cultural heritages'.

It seems that these new themes have not brought big changes to locals' everyday life. The everyday practices have been largely still there, and the physical form and space have largely remained, but there have been collages and malpositions in the combinations of the two, with the original meanings interrupted and reinterpreted. For example, in Tangmo, many historic parts of the village were contracted to individuals. The covered bridge became tea house (Dai, 2017, p.64) (Figure 8.32); the two renovated ancestral halls were no longer used for worshipping, with one used for performing Huangmei opera not originating from Huizhou, and another one used by locals to present the technic of rubbing and calligraphy (ibid., pp.65-69) (Figure 8.33); and the mansion of *hanlin* (member of imperial academy) was even used for studios showing tofu making (ibid., p. 75). In Xiongcun village, similarly, the historic academy building is not a teaching place anymore. Included in the ticket package, it has been renovated into a core exhibition hall with zero activities.

Figure 8.32. The covered bridge in Tangmo village (source: courtesy of Jiang Hongyi).

Figure 8.33. Presenting the technic of rubbing and calligraphy (source: Zhi Lǚyou, 2017. Available at: https://www.sohu.com/a/144869779_572539).

For the new themes in the balance, the case of 'villager tour guide' in Chengkan village is more revealing. It is a dependent work. In day time, a few locals gather and gossip at the entrance of the village, yet when visitors arrive, they immediately become individual guides to led the village tour. They tell tourists histories and traditions constructed by their own or shared among their group, and for this issue they have been competing with the tourist company. The narrative from Mr. P[160] is telling:

> Many elders, without jobs and other special skills, and being too old to do farming, become village tour guides. Like my mum, from time to time she does this when there is no farmland work. Especially during the high season, when the company-hired professional guides are not enough, they can be alternatives, earning 20-30 *yuan* for a whole route. Many of them queue up for choices in the morning or have them in turn. They learn the routes, scripts, anecdotes, jokes by themself or from each other, or from the

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[160] Interview by the author, on 18/04/2021.

professionals….Their roles have been changing between villager, farmer, interpreter, performer, or even curator. However, the company not always support them as one or two of them swindled consumers, which damaged the village's image. It thus sometimes prevents tourists from accepting these village guides' offers, which in turn causes locals' anger regarding the old problem of monopoly.

Following this trend, locals have been doing more to show rites and ceremonies rooted in Huizhou history but these have been more deliberate compared to the natural real-life scenes and individually performing and promotional activities in scattered corners. What have been emerging are a series of revived, scheduled, organized, choreographed, and promoted public events in the renovated traditional environment, aiming to brand the local places through showing the unique Huizhou culture and tradition, which have further supported the 'experience-based' mode.

Figure 8.34. The event of long-table banquet in Xu village (source: courtesy of Jiang Hongyi).

A few examples are noteworthy, such as the Long-table Banquet, the Chair Dragon (dragon made by a chair chain) and Broadsword Dance in Xu village (Figure 8.34), Human Pyramids in Sanyang villages, and *tanwu* Dance in Qimen county. In the tourist spot of Huizhou Ancient City in She county centre, there have been more secular activities showing traditional processes of 'husband choosing' (by throwing a ball to the chosen men) and wedding, and of the magistrate of ancient Huizhou patrolling on streets. One can find from these performances traditional costumes, special gestures and orders announced in old dialects, but the stage props are usually not elaborately prepared. These staged events no longer accord with their real timings in history and are not held for the locals themselves but for tourists. Some events can be showed everyday only according to consumer's demands. Nevertheless, no questions about the authenticities and relevancies have been raised among the organizers, performers, spectators, and supervisors. Experiences, fames, revenues, symbols and apparent achievements have seemed to be more important. It is essentially another demonstration of "consuming tradition and manufacturing heritage," (Alsayyad, 2001) yet with the tradition and heritage being more intangible, which is performed in renovated or manufactured tangible environments.

The appearance and meaning of people's everyday practice have been actually very responsive to the consumers' demands and tastes. Some special demands have oriented locals' direction. For example, Hongcun village, for over 20 years, have been a hot destination for students from design disciplines nationwide to obtain knowledge of historical architecture and practice basic skills of aesthetics like sketching. The locals have hence established a set of supporting facilities such as cheaper dormitories, convenient canteens, drawing materials, stationary shops, transportation services, etc. They even have held stable contracts with many universities throughout the year. Also, Xidi village and some nearby villages have seen a boom of carpentry as they are utilized by some film industries which need many wooden furniture made in Hui style and thus

carpenters with relevant wisdom and skills have been very welcomed. People thus even come back home to learn this, or even build relevant schools. This formerly dying craftmanship thus has been incidentally and unwittingly continued and even exported to elsewhere outside Huizhou. However, a problematic irrelevancy of tradition has also emerged, caused by the homogenization brought by tourism. People have been selling things that are not related to Huizhou (Figure 8.35). In Tunxi old street, many souvenirs, promotional performances, faked antiques, foods and toys are identical with those offered in other places. The shop selling Yunan or Burma jade is a typical one, as it could be found in many scenic spots across China.

Figure 8.35. A village shop selling items similar to those sold in other scenic areas outside Huizhou (source: courtesy of Jiang Hongyi).

More, in this balanced space production, locals have been learning quickly from the outside investors regarding the mode of utilizing the form and space. This trend has also brought about adjustments of both their everyday practices and the spatial practice, making the lived space more hybrid. In *Deiweier* Café of Yangchan village, the neighbour couple hired by the owner have been very familiar with the online selling and promotion. The *Hui Yue* (Hui Music) *minsu* in Xiongcun village was opened by a

returned villager who is an inheritor and expert of singing local folk songs. It has gained fame by offering special music experiences, with singing studios and academies regularly held for guests, and within an outside Hui-style configuration its inner space has been very modernized and Ikea-like (Figure 8.36). The curator of Ba Weizu Residence Museum in Yuliang village, as a descendant of the prestigious seal cutting master Ba Weizu, now aims to develop a comprehensive platform of cultural and tourist businesses called '*Lianfang*' (Lotus Boat), a name used by Ba Weizu to style himself. The businesses are based on the renovated space around this ancient dwelling museum as a 'Major Historical and Cultural Site Protected at The National Level', which is planned to include exhibition, *minsu*, restaurant, education, studio, and peripheral products all under the brand of *Lianfang*. This is typically an advanced operation mode being no different to those of outsiders. Design has been more mentioned in this trend, yet it seems that it is treated as an instrument again for their commercial purpose.

Figure 8.36. The interior settings of *Hui Yue minsu* (source: Trip.com. Available at: https://hk.trip.com/hotels/she-county-hotel-detail-73296878/she-xian-hui-le-gu-yun-min-su/?checkin=2022-03-08&checkout=2022-03-09&adult=1&crn=1).

In the relatively stable environment with a gradual space production, the local's

everyday life has been in evolution rather than revolution. However, underlying many evolving or emerging practices that present new themes based on Huizhou culture and tradition, the meanings have been no longer similarly built on those genuine culture and tradition, because the core of these meanings has changed to catering to the tastes of tourists, rather than deliberately cherishing or unwittingly carrying the true residues of traditional life style. This trend has been growing in the Rural Revitalization highlighting tourism-centred industries. In this sense, the appearances and meanings of locals' everyday life have been increasingly divided.

In terms of the physical form problem and its design issue, the limited alteration of their houses for developing tourism-related business is probably the only 'change' they can dominate, which usually happens in the inside parts. However, these inward changes would similarly fragment the remaining form continuity as what has been done by these inward outside developers, in the absence of integrated urban design considerations.

8.5.3 Co-residency in an equilibrium

In the form development resistance has developed to competition, which has reached a balance, and the dialectical relationship between major stakeholders has been established. The change of local people's notion about the form problem has finished, with the conceptual scarcity of space and its solutions being in a stable status. In the 'interdependency' the locals have fully accepted the co-residency with outsiders, which is now prevalent in Huizhou towns and villages, and the locals' everyday life has been very adaptive to this co-residency.

Among the locals and outsiders which include larger companies, 'New Huizhouneses' and even some 'True Huizhouneses', an apparent 'Huizhou cultural identity' is still being actively constructed, as they have been all branding their concepts and behaviours

with a strong Huizhou mentality, although the identity has seemed to be differently understood. This co-residency has also not affected the forming of an acquaintance society similar to that of local NRDs, with the *guanxi* network and the sense of familiarity easily built. New comers can well understand local dialects and habits for years' stay, whilst locals can well follow outsiders' minds and tastes. There are no obvious walls, either physically or mentally, because the scattered and small traditional places nurture stable and direct connections between people. However, compared to the fact that the harmony between people in NRD has been built on a shared identity of 'being related to villages', this newly balanced co-residency facing a gradual form change has been based on a stable consensus on the distribution of benefits generated from the space production under a nominal 'Huizhou cultural identity', rather than a collective empathy.

In this equilibrium, the bigger companies are still dominating; the outside investors are contented with their feeling or profiting; and the self-interest motivated locals are able to have good ways to improve their living space, and to earn more income through either independent or dependent work in this space, or through utilizing, leasing and selling this space. In these ways their self-actualization can be achieved both materially and conceptually, which conforms to the goals of greater development causes that are in a trend of focusing more on people.

Mr. W, a manager of a local tourist company, has commented on the people's minds and behaviours[161] as that:

> For the locals, the purpose is to get a better life. They have no such responsibilities and awareness to say protection (of the ancient dwellings). During the resettlement offering new land and houses, or the construction of

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[161] Interview by the author, on 07/05/2021.

concentrated living districts, or the 'Construction of Beautiful Village', they would not care and consider much. The conservation and improvement are what governments need to do, and actually these are considered by people with broader visions. For many locals, the beautification of flowers and plants, the maintenance of roads and drainage system are much better than only holding old houses. Many of them support the governments' work in villages and are now willing to sell the unused old properties. The outsiders can have more energies and capabilities to keep and operate them well, and some treat the former owners as friends and 'relatives' as giving them small presents in festivals and in turn the locals also bring them products like eggs, hens and vegetables. To some extent locals are having new friends and relatives, so they now welcome this.

People's reversed attitude experienced by the owner of *Banshan Xianke* (Hillside Comfortable Guesthouse) are even more persuasive in showing their belated contentment contributing to the consensus in this co-residency. As she mentioned that:[162]

When the renovation finished and the *minsu* business started, I needed to restore the relationship with the people, by hiring them, selling their products in my hotel, and sending goods to the poor ones now and then. They finally made a U-turn to me, becoming very nice and trusting me a lot. I have developed the rural study tour in this village and let the people join the catering work by sending visitors to their homes, which need to be clean and able to prepare meals for 3-4 tables with the menu offered by me, which includes some special Huizhou dishes and desserts. Also, activities can be organized in their places as they can lead visitors to pick vegetables, feed pigs,

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[162] Interview by the author, on 14/05/2021.

dig bamboo shoots, transplant rice seedlings, use firewood stove...a good chance for the city kids to taste the rural life. Now the family earning most can have 70-80 thousand *yuan* annually, and the one having least can also make 20 thousand yuan. My name was thus even recorded into the village history in its small museum. I really have motivated them and bring changes, and now there are another 4 or 5 *minsu* opened, as followers of mine.

Most of the locals clearly have not fully recognized the holistic picture of the form transformation, like the underlying logics of space supplier and designer. They may even not be aware of their own logics and possibilities in the process, let alone to fully understand the strategic values of series of development causes, such as the compensation to the countryside, the New-Type Urbanization, the revitalization efforts and the potential monetization rural resources. 'Being late to catch on', 'relatively short-sighted and thinking about their own piece of land', 'being eager to learn if seeing your success', and 'people needing to be guided' are what the local officials think about the locals' mindset. The below quotation is from a local leader of a town,[163] as an example:

The key is always to guide them. Those having returned from outside will be fine, as they are more capable in operating *minsu* or catering work, but the vulnerable elders and poor ones, need to be looked after by government, through letting them fully participate in relevant work to have extra money brought by tourism. Thus, they would cherish these development causes...[and]we need to let them fully display their talents that can become their income, like being cleaners, maintainers, guards, conductors, to let them feel the benefit of development as they are very practical. Many need to be encouraged to get rich, and if someone has gotten rich, they can become a

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[163] Interview by the author, on 29/04/2021.

model and lead others to make progress.

However, the balanced co-residency and consensus on benefit might not be always stable. The strong theme of tourism tends to cause a fixed mindset and path dependence among different levels as mentioned before. It may be easier for upper-level governments and outsiders to see this problem and make adjustments, but for locals at bottom level, it would be more difficult to realize this and hence their subjectivity and resilience would be impacted. They may not move their eyes to other related industries, with the conceptual scarcity of space stuck in tourism. The failure of Bishan Project was a demonstration, as one major reason was that the local people's mindset was not actually interested in this project but the fame and income through tourism the project could bring. Influenced by the situation in adjacent established tourist destinations of Xidi and Hongcun village, the key aspiration was merely put on tourism, with villagers, governments and developers all wanting tourist projects (Sun, 2014). Even in successful Hongcun or Xidi, the life is too dominated by tourist consumption, as described by Ou Ning: "...the people rush to bring visitors to their shops and lodgings...many shops were leased to outsiders by the tourist company. The organic village has become Disneyland; the life is performance, the neighbourhood relationships become business competitions." (Ou, cited in Sun, 2014) Indeed, as Wen Tiejun suggested, the rural industries need to be diversified in the Rural Revitalization (Wen, 2019). Rural tourism could be one choice but not the sole choice.

In the equilibrium, it seems that the competition has reached a higher level —competing over the discourses about Huizhou cultural identity. The locals and outsiders (including the companies) seem to have different imaginations and hence narratives of this 'homeland'. The contention about the 'French romance' and 'Huizhou character' in Tangmo was an example (Dai, 2017, pp.97-99). Also, in there, the company's utilization of Xu family's ancestral halls sparked anger among people under this

surname, as those hired to control this utilization were actually from local Wang family (ibid., pp.73-76). This has shown a noteworthy revival of the concept of clan system among Huizhou people. For example, many large worship ceremonies have been held in Huangdun village, which is seen by many Huizhou families as their ancestries' first settlement in the historical migrations. Although this revival can never break the current rural institution and order, it is a sign of locals' growing demand for more powerful voices in inheriting and passing on the traditional culture understood by them. Also, for some 'True Huizhouneses', they have been keen to challenge the Huizhou discourses made by the 'New Huizhouneses' so as to '*zhengben qingyuan*' (bring order out of chaos) to claim back the power of discourse, but they are yet to have enough financial power to achieve this goal. Whose voice can represent Huizhou's cultural identity, would potentially become a problem breaking the balance.

8.6 Conclusion

In this space production in inventory driven by relocation and renovation of living space, the roles of stakeholders have been more strongly influenced by the local context.

For fiscal revenue, the local government has conventionally resorted to developing related industry, especially the tourism, with the form and space in existing stock as resources receiving developer' investment to be utilized to provide tax revenue. In facing traditional villages, the government should have begun to see more possibilities in monetizing wider ranges of rural resources against the background of Rural Revitalization and Ecological Civilization that have further opened the rural area through promoting 'Three Changes', yet its economic logic is still dominated by the mind of running tourism-centred industries. For cultural construction, the logic has been much stronger as it is related to the preservation of Huizhou's unique cultural resources — the remaining plentiful historical dwellings, and this local preservation cause actually started the top-down effort to drive this form change through relocation and renovation. However, despite of a more serious attitude with a more powerful and systematic organization in fulfilling the preservation cause (e.g., BCQZ), the measures of relocation and renovation have not been detailed enough, with relevant criteria being simplified and vague, and the room for discriminatory operations growing. The 'authenticity' has not been given enough respect, with utilization of these heritages (promoted by the economic logic) highlighted too much. Preservation has sometimes reversely opened an exit for some irrational and illegal behaviours treating the tangible heritages. Under the cause of revitalization aiming at a broader range of scattered properties, the renovation practices have been allowed to be more anarchic. However, the parallel *Gai Hui* movement as a more unified, extensive yet shallower renovation effort reflected an urgent but insensible implementation of this cultural logic that

reached an extreme. Political responsibility has not totally offered direct compensations, rather it has been a foundation to support the economic and cultural logics so as to ultimately promote the development of relevant industries through this space production, with the benefit shared by other roles, especially the people in there.

Taking the 'back seat' position, the three faces of power logic have been more entangled with each other compared to those in the first case. They have co-driven this form change so it is hard to dissect their individual contribution. Towards the context that is closer to villages and rural people that is more vulnerable, the social sustainability has not been well considered by the power logic, for example, the contradiction between the big cause of preservation and the real demand for new living space was not well solved, which was especially exacerbated by the 'movement' sense and thus caused locals' resistance.

The role of capital has been more dynamic under the encouragement of economic logic, as it has further lowered the threshold for access for broadening the investment channel. The developers' motivations and backgrounds have been greatly diversified, and they have even overlapped with the roles of designer and local people. Developers have aimed for profiting through utilizing the form and space in inventory, or even monopolizing the utilization as what have been done by those tourist companies. Also, some smaller developers from outside Huizhou running individual projects have sought for feelings of the poetic lifestyle and beautiful environment from this utilization.

For the role of designer, in this case planners' influence has receded with architects' voice becoming louder. Designers have become much more positive as more viable and controllable opportunities have come out. However, with form problem individually imagined and constructed, and solutions transplanted from cities they have tended to not genuinely deal with the realities but cause a 'destructive creation'. Designers have

taken three positions in this process (instrument, developer & designer and leader), and offered three operation streams towards the form and space (cultural, technical and social), yet with the social-responsive design approach not seen in Huizhou. Being the developer or leader of a project or area, designers can make design-led development and raise the profile of design, but their values sometimes only speak for their interest and fame rather the local people. Even when the values are right, they lack a platform like urban design to raise broader social awareness of design.

As the space receiver, local people have experienced an attitude change in the shift of their notion, which has changed from resistance to acceptance towards the space production. It was due to that the access of self-actualization was initially blocked and limited. Their solution of material scarcity of living space once met a difficulty, and the subsequent solution of conceptual scarcity of space also initially confronted an unequal competition with those bigger tourist companies. Finally, the competition reached an equilibrium, becoming a cooperation and an inter-dependency in a co-residency based on their consensus on benefits under the nominal Huizhou cultural identity. In forming the lived space, the congruence between their practices and grand social progresses as well as the supplier logics was also made, but in a slower way without an evident diachronic process like that in the first case. The space receivers' everyday practices have not had a fundamental change; the practices have been evolving, following the new themes of tradition in this space production serving the tourism. However, the underlying meanings have been not genuine any more, compared to these behind the residues or revivals of tradition in the first case, as the core has been changed to catering to the consumers. With the appearance and meaning divided from each other, the everyday life has become more dissociative.

Underlying the form renovation has been the reconciliation of the stakeholders' interests, and the connection of three kinds of space has been made upon the consensus

of their interests, yet with the interests not always dominated by benefits. Such as local governments' more interrelated goals; developers' profiting and feeling; people's improved living space, raised income and imagined tradition; as well as designers' ideals and fame. This consensus has reflected a more complicated compromise between the different logics of these roles.

Luckily, within the existing stock of form and space, especially the historical villages, the traditional form structures remain as foundations, so relocations and renovations within scattered positions would not cause a sudden and radical form transformation. The form results were also largely tolerated in the consensus, but indeed, their quality have been better in terms of design as grounded design operations in creating the 'spatial practice' (perceived space) have been given more respect. However, they are still problematic, as these unorganized and more individualised alterations have kept fragmenting the remaining form continuity thoroughly. On the one hand, many form changes as mutations and variants in form systems have not been in an evolution expected by urban morphologists as they have followed some radical socio-economic progresses in the space production, on the other hand, relevant form control methods (typology, urban morphology and typo-morphology) have been largely absent in the context. Also, although design has been after all partially highlighted, it has been very unevenly understood by the stakeholders. However, a platform supported by more inclusive urban design wisdoms could relieve above problems, as it not only can carry out integrated form controls through relevant methods, but also can establish a set of shared values about design and its wider implications among these stakeholders.

Beyond design, nevertheless, the more urgent and important problem seems to be the consequences of the land reform towards countryside. As now the trend is to establish a unified land market across urban and rural areas, with people freely ceding the use

right of their homestead land to the collectives or directly rent it out, the key responsibility is now on the shoulder of village collectives. If they cannot be strong enough to guarantee the locals' interests in the unified market of land or even natural resources (e.g., reclaiming more portions of use right from the bigger companies so as to become actual controllers, or better regulating scattered use rights held by these smaller players), a 'gentrification' in villages would happen as it would still be hard for local people to win the competition for utilizing the resources on their own. The trend has actually emerged. For example, in Chengkan village, there are almost no locals living along the tourist route, and Zuyuan village in Xiuning county, which had been empty for years, has been holistically packaged to developers to run *minsu* industries, with the life there all newly created.

More, facing the emergence of the unified land market and the promotion of 'Three Changes', the logics of space suppliers may be dominated by 'Land Finance' or 'Resource Finance' again. Indeed, the developers of the existing form and space in some local historical villages have already progressed to create a new 'enclosure movement' towards the state-owned urban construction land around these villages to develop real estate projects, as these historical villages as tourist spots can help create their intellectual property (IP), so they can better promote their housing products and raise their land price. For example, Deshui Company has recently taken a large piece of state-owned land (around 60 *mu*) situated next to the entrance of Xixinan village; the designers/developers of *Mengxi Fanghui* are going to push to market a group of villas they designed and developed, which is located 500 meters away from their current hotel. Also, another large piece of sate-owned urban construction land adjacent to Xixinan village has been recently leased to Yuping Company, a local real estate developer, for building a commercial gated community. In addition, once the unified land market has been established, the rural construction land could be easily rented out to develop commercial projects. Although they are not allowed for real estate, they can hold many

similar developments as rental houses, tourist houses, hotels, etc. As a consequence, the villagers' rights and interests involving the rural land and resources will meet more challenges.

Chapter 9: Conclusion, Reflection and Recommendation

9.1 Conclusion

Through developing an analytical mode of space production from Henri Lefebvre's ideas of social space, and applying the mode into the special context of Huizhou, this thesis has offered an explanation of the form transformation of traditional towns and villages in China, with a more comprehensive perspective beyond conventional design knowledge.

The discussions in this thesis have further supported the idea that the form transformation is a result of social production of space. The research questions thus have been answered through a case study in the special context, yet relevant analyses have been done against a bigger background of local urbanization and rural development. The true big picture of the contextual form transformation in the reality has been comprehensively revealed through the understanding of two kinds of space production therein, the one for growth and the one in inventory. The analyses of the two kinds of space production have demonstrated the specific spatialization of capital during the development of socialist market economy outside cities, as it shows how the second circuit of capital has been fixed in the traditional towns and villages against the backdrop of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'.

Specifically, in these two kinds of contextual space production, the three kinds of social space (conceived space, perceived space and lived space) at the three levels of the analytical mode and the roles of stakeholders underlying them have been explained in depth. For each of the space supplier, space receiver and space designer, the intentions, dilemmas, and potential solutions inherent in this process have been analysed and understood from their own perspectives. Especially, the situation faced by the bottom-up space receiver — the local people and their responses have been highlighted, which was an understudied area.

However, in these processes the roles of the major stakeholders have been largely parallel to each other. The various logics, motivations and expectations of them have been incredibly diverse, yet they have coexisted in the same 'production of space' and contributed to the same form results. Unfortunately, designers have not played their due role, which is expected to connect the conceived space and lived space in the spatial practice. They have largely bent to the logics of the driving forces of the space production. In the first case they have followed the overwhelming theme of growth, whilst in the second case they have seemed to lose themselves in facing a more dynamic situation offering more freedom and opportunities. The three kinds of space in the context have hence passively compromise with each other but not been positively integrated. It has been a compromised production of space, with the role of local people largely overlooked, despite that they have had their own ways to response the form results and make the space lived.

In addition, the related built tradition has been diminished in fragmentations as the built environment that holds it has been changed discontinuously. For example, in the new residential districts (NRD), tradition has been both interrupted and partially revived under new conditions. In relocation and renovation cases, tradition has been 'deliberately choreographed' (Li, 2014, p.60) or deployed to cater to new patrons against the background of tourism through manufactured form and space. In local government's cultural logic, tradition is more likely a cultural symbol, whilst for developers, it is a brand for their profiting or feeling. For the local people, it is more of a silent lifestyle and imagination in their 'everyday life', and for designers, it is utilized to provide conceptual justifications for their stylistic interpretations of form.

9.1.1 The role of power

The three faces of power logic and their relationships have been deeply illustrated in the case study. Economically, the local government has aimed to seek fiscal revenue from the form change through promoting the conceived space. The form growth (space production for growth) has directly contributed to the land leasing income in the business mode of Land Finance, whilst the form renovation (space production in inventory) has indirectly generated tax revenue in the conventional mode of developing tourism-centred industries. The latter as an effort of managing the form transformation has provided sharable benefits and also reflected the political and cultural logics. The latest trend of managing the form and space in the era of Rural Revitalization and Ecological Civilization is the reform of 'Three Changes', which as a new economic logic has begun to further open the rural resources and hence manage and utilize them for the purpose of their value appreciation. However, the local government in Huizhou is yet to fully recognize this trend and implement relevant strategies, and also yet to see the potential challenge that the Land Finance mode would reach and enclose villages in the emerging unified land market across urban and rural areas and would even turn into a more inclusive 'Resource Finance' under the promotion of 'National Territory Spatial Planning System', which aims at managing all the territorial space and resources.

Politically, the local government has aimed to fulfil its responsibilities of compensating the relatively inferior areas, and of supporting their developments and the well-being of the people through driving the form change. The direct compensation has mainly pushed the form growth. It has been achieved by offering the indemnificatory houses to people in towns as the economic gains of producing NRD have been initially monopolized by the government and developer; it has also been realized by supplying concentrated living districts on the periphery of towns being near to villages, as an implementation of the goals of BNSC, which has been closer to a consideration of

nurturing the villages and people sustainably. Also, the fundamental improvement of rural infrastructure in BNSC has also been such a direct support that has paved the way for the wider and deeper opening up and development of villages, which is essential for indirect political supports. The indirect compensation has been largely seen in the form renovation cases; it has taken effect through offering policies supporting cultural and economic logics for developing relevant industries (e.g., rural land reform and specific policies), with the benefit brought by industries shared by the local people involved.

Culturally, the local power has strived to protect and promote the local traditional culture and identity borne by the built-environment, conforming to greater discourses on revitalizing Chinese culture and gaining a stronger cultural confidence. The local governments thus have embodied their 'Huizhou mentality' by intervening in the development of form and space. In the form growth, the cultural construction has been a moderate effort promoting symbolic Hui Style in the form with a shallow understanding of local built tradition. In the form renovation, the logic has become stronger, and relevant efforts have been more seriously and ambitiously made, as it initially related to the preservation and utilization of Huizhou's unique tangible culture of historical dwellings, and latterly relates to sustaining the Huizhou identity in wider ranges of buildings. Both of them have served the tourism-centred industries. However, the related practices of relocation and renovation have not been well organized, and this cultural construction towards the existing stock of form and space being much more scattered has also seemed to become a burden for local governments, as demonstrated in the movement of *Gai Hui*.

9.1.2 The role of capital

In its second circuit against the backdrop of socialist market economy, the capital has reached traditional towns and penetrated into villages, to be fixed in the contextual form

and space. It has recently been allowed to flow through more channels to fund the space production as the land, properties and resources in towns and villages have become more open to them. Especially, promoted by the 'Three Changes', the trend of monetizing rural land, properties and resources needs more capital to be invested into villages. Developers have represented the role of capital in the contextual space production. In driving form growth, they have purely aimed for earning profits through producing and selling new living space as gated communities in towns, but most of them have been inexperienced in developing NRD projects, with inappropriate or short-sighted visions, and been weaker to face risk caused by external factors. This has created more uncertainty and irrationality for the form growth. In driving form renovation, the threshold of access for developers has been even lower, so the voice of developers has been very anarchic and discordant, with their backgrounds more diversified, motivations more complicated. Designers and local people can all become individual developers to sponsor individual projects and hence cause form changes. Many developers have come for profiting through utilizing the form and space in inventory, yet some of them operating smaller projects have prioritized their feelings of the environment over profiting from there. All of them have powered smaller yet more thorough form changes in this space production which is harder to be controlled and regulated. Along with the new economic considerations from power ('Three Changes') and related political supports, the capital tends to welcome and support the emerging trend of adopting the Land Finance or even 'Resource Finance' mode in facing villages.

9.1.3 The role of people

The space receivers have been reactive and responsive to the form changes driven from top down, with their everyday life adapted to form the lived space, passively or actively, consciously or subconsciously. This thesis argues that the everyday life is made up with

everyday practices and the underlying meanings. The meanings reflect local people's notion, and are influenced by the Huizhou tradition inherent in their lifestyle and the fresh realities they have faced. The notion has been dominated by their self-interests and realized through their self-actualizations. Indeed, the space receivers have all experienced a notion change in the two kinds of space production, reifying the shift of principal contradiction facing Chinese society, which has developed from the one between 'the ever-growing material and cultural needs of the people and backward social production' to the one between 'the people's ever-growing needs for a better life and unbalanced and inadequate development'. Regarding their living space, the notion has thus changed from the 'material scarcity of space' to 'conceptual scarcity of space'. Their everyday practices have been a demonstration of their notion and meanings in their behaviours in forming the lived space, and the congruence between their practices and greater social progresses as well as relevant power and profiting logics has been made in each sub-case.

Local people have accepted the form growth as their solutions of spatial scarcities have been smoothy, as successful self-actualization processes. After that they have resiliently adjusted their practices to the change, which have also shown a modification and appropriation of the space received. The underlying meanings have been more genuine, within which the inherent relation with tradition has not only brought in traditional lifestyles, but also stimulated attempts to revive the imagined traditional living space as another conceptual scarcity of space. Also, the shared identity of 'being related to villages' has generated a harmony between these space receivers.

In the form renovation, locals have experienced an attitude change (from resistance to acceptance) towards the space production, as the solutions of the material scarcity of space had initially met difficulties. When the difficulties disappeared, they began to positively join in the space production and formed a competition with outsiders over

the utilization of space, which has later reached an equilibrium and become an interdependency in the co-residency based on the consensus on benefits and on a nominal 'Huizhou cultural identity'. More importantly, underlying their evolving practices in space production in the traditional built environment, the meanings have not been genuine any more as they are dominated by tourist themes. The everyday life has been divided. The locals are not long-sighted, voting with their feet. Their interest involving the form changes need to be protected.

9.1.4 The role of designer

Designers have been alternately limited and ignored (in form growth) or liberated and indulged (in form renovation) in the space production in Huizhou. However, in both situations they have not had a thorough understanding of the contextual form transformation, and they have insensibly transferred designer approaches from cities into Huizhou towns and villages, and have largely not aimed at making places for people.

In the form growth, designers have been largely an instrument. Under the overwhelming themes of growth, they have been indifferent to the space quality they have contributed to, and the people and lived space involved. Although the situation is hard to change, their design values could still be improved, such as having more urban design considerations within or between the blocks of NRD for creating better places. Even within the boundaries of NRD they could have made and delivered better designs. Also, in these non-gated communities (rural concentrated living districts) they could have done differently. In the form renovation, designers have been very positive and subjective, and sometimes overconfident with their prescriptions to form changes in these more individual projects. They have been at three positions (instrument, investor, leader) and offered two streams of design operation towards the form and space in

Huizhou, but lacked a socially responsive approach. Indeed, the chances for doing better designs are higher in this sub-case as the roles of developer and project leader designers have had can potentially ensure relevant developments are design-led, but the purposes have still largely reflected designers' own interests and their desires for fame, not genuinely considering the local people and places, not appropriately interrogating their designs' social implications, or in other words not well connecting the three kinds of space in the space production.[164]

The role of designer should be reflected and the values should be reformed in the context. Designers should know their positions and rightly do their part in the larger social-spatial processes. They should be a negotiator in this process, helping link conceived space to lived space by creating perceived space, as making places for everyone. For doing so, they cannot see the form issue from a purely design perspective being self-referential; they need to comprehensively understand the form transformation against the backdrop of contextual realities from a socio-spatial perspective first, then to deliver high quality design through 'interpretation of form' to create form results that contribute to better socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural outcomes, which could represent the interest of all major stakeholders. It means that designers need to help form a community of shared interests, and serve it through mediating between the stakeholders in the form transformation. They do need to become leaders with right values in relevant developments, and they need a good platform to play the mediating role in the space production, so as to help build consensuses on the processes and results of form change, as connecting the three kinds of space. The platform is yet to be seen in Huizhou, and is better to be created by the urban design wisdoms that are more inclusive, and such wisdoms need to be extended from cities to traditional towns and villages.

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[164] The reasons why designers have lost their creativity and values in the form growth and renovation processes have been specified in the conclusions of Chapter 7 and 8; See Section 7.7 and 8.6.

However, design considerations should ultimately reach the grounded detailed form issues, then a proper form control to coordinate and regulate the form interpretations is always important. Urban design can also help to achieve this goal, as it as a platform can mediate between the different understanding of form issues and provide appropriate design codes through building design guides that can not only connect various stakeholders, but also are inspired by descriptive form approaches like typology and urban morphology, as well as more operational approaches like typo-morphology.

On this platform for shared interests, the designers' influences towards the form change could be stronger and better conform with the greater trend of local development. Indeed, designers should not treat the form results as the only purpose; instead, they should see the form changes as operatable processes to offer more possibilities. For traditional towns and villages in Huizhou, on the one hand, designers need to create high quality form and space to make good places, and especially in villages these places can become environmental activators, which can help fix the capital flow and promote the value appreciation of rural properties and hence improve the local incomes and lives. On the other hand, designers need to raise the profile of design and promote design-led sustainable development, by nurturing wider social awareness of design values based on the platform of urban design. Designers should try to facilitate a better situation in the space production, in which the goals of power are implemented; the targets of capital can be achieved; the real demands of local people should be carefully considered; and the cultural identity and tradition should not be understood separately.

9.2 Recommendation

9.2.1 To promote design-led development (design-led growth or regeneration) and to make places in the form transformation

Although designers have not well played its role in the compromised space production, this thesis argues that design is the key for a successful project in the urbanization and rural development and the design-led form transformation (growth or renovation) needs to be promoted in the future. As demonstrated in the case studies, designers at the middle level have had the potential to mediate between stakeholders in the space production, and their expertise and skills can direct influence the physical form results. Designers can lead to solve problems in early stages of a form development before construction starts, and can keep playing the mediating role throughout the whole process. Actually, the understanding of design's importance to developments has grown and spread, proved by increasing official commitments to the improvement of design quality. For example, in the UK between around 1999 and 2009, the government had strongly promoted design-led developments and regenerations, with many successful urban design cases emerged in the country.[165] Also, in China recently, although being more likely in its initial stages, design (especially planning) has been emphasized from top down against the background of 'Rural Revitalisation' with designers encouraged to go to villages to help the development, such as the recent promotion of 'rural planners' (Long, 2022). Also, from bottom up, as illustrated in the second sub-case, in villages many individual designers have been able to act as leaders in relevant developments,

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[165] The ten-year period between 1999 and 2009 could be the golden age for UK's urban design, which was marked by the urban task force's design-led regeneration as the 'urban renaissance', the publication of series of supporting documents such as 'By Design' and two urban design compendiums, and the establishment of key agencies like the CABE. Although the wave slowed down after 2009, the city of London has still seen a boom of design-led developments and regenerations (See Yang and Yu, 2018).

yet their values are still problematic and the form results are not all satisfying.

However, design-led developments should be better organized at the platform of urban design, becoming urban-design-led developments. Indeed, the drawbacks of designers identified by this thesis can be potentially overcome by the wisdoms of urban design, yet these wisdoms need to have correct values as well.[166] Right and good urban design puts people first, not designers' own interests and desires for fame. Its key mission is to deliver places that people want to use, live in and enjoy, and thus to create social, environmental and economic value in these places (Roger Evans Associates Limited, 2007). A right and good urban design is inclusive. It is "derives from but transcends related matters such as planning and transportation policy, architectural design, development economics, landscape and engineering," (Llewelyn-Davies, 2000, p.10), and breaks the tyrannies in built environment professions, joining them up to reconcile the different understandings of form and coordinate different design procedures, aiming at better form results. As 'the art of shaping the interaction between people, places, urban form and nature, and influencing the processes which lead to successful villages, towns and cities' (Campbell and Cowan, 1999 cited in Llewelyn-Davies, 2000), it plays "a critical role in understanding these relationships and integrating solutions" and can "coordinate policy and practice, and raise aspirations." (Roger Evans Associates Limited, 2007, p.5) The right urban design is an open system with multiple contexts (local, global, market, regulatory) and dimensions (morphological, perceptual, social, visual, functional and temporal) (Figure 9.1) (Carmona et al., 2010), breaking self-referential stereotypes and embracing socio-spatial understanding of form problem (Madanipour, 1996; Cuthbert, 2007). Two groups of detailed suggestions from the two urban design compendiums can well demonstrate the value of urban design. The *Urban Design Compendium* (Llewelyn-Davies, 2000, pp.10-11) states urban design needs to

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[166] As discussed in Sub-section 2.3.3, it should not be territorial, insubstantial, self-referential and deterministic, but an inclusive open system, a socio-spatial process and joining up.

overcome a series of constraints to make quality places, including the separation of professional disciplines; the neglect of the role of public sector in promoting high quality design; the conservative, short-term and supply-driven features of development industry; the preference for single use schemes and buildings; the shortage of innovation in sustainable development, new technology and construction efficiency; the reactive planning and development control stereotypes prioritizing quantitative standards; and the lack of a satisfying series of guidelines and procedures for producing high quality design. The *Urban Design Compendium 2* (Roger Evans Associates Limited, 2007, p.13) highlights several key aspects for doing high quality design, like the commitment and leadership, the integrated approach, the collaboration of work, the long-term involvement, and the legacy and management.
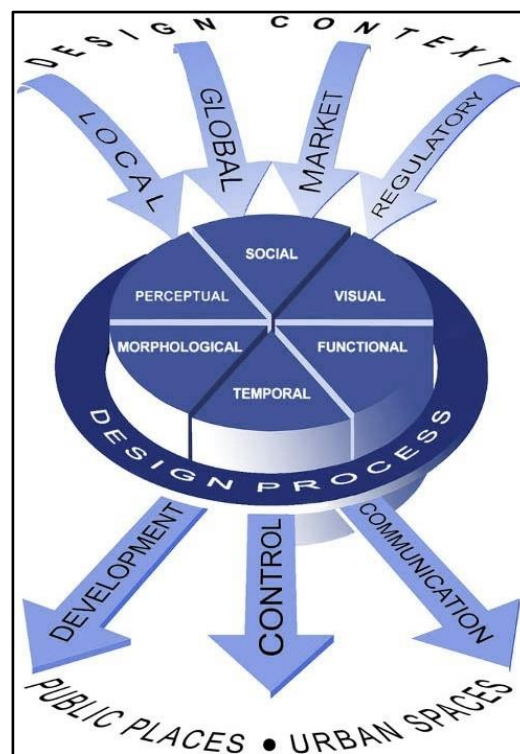
Figure 9.1. The dimensions of urban design (source: Carmona et al., 2010, p. viii).

Also, as suggested by Carmona et al. (2010), the right urban design needs to add quality to both the process and product, and it should create 'wholes' from the parts (ibid.,

p.12). It is also an effort of joining up, for "giving qualities of continuity and synergy to otherwise individual, often inward-focused, urban developments" and for "joining up a fragmented set of professions."(ibid., p.14) It also embraces an inclusive understanding of urban designers, which comprise self-conscious designers and unself-conscious designers, with the former being professionals with urban design expertise and the latter being those involving place-making efforts yet without appreciating what they are doing (ibid., pp.16-17). In addition, good urban design aims to narrow the 'gaps' between the producers and the users or consumers of the places created (ibid., p.20).

Under the leadership of good urban design, form results need to serve the formation of quality places, and space production needs to become 'place production'. Thus, the three kinds of space can positively converge together with benefits or interests of stakeholders coordinated and optimized, rathe rather than being passively connected with their benefits or interests compromised for building consensuses.

9.2.2 To establish regional urban design across towns and villages as an integrated design approach

However, the approach of urban design has been barely seen in the design efforts towards the built environment of traditional towns and villages in China. In most circumstances urban design only focuses on developments in Chinese cities. This consideration and the urban-design-led development hence need to be fully extended to the areas outside cities, as the form there has also experienced a profound transformation and the results has been problematic. Luckily, such a trend has emerged in the latest efforts trying to match urban design with the new 'National Territory Spatial Planning System', as demonstrated in the *Guidelines on Urban Design in National Territory Spatial Planning (Draft for Comments)* (Ministry of Natural Resources, 2020). It aims to use urban design measures to improve the preparing

methods of relevant territory spatial plans (master plan, detailed plan and topic-related plan), and to improve the scientificalness and operability of use control and planning permission in the management processes of such plans, such as site selection, land supply and plan review (ibid., p.1). The guide hence tries to match urban design with the three types of territory spatial plans in the new planning system, and incorporate urban design considerations into the use control and planning permission. Urban design for the rural area has been first mentioned in the requirement of connecting urban design with the detailed plan (Figure 9.2), as the connection is made in three aspects: the general urban districts, the critical control districts, and the rural areas. Whilst generally offering technical supports and optimization suggestions for the land use distribution, function arrangement, and development intensity of the detailed plans, relevant urban design considerations for these above three aspects need to be incorporated into the detailed plan in the form of ordinance and plan drawing (ibid., pp.3-5).

For rural areas, specifically, the guideline requires that (ibid., p.4):

> The urban design for rural areas cannot simply use the design techniques used for urban space. Instead, it needs to adopt the ideas and methods from urban design, such as respecting the nature, inheriting the culture, caring for the people, in order to comprehensively integrate the production, living, and ecological space, so as to build a beautiful countryside full of charm and vitality.

It further gives some key requirements as "to protect the natural foundation of rural areas, to highlight the character of local culture, to enhance the protection and renovation of villages and towns with special characteristics, and to improve the spatial quality of the rural living environment." (ibid., p.5)

2019 National Territory Spatial Planning System

Three Types / Five Levels	Master Plan	Detailed Plan		Topic-related Plan
National Level	National-level Territory Spatial Master Plan			Relevant Topic-related Plan
Provincial Level	Provincial-level Territory Spatial Master Plan			Relevant Topic-related Plan
Municipal Level	Municipal-level Territory Spatial Master Plan	Municipal-level Detailed Plan (within the boundary)	Municipal-level Countryside Plan (outside the boundary)	Relevant Topic-related Plan
County Level	County-level Territory Spatial Master Plan	County-level Detailed Plan (within the boundary)	County-level Countryside Plan (outside the boundary)	Relevant Topic-related Plan
Town and Township Level	Town and Township-level Territory Spatial Master Plan	Town and Township-level Detailed Plan (within the boundary)	Town and Township-level Countryside Plan (outside the boundary)	
		Detailed Plan within the urban development boundary	Countryside Plan outside the urban development boundary	

Cross Regional Level	Municipal and County Level	City Centre Level		General Urban Districts	Critical Control Districts	Rural Areas		Special Regions	Special Topics
The Application of Urban Design Considerations in Master Plan				The Application of Urban Design Considerations in Detailed Plan				The Application of Urban Design Considerations in Topic-related Plan	

Urban Design Considerations

Figure 9.2. Urban design considerations in the '2019 National Territory Spatial Planning System' (source: Author).

These efforts have recognized the necessity of doing urban design in rural areas, and seen the differences between applying urban design in cities and in rural areas, and stressed the importance of people, culture and quality of space. However, the whole guide is still in its initial process, being macro, overarching and too descriptive. Rather than offering practical guidelines for 'designing' the rural areas, it is essentially a handbook for how to better prepare urban design in the territorial space and how to have it incorporated into the new planning system. Practical and successful urban design cases following this guide is yet to be seen, and more importantly, the guide still emphasizes that in detailed plan level urban design thoughts need to be transferred into ordinance and zoning plans, which still supports an abstract expression of urban design.

In addition, the guide has not offered any statutory status to urban design, so urban design still cannot directly influence the form development.
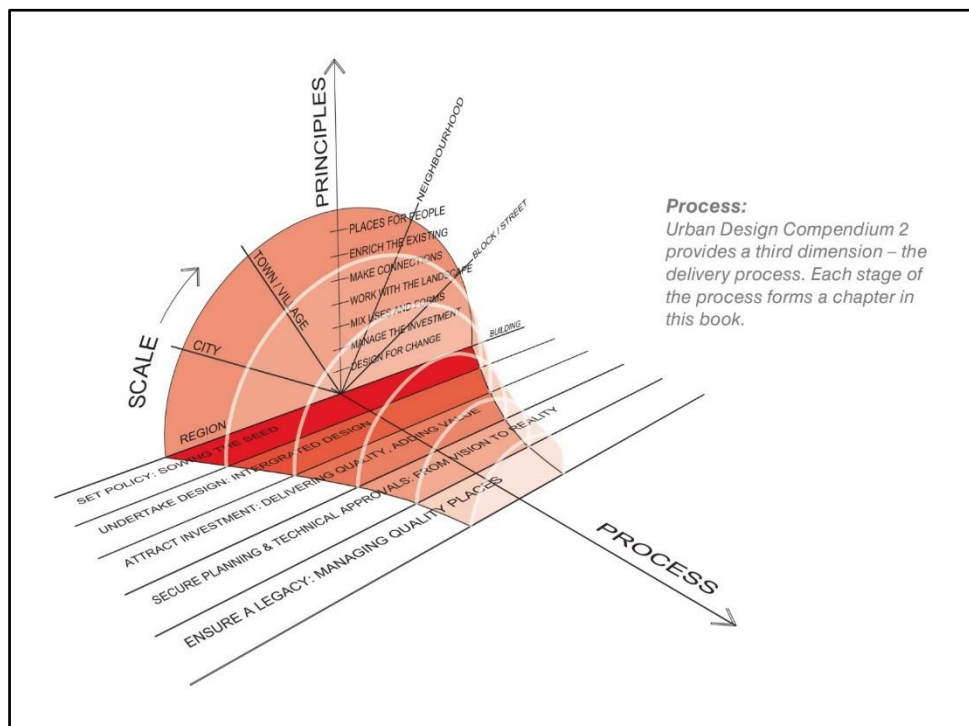
Figure 9.3. The scale, principles and process of urban design (source: Roger Evans Associates Limited, 2007, p. 7).

Indeed, the trend of promoting integrated urban design considerations across urban and rural areas conforms with the background of 'urban-rural integration' aiming at integrated developments. Integrated urban design breaking the urban-rural separation is a rational effort to promote a 'form integration' across urban and rural areas. For making quality places and better form results, urban design should transcend administrative boundaries and socio-political disparities, and follow continuous and shared cultural identity existing in the built environment in an integrated cultural region. Also, urban design principles need to be applied at all scales of the form and space across urban and rural areas, and the application need to focus on not only the product, but also the delivery process (Figure 9.3). Likewise, the effort of design governance in the design/planning system should transcend the boundaries and disparities as well and enlarge the design dimension whilst intervening in the forming of built environment.

And against this background of 'form integration', design governance should be improved in the three aspects mentioned by Chen and White, such as more grounded morphological concerns in design policies, more compatible relationship between urban design outcomes and DDCP or even some statutory status for the former, stronger coordination between government departments which is now stressed by the newest planning system, and better public participations with the promotion of rural planners marking a promising effort. However, for the time being, improving the synergy between the formal (statutory plans) and informal governing tools (supportive non-non-compulsory guidelines, e.g., urban design) should be a more practical solution.

Thus, as a practical measure, for example, after comprehensively understanding the form change in Huizhou, a reliable, robust and systematic regional design guide could be made at the urban design platform connecting all the designers, for guiding design and construction activities across the city, towns and villages in Huizhou region, for ensuring better form results in relevant developments, and for achieving positive social outcomes. For its implementation (as an instrument of design governance), this regional design guide could have some statutory status, like being parallel to or at least directly complementing the DDCP (or other statutory development control methods) in the planning system. It should not be all translated into 2D ordinances and plan drawings. Also, a semi-official agency made by stakeholders can be established to supervise the process as well, which could offer qualitative advice and judgements with more considerations of the perceptible space in three dimensions. Actually, the implementation efforts have been preliminarily mentioned by the above guide, as "to incorporate urban design thought into the planning conditions" and "to review the architectural design from the perspective of urban design," (ibid., p.7) but the detailed mechanism is yet to be seen.

In the integrated platform of urban design, approaches like typology, urban morphology

and typo-morphology can be used as well, but they need to face the traditional districts whose form developments have been in a continuous and stable manner, not interrupted by powerful outside forces,[167] such as a historical village in Huizhou still having a complete form continuity and a strong sense of cultural identity among its people. If apply, for example, typo-morphology into the renovation of this historical village, the developing phase hence can be easily confirmed; the form elements are likely to be selected with their morphological regions delimited; the types of these elements and their typological processes can be identified; and then relevant guides and advice for design interpretation could be generated. It is possible that the continuation of form in a vernacular built environment could still be spontaneous, without the formal interventions of architects. This process could attribute to the essence of typology, with form types evolved in the cultural languages underlying local collective memories. In such a circumstance the typo-morphology approach could also be utilized. For example, through holding design-related activities in communities (as a way of public participation), the lost or interrupt form type could potentially be found and restored in the local cultural languages, so as to inform the future typological process. However, typo-morphology may not be applicable in NRD in Huizhou as they as a modern type of living space have been totally transplanted from outside and may not been considered as a part of the form continuity of Huizhou. Also, the design guides generated cannot become too institutionalized and hence become design doctrines; they need to fit the real situations case by case, and particularly pay attention to the social implications. This could also be achieved by a good design governance, ensuring the design outcome is social-responsive. Informal tools and more effective and reasonable review and permit-granting process utilized by local governments could be a good choice.

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[167] The land reform after 1949 can be a big social change, but the cultural identity is not immediately interrupted by this change.

9.2.3 To strengthen the power of village collective organizations and increase their ability to operate the rural properties and other rural resources

For promoting design-led development in the traditional built environment, a stable socio-political and socio-economic context is necessary. This is especially important for applying some specific urban design approaches like typo-morphology into the contextual transformations of some form continuities, as it can ensure the form developments are continuous and stable in future stages. Against the background of urbanization and rural development, indeed, a more stable economic environment for the form transformation in traditional towns and villages seems to be more critical, especially in villages confronting 'Rural Revitalization' further opening the rural resources to the emerging market. Greater efforts are thus needed to protect the traditional built environment from being dominated by speculative capital flows from outside the villages. It could be achieved though enhancing the village collective economic organizations' power and ability in controlling and utilizing their rural resources including the built environment; it will also contribute to build the subjectivity of local people in developing, constructing and managing their villages.

In Henan province, the Haotang village's development could be an inspiring case. A community of shared interests have been built on a platform supported by a self-sustaining financial cooperative using a mode called 'built-in finance', which is independent from financial interventions from outside, allowing the collective members to dominate the use of money. The people thus can have stronger voices in their village's development and construction. A series of design-led sustainable developments have been thus made on this platform and supported by the villagers. The design work thus has been done by a group of roles, with 40% of them being designers, 20% being literary and art workers, 10% from local administrative staff, 15% being

village cadres, 10% being government officials and 5% being the village elders (Ye and Huang, 2016). The villagers' subjectivity in the space production has been well protected.

Although for the time being this would not be a popular mode in Huizhou villages under a prevalent mindset of *zhaoshang yinzi*, it will potentially become a promising mode in the Rural Revitalization era as the reform of 'Three Changes' could become the biggest supporter of 'built-in finance', through having the rural resources well controlled by the collective organizations and better monetized and capitalized. Designers thus can become one part of the 'joint-adventures' and lead the design-led developments. Supported by local authorities and people, taking the position of leader, adopting socially responsive values, designers could better connect the three kinds of space in the space production and creating better places for the people.

9.3 Reflection

9.3.1 Limitation of the research

The limitation of this research mainly lies in two aspects. One is inherent in the methodology, and the other is caused by the external influence that cannot be predicted and overcome.

9.3.1.1 Method limitation

The research has chosen the paradigm of qualitative research and the approach of case study, so some general drawbacks of qualitative research can also be found in this research, such as the smaller and more limited sample size being not statistically representative, the bias from both the researcher and people researched, the analysis process being less rigor and more subjective, the explanation being sometimes ambiguous, and the validity and reliability being difficult to achieve.

The bias from the researcher is inevitable. In the field work the researcher was immersed in the local themes and settings and interacted deeply with the people studied. Also, as the research is under the interpretive framework of social constructivism, whilst focusing on the context people live and work in and relevant practices and meanings, the interpretation (explanation through writing in this thesis) is shaped by the researcher's own experience and background (Creswell and Poth, 2018, pp.24-26). These have all caused subjective bias, and in this research this bias from author seems even stronger. The education background of architecture and more than five years' professional experience of architectural design may have strongly influenced the process of research design, data collection, analysis and explanation even the author urges designers to look outside their design circle. More importantly, as the author himself was born and has grown up in Huizhou, the life experience and vision may have

allowed more bias to happen in shaping the research. The role has been drifting between outsider and insider, between observer and participant, between interpreter and interpreted local people, and these overlaps are fairly strong. The boundary between the researcher and researched has been sometimes blurred. Pre-existent mindsets towards the context have been brought into the analysis and discussion. For example, in discussing the responses of people to the form changes, the author has inevitably tended to show an empathy with the people, rather than studying the collective empathy among the people.

The bias from the interviewee also exists. The presence of the researcher may have affected the responses of the interviewees, and also, as cautioned by Crouch and Housden (1996, p.93), "strong personal or social influences may cause an individual not to act in accordance with his or her general attitude," which challenges the understanding of their notions and practices. The sample of interviewee has its problems as well, as not only the 'purposive sampling' strategy is influenced by the researcher's ideas, but also the sampling did not include other potentially influencing factors such as the demographic features. Also, in the only focus group organized for the first case, the people cannot rigorously form a statistically representative sample.

More, the validation of the findings may have not been done enough. According to the criteria offered by J.W. Creswell and J.D. Creswell (2019, pp.198-202), for example, the 'member checking' for verifying the data gathered from them was not fully done; 'peer debriefing' was not made; 'external auditor' was not sought; and the negative and discrepant information being counter to the explanation may have been subjectively minimized by the author.

In general, the research has only presented relevant trends of the form transformation and related tendencies of the stakeholders, rather than answering questions of 'how

many', 'how exactly', 'what percentage' in the form transformation. As a single case study, although it can contribute to the generalisation of theoretical propositions, its value as an analytical reference for form developments in other places must not be easy to realize, as the differences between contexts from place to place are yet to be studied, which would be substantial, and challenge the effort. The phenomenon in Huizhou is typical, but may not be general.

9.3.1.2 The 'force majeure' limitation

The travel restriction brought by COVID-19 was unpredictable and considerably impacted the research. The second case thus lacks participant observations and in-person interviews. The interviews had to be done remotely, with the sampling of interviewees becoming even more difficult and the data quality being less satisfying. The understanding of local people's responses to the form change has to some extent depended on some second-hand materials like other researchers' observations and records and other indirect information in the form of texts and online documents, and depended on the life experience and memory from the author himself as a Huizhou local. These have increased the influences from some method limitations mentioned above and hence made the second case study to some extent less rigorous, and inevitably exacerbated the problem of validity and reliability. These drawbacks need to be overcome in future research when there is a chance to go back to the site.

9.3.2 Potential contribution of the research

It is the first systematic study of the production of space in the context of traditional towns and villages from a social-spatial perspective, pointing out the gaps in both theoretical and practical arenas, which are valuable for other related researches.

It has first built an analytical mode for the contextual production of space. It is thus

helpful for other researchers to further explore the underlying mechanisms in this direction. More importantly, it helps designers to gain an epistemological reform in understanding the form transformation, so as to better fulfil their role, especially in the current trend of fourth wave of 'design going down to the countryside'.

It has first highlighted the role of local people, by offering a bottom-up perspective to understand the form change, which conforms to the trend of 'putting people first', so it is helpful for further research starting from an insider's view.

The research has produced knowledge as a valuable reference to officials in local and national governments, for them to better understand the implication of form and space in the urbanization and rural development, to better conduct their decision-making processes. It also can promote the role of design among local authorities and raise its profile, potentially contributing to the promotion of 'design-led development'.

Glossary

Huizhou 徽州

Huangshan city 黄山市

Hukou System 户口体系

Mu 亩

Yuan 元

sannong wenti 三农问题 (the three rural issues: farmer, rural region and agricultural industry)

jianzhu xuebao 建筑学报 (The Architectural Journal)

Shangcun village 尚村

Jixi county 绩溪县

Hecun Bingjun 合村并居 (merging villages and combining houses)

Gai Hui 改徽 (changing to Hui style)

Xixinan village 西溪南村

Xidi village 西递村

Hongcun village 宏村

xiang 乡

cun 村

chengshi 城市

jianzhizhen 建制镇

jiedao 街道

jizhen 集镇

She county 歙县

Tangmo village 唐模村

Chengkan village 呈坎村

Huangcun village 黄村

Xucun village 许村

Xiongcun village 雄村

Tunxi Old Street 屯溪老街

Huizhou Ancient City 徽州古城

Qiankou town 潜口镇

Xi Yuan 西园

Hui Yuan 徽园

Hubian Ancient Village 湖边古村落

Liyang Street 黎阳街

Deiweier Café 德味儿咖啡

Yangchan village 阳产村

Banshan Xianke 半山闲客 (Hillside Comfortable Guesthouse)

Shuyuan village 蜀源村

Mengxi Fanghui 梦溪方会 (Dream Brook Club)

Yi county 黟县

Xiuning county 休宁县

Wuyuan county 婺源县

Qimen county 祁门县

lizhi 礼制 (code of etiquettes)

xuanxue 玄学 (metaphysical concepts such as feng-shui)

matouqiang 马头墙

yue culture 越文化

yikeyin 一颗印

zhongtang 中堂

saxian jianshe 三线建设 (Third Frontier Construction)

Tunxi district 屯溪区

Huicheng town 徽城镇

Xiakeng town 霞坑镇

ba shan yi shui yi fentian 八山一水一分田 (eight portions of hills, one portion of waters and one portion of farmlands coming to make up the whole terrain)

Huizhou district 徽州区

Xiu-tun basin 休屯盆地

Xin'an river 新安江

zhaoshang yinzi 招商引资(introducing industries and attracting investment)

ronghang 融杭

santong yiping 三通一平 (the land being even, with water and electricity supply and systematic road net)

Yansi town 岩寺镇

Fengle home 丰乐人家

Hui-style 徽派

baxian zhuo 八仙桌 (old

fashioned square table for eight p
eople)

chaxu geju 差序格局 (a pattern of oscillating
but differential social circles)

guanxi 关系

mianshu 面熟

chiku 吃苦 (eating bitterness)

wushamao 乌纱帽 (a metaphor for the
official post)

fagaiwei 发改委 (Development and Reform
Commission)

Yin Yu Tang 荫余堂

Xiuli Studio village 秀里影视村

Liyang Old Mansion 黎阳故邸

minsu 民宿 (homestay/guesthouse)

Zhengcun town 郑村镇

Deshui Tourism Development Company 得水
旅游发展公司

Tangyue village 棠樾村

Hetian Li 荷田里 (Lotus Fields)

Fengle river 丰乐河

Wangshan Life 望山生活

Diaoxue Yuan 钓雪园 (Snow-Fishing Garden)

Shilili group 诗莉莉集团

Yuyin Raoliang 渔音绕梁 (Tune Lingering
House)

Qi Tianjin 七天井 (Seven Courtyards)

tucai 土菜 (rustic dishes)

hanlin 翰林 (member of imperial academy)

Sanyang village 三阳村

tanwu dance 滩舞

Lianfang 莲舫(Lotus Boat)

zhengben qingyuan 正本清源 (bring order out
of chaos)

Zuyuan village 祖源村

List of Acronyms

TVE	Township and Village Enterprise
CPC	Communist Party of China
BNSC	Building a New Socialist Countryside
NPC	National People's Congress
MOHURD	Ministry of Housing and Urban-rural Development
DDCP	Detailed Development Control Plan
NRD	New Residential District
KMT	Kuomintang 国民党 (Chinese Nationalist Party)
DCP	Detailed Construction Plan
MNR	Ministry of Natural Resources
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
SASAC	State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission
CRH	China Railway High-speed
BCQZ	*Baicun Qianzhuang* 百村千幢 (one hundred villages and one thousand buildings）

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Appendices

Appendix A: Protocol for interview with local people in sub-case 1

	Interview Protocol 1-1: with local people and communities in sub-case 1		
Case Name	Incremental Production of New Residential Districts as a Form Growth		
Interviewee	Bottom-up Local People and Communities	General profile	
		Gender: Age: Occupation:	
		The participants may not give their personal details at their absolute discretion.	
Interviewer	Xiao Cheng		
Location			
Date			
Time			
Introduction	Hello, my name is Xiao Cheng and I am a PhD student from the Department of Architecture and Built Environment at the University of Nottingham, UK. Thanks for attending this interview, which will provide important information for my research.		
Overall Purpose of the Research	This study aims to understand the form tranformation in traditional towns and villages in China from a 'bottom-up' view. The transformation caused by this case are an important part of the phenomenon. A brief introduction of the case-*Incremental Production of New Residential Districts as a Form Growth* You are invited to take part in this narrative interview to share with me the detailed stories of your life, and your experience in the transformation process, as well as your opinions on it.		
Ground Rules	This interview will take around 45 minutes to 90 minutes of your time depending on the discussion. It will have two parts, the first is a pure narrative one, which will be dominated by you and allow you to say everything you want to say. The second part includes some follow-up semi-structured questions, which you can share your opinions by following my questions. The session will be audio-recorded however all the information will be anonymous and the data will be protected. The results of the interview will be used to understand the role of local people and communities from bottom up in the process. Do you have any questions before we start?		
Genetrative narrative quesitons	Now, first, I want to ask you to tell me your detailed stories and experience in the process of this kind of form growth brought by NRD(incremental production of space), especially facts that happened to the living space and the everyday life of you and your family. The best way to do this would be to start from the first time you were involved in this change, and then tell all the things that happened to your living space and everyday life one after the other until today. I will not interupt you, and you can take yout time in doing this, and please also give details, because for me everything about your experience is of interest.		
General protocals for follow-up semi-structured questions	Now, based on your interview, I will ask you some questions. 1. Ask information that was not clear, or was interesting and hence need more details in the narrative. 2. Protocals for follow-up semi-structured questions: 2-1. the life relating to the old living space (mainly your old homes) before, your daily life and routines then, especially if they were in former villages 2-2. more detailed description of the old living space 2-3. new life relating to the new living space you moved in, your daily life and routines now, the differences between these and those in the former living space elsewhere. 2-4. more detailed description of the new living space in NRD 2-5. understandings of and opinions on the main reasons caused the change as a growth (how do you understand...) 2-6. understandings of and opinions on the roles of the government, capital and designer in this process (how do you understand...) 2-7. the ways to adjust your everyday life to the change of living space as moving to a new environment 2-8. the possible changes you think your adjustment of life has brought to the new living space 2-9. expectations for the future newer living space in newer contexts		
Close the interview	Thank you very much for participating in the interview. If you have any further questions about my research, please do not hesitate to contact me.		

Appendix B: Protocol for interview with officials in sub-case 1

Interview Protocol 1-2: with local government officials in sub-case 1		
Case Name	Incremental Production of New Residential Districts as a Form Growth	
Interviewee	Top-down Local Government Officials	General profile
		Gender: Age: Occupation:
		The participants may not give their personal details at their absolute discretion.
Interviewer	Xiao Cheng	
Location		
Date		
Time		
Introduction	Hello, my name is Xiao Cheng and I am a PhD student from the Department of Architecture and Built Environment at the University of Nottingham, UK. Thanks for attending this interview, which will provide important information for my research.	
Overall Purpose of the Research	This study aims to understand the form tranformation in traditional towns and villages in China from a 'top-down' view. The transformation caused by this case are an important part of the phenomenon. A brief introduction of the case-*Incremental Production of New Residential Districts as a Form Growth* You are invited to take part in this narrative interview to share with me the detailed stories of your involvement and experience in the transformation process, your contributions to it and opinions on it.	
Ground Rules	This interview will take around 45 minutes to 90 minutes of your time depending on the discussion. It will have two parts, the first is a pure narrative one, which will be dominated by you and allow you to say everything you want to say. The second part includes some follow-up semi-structured questions, which you can share your opinions by following my questions. The session will be audio-recorded however all the information will be anonymous and the data will be protected. The results of the interview will be used to understand the role of government power from top down in the process. Do you have any questions before we start?	
Genetrative narrative quesitons	Now, first, I want to ask you to tell me your detailed stories and experience in the process of this kind of form growth brought by NRD(incremental production of space), especially facts that related to the logics, behaviours and reactions of the local government. The best way to do this would be to start from the beginning of this kind of form change you were involved in, and then tell all the facts you know and you can say the one after the other until today, which were done by the local government to produce the NRD. I will not interupt you, and you can take yout time in doing this, and please also give details, because for me everything about your experience is of interest.	
General protocals for follow-up semi-structured questions	Now, based on your interview, I will ask you some questions. 1. Ask information that was not clear, or was interesting and hence need more details in the narrative. 2. Protocals for follow-up semi-structured questions: 2-1. overall opinions on the incremental space production 2-2. understandings of and opinions on the main reasons caused the change as a growth (how do you understand...) 2-3. understandings of and opinions on the role of local government of which they are on behalf in promoting the NRD 2-4. understandings of and opinions on the roles of capital (developer) and designer in this process 2-5. understandings of and opinions on the local people's logics, behaviours and reactions in moving into the NRD 2-6. understandings of and opinions on the local people's everyday life and its changes in receiving the newly produced space 2-7. understandings of and opinions on the relations between the space producers, the designer and the receiver in this process 2-8. expectations for the future roles the local government can play in relevant incremental form changes	
Close the interview	Thank you very much for participating in the interview. If you have any further questions about my research, please do not hesitate to contact me.	

Appendix C: Protocol for interview with developers in sub-case 1

Interview Protocol 1-3: with developers in sub-case 1				
Case Name	Incremental Production of New Residential Districts as a Form Growth			
Interviewee	Top-down Capital-developers	General profile		
		Gender:	Age:	Occupation:
		The participants may not give their personal details at their absolute discretion.		
Interviewer	Xiao Cheng			
Location				
Date				
Time				
Introduction	Hello, my name is Xiao Cheng and I am a PhD student from the Department of Architecture and Built Environment at the University of Nottingham, UK. Thanks for attending this interview, which will provide important information for my research.			
Overall Purpose of the Research	This study aims to understand the form tranformation in traditional towns and villages in China from a 'top-down' view. The transformation caused by this case are an important part of the phenomenon. A brief introduction of the case-*Incremental Production of New Residential Districts as a Form Growth* You are invited to take part in this narrative interview to share with me the detailed stories of your involvement and experience in the transformation process, your contributions to it and opinions on it.			
Ground Rules	This interview will take around 45 minutes to 90 minutes of your time depending on the discussion. It will have two parts, the first is a pure narrative one, which will be dominated by you and allow you to say everything you want to say. The second part includes some follow-up semi-structured questions, which you can share your opinions by following my questions. The session will be audio-recorded however all the information will be anonymous and the data will be protected. The results of the interview will be used to understand the role of capital from top down in the process. Do you have any questions before we start?			
Genetrative narrative quesitons	Now, first, I want to ask you to tell me your detailed stories and experience in the process of this kind of form growth brought by NRD(incremental production of space), especially facts that related to the logics, behaviours and reactions of the capital, represented by you developers. The best way to do this would be to start from the beginning of this kind of form change you were involved in, and then tell all the facts you know and you can say the one after the other until today, which were done by you to produce the NRD. I will not interupt you, and you can take yout time in doing this, and please also give details, because for me everything about your experience is of interest.			
General protocals for follow-up semi-structured questions	Now, based on your interview, I will ask you some questions. 1. Ask information that was not clear, or was interesting and hence need more details in the narrative. 2. Protocals for follow-up semi-structured questions: 2-1. overall opinions on the incremental space production 2-2. understandings of and opinions on the main reasons caused the change as a growth (how do you understand...) 2-3. understandings of and opinions on the role of captial of which you developers are on behalf in promoting the NRD 2-4. understandings of and opinions on the roles of local government power and designer in this process 2-5. understandings of and opinions on the local people's logics, behaviours and reactions in moving into the NRD 2-6. understandings of and opinions on the local people's everyday life and its changes in receiving the newly produced space 2-7. understandings of and opinions on the relations between the space producers, the designer and the receiver in this process 2-8. expectations for the future roles developers can play in relevant incremental form changes			
Close the interview	Thank you very much for participating in the interview. If you have any further questions about my research, please do not hesitate to contact me.			

Appendix D: Protocol for interview with designers in sub-case 1

Interview Protocol 1-4: with designers in sub-case 1	
Case Name	Incremental Production of New Residential Districts as a Form Growth
Interviewee	Middle Designers / General profile Gender: Age: Occupation: *The participants may not give their personal details at their absolute discretion.*
Interviewer	Xiao Cheng
Location	
Date	
Time	
Introduction	Hello, my name is Xiao Cheng and I am a PhD student from the Department of Architecture and Built Environment at the University of Nottingham, UK. Thanks for attending this interview, which will provide important information for my research.
Overall Purpose of the Research	This study aims to understand the form tranformation in traditional towns and villages in China from a 'middle' view. The transformation caused by this case are an important part of the phenomenon. A brief introduction of the case-*Incremental Production of New Residential Districts as a Form Growth* You are invited to take part in this narrative interview to share with me the detailed stories of your involvement and experience in the transformation process, your contributions to it and opinions on it.
Ground Rules	This interview will take around 45 minutes to 90 minutes of your time depending on the discussion. It will have two parts, the first is a pure narrative one, which will be dominated by you and allow you to say everything you want to say. The second part includes some follow-up semi-structured questions, which you can share your opinions by following my questions. The session will be audio-recorded however all the information will be anonymous and the data will be protected. The results of the interview will be used to understand the role of designer in the middle in the process. Do you have any questions before we start?
Genetrative narrative quesitons	Now, first, I want to ask you to tell me your detailed stories and experience in the process of this kind of form growth brought by NRD(incremental production of space), especially facts that related to the logics, behaviours and reactions of the designer. The best way to do this would be to start from the beginning of this kind of form change you were involved in, and then tell all the facts you know and you can say the one after the other until today, which were done by the designer to help produce the NRD. I will not interupt you, and you can take yout time in doing this, and please also give details, because for me everything about your experience is of interest.
General protocals for follow-up semi-structured questions	Now, based on your interview, I will ask you some questions. 1. Ask information that was not clear, or was interesting and hence need more details in the narrative. 2. Protocals for follow-up semi-structured questions: 2-1. overall opinions on the incremental space production 2-2. understandings of and opinions on the main reasons caused the change as a growth (how do you understand...) 2-3. understandings of and opinions on the role of designer of which they are on behalf in helping promote the NRD 2-4. understandings of and opinions on the roles of local government power and capital (developer) in this process 2-5. understandings of and opinions on the local people's logics, behaviours and reactions in moving into the NRD 2-6. understandings of and opinions on the local people's everyday life and its changes in receiving the newly produced space 2-7. understandings of and opinions on the relations between the space designer, the producers, and the receiver in this process 2-7. expectations for the future roles the designer can play in relevant incremental form changes
Close the interview	Thank you very much for participating in the interview. If you have any further questions about my research, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Appendix E: Protocol for focus group interview in sub-case 1

Interview Protocol 1-5: Focus Groups		
Case Name	Incremental Production of New Residential Districts as a Form Growth	
Interviewee	General profile	
	6-8 Local Residents	
	*The participants may not give their personal details at their absolute discretion.	
Interviewer	Xiao Cheng	
Location		
Date		
Time		
Objective	The key objective of this focus group is: to understand the form transformation in this sub-case through the view of bottom-up local people and communities to discover local people's logics, behaviours and reactions from bottom-up in facing this incremental production of space to know the local people's understandings of and opinions on this incremental production of space to know the current situation in the new living space and environment in NRD	
Introduction	Welcome; About the study (the background and research aim); About the case No 'right' or 'wrong' answers Voice Recording Confidentiality 1hour and 30 min Any questions before we start?	
Background of the participants	Name; Location of current new living space; Location of old living space; When the change happened; How long lived in the new environment; One thing that is most impressive for you in the process of this kind of incremental production of space	
Discussion statements	1. 'I want to know your experience of the process of this case' 2. 'I want to hear your opinion about the current living space in the new context' 3. 'I want to know you understand the form change that has happened to you, including the reasons, the roles of other stakeholders' 4. 'I want to know you expectations for the ideal living space' 5. 'I am here to learn from your experiences so I need to hear as many different things from you'	
About the past	1.What was the life of you, your family and your neighbours in the original living environment before moving into the new NRD? (e.g., the everyday life and daily routines and practices that your think are meaningful) 2.Please try you best to describe your former living space (basically your house and the space around it) ? 3.How do you feel about the living space in your original environment, in any possible sense? Why? 4.How do you think of the Huizhou identity in the old context in terms of architectural and urban space? 5.If possible, do you want to be back to the original environment?	
About the present	1. What is the life of you, your family and your neighbours in the new produced NRD? (e.g., the everyday life and daily routines and practices that your think are meaningful) 2. Please try your best to describe your current living space (basically your house, apartment, building unit and the space around them) ? 3. How do you feel about the living space in your residential unit, in any possible sense? Why? 4. How do you think of the Huizhou identity in the new context in terms of architectural and urban space? 5. What do you think are the most significant changes of your everyday life after moving into the NRD from your old living space?	
About the process	1. Why do you accept the change from the old to new? 2. What do you think are the main reason caused this kind form transformation? 3. How do you understand these reasons? 4. How do you understand the roles that local government, capital (developer) and designer have played in this process? 5. How do you adjust your everyday life (notions and practices) to the change of living space? Why do you do so? 6. How do you understand the relationship between you and these other stakeholders mentioned above? 6. Do you think it is a better or worse space for you now? Why?	
About the future	1.Tell me your plans or expectations for the future living space in potential newer context? 2. What is the ideal living space for you? Can you describe it with more details?	
Close the conversation	Thank you very much for participating in the interview. If you hace any further questions about my research, please do not hesitate to contact me.	

Appendix F: Protocol for interview with local people in sub-case 2

Interview Protocol 2-1: with local people and communities in sub-case 2		
Case Name	Relocation and Renovation of Dwellings and Houses in Inventory as a Form Renovation	
Interviewee	Bottom-up Local People and Communities	General profile
		Gender: Age: Occupation: *The participants may not give their personal details at their absolute discretion.*
Interviewer	Xiao Cheng	
Location		
Date		
Time		
Introduction	Hello, my name is Xiao Cheng and I am a PhD student from the Department of Architecture and Built Environment at the University of Nottingham, UK. Thanks for attending this interview, which will provide important information for my research.	
Overall Purpose of the Research	This study aims to understand the form tranformation in traditional towns and villages in China from a 'bottom-up' view. The transformation caused by this case are an important part of the phenomenon. A brief introduction of the case-*Relocation and Renovation of Dwellings and Houses in Inventory as a Form Renovation* You are invited to take part in this narrative interview to share with me the detailed stories of your life, and your experience in the transformation process, as well as your opinions on it.	
Ground Rules	This interview will take around 45 minutes to 90 minutes of your time depending on the discussion. It will have two parts, the first is a pure narrative one, which will be dominated by you and allow you to say everything you want to say. The second part includes some follow-up semi-structured questions, which you can share your opinions by following my questions. The session will be audio-recorded however all the information will be anonymous and the data will be protected. The results of the interview will be used to understand the role of local people and communities from bottom up in the process. Do you have any questions before we start?	
Genetrative narrative quesitons	Now, first, I want to ask you to tell me your detailed stories and experience in the process of this kind of form renovation brought by relocation and renovation practices(space production in inventory), especially facts that happened to the living space and the everyday life of you and your family. The best way to do this would be to start from the first time you were involved in this change, and then tell all the things that happened to your living space and everyday life one after the other until today. I will not interupt you, and you can take yout time in doing this, and please also give details, because for me everything about your experience is of interest.	
General protocals for follow-up semi-structured questions	Now, based on your interview, I will ask you some questions. 1. Ask information that was not clear, or was interesting and hence need more details in the narrative. 2. Protocals for follow-up semi-structured questions: 2-1. the life relating to the old living space (your old dwellings, houses or village environment) before, your daily life and routines then 2-2. more detailed description of the old living space 2-3. new life relating to the changed existing living space, your daily life and routines now, the differences between these and those in the living space before change. 2-4. more detailed description of the changed living space (changed dwellings, houses, village environment...) 2-5. understandings of and opinions on the main reasons caused the changes in inventory (how do you understand...) 2-6. understandings of and opinions on the roles of the government, capital and designer in this process (how do you understand...) 2-7. the ways to adjust your everyday life to the change of living space in an exisiting place 2-8. the possible changes you think your adjustment of life has brought to the exisiting living space 2-9. expectations for the future changes of the exisiting living space and environment or newer living space in newer contexts	
Close the interview	Thank you very much for participating in the interview. If you have any further questions about my research, please do not hesitate to contact me.	

Appendix G: Protocol for interview with officials in sub-case 2

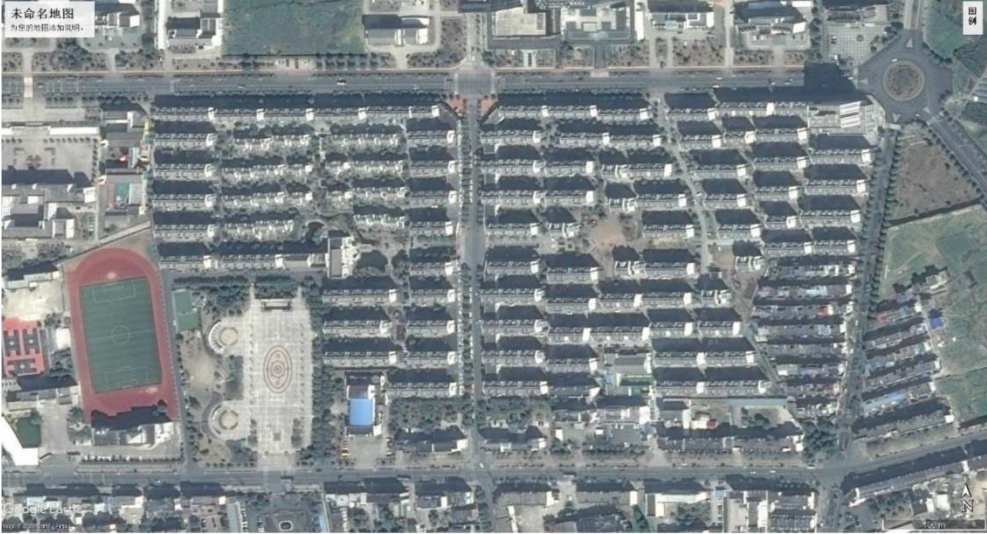| Interview Protocol 2-2: with local government officials in sub-case 2		
Case Name	Relocation and Renovation of Dwellings and Houses in Inventory as a Form Renovation	
Interviewee	Top-down Local Government Officials	General profile
		Gender: Age: Occupation:
		The participants may not give their personal details at their absolute discretion.
Interviewer	Xiao Cheng	
Location		
Date		
Time		
Introduction	Hello, my name is Xiao Cheng and I am a PhD student from the Department of Architecture and Built Environment at the University of Nottingham, UK. Thanks for attending this interview, which will provide important information for my research.	
Overall Purpose of the Research	This study aims to understand the form tranformation in traditional towns and villages in China from a 'top-down' view. The transformation caused by this case are an important part of the phenomenon. A brief introduction of the case-*Relocation and Renovation of Dwellings and Houses in Inventory as a Form Renovation* You are invited to take part in this narrative interview to share with me the detailed stories of your involvement and experience in the transformation process, your contributions to it and opinions on it.	
Ground Rules	This interview will take around 45 minutes to 90 minutes of your time depending on the discussion. It will have two parts, the first is a pure narrative one, which will be dominated by you and allow you to say everything you want to say. The second part includes some follow-up semi-structured questions, which you can share your opinions by following my questions. The session will be audio-recorded however all the information will be anonymous and the data will be protected. The results of the interview will be used to understand the role of government power from top down in the process. Do you have any questions before we start?	
Genetrative narrative quesitons	Now, first, I want to ask you to tell me your detailed stories and experience in the process of this kind of form renovation brought by relocation and renovation practices(space production in inventory), especially facts that related to the logics, behaviours and reactions of the local government. The best way to do this would be to start from the beginning of this kind of form change you were involved in, and then tell all the facts you know and you can say the one after the other until today, which were done by the local government to relocate or renovate the dwellings and houses in inventory. I will not interupt you, and you can take yout time in doing this, and please also give details, because for me everything about your experience is of interest.	
General protocals for follow-up semi-structured questions	Now, based on your interview, I will ask you some questions. 1. Ask information that was not clear, or was interesting and hence need more details in the narrative. 2. Protocals for follow-up semi-structured questions: 2-1. overall opinions on the space production in inventory 2-2. understandings of and opinions on the main reasons caused the change as relocation or renovation (how do you understand...) 2-3. understandings of and opinions on the role of local government of which they are on behalf in promoting the relocation and renovation of dwellings and houses in inventory 2-4. understandings of and opinions on the roles of capital (developer) and designer in this process 2-5. understandings of and opinions on the local people's logics, behaviours and reactions in facing this gradual change 2-6. understandings of and opinions on the local people's everyday life and its changes in receiving the relocated or renovated living space 2-7. understandings of and opinions on the relations between the space producers, the designer and the receiver in this process 2-8. expectations for the future roles the local government can play in relevant form changes in inventory	
Close the interview	Thank you very much for participating in the interview. If you have any further questions about my research, please do not hesitate to contact me.	

Appendix H: Protocol for interview with developers in sub-case 2

Interview Protocol 2-3: with developers in sub-case 2		
Case Name	Relocation and Renovation of Dwellings and Houses in Inventory as a Form Renovation	
Interviewee	Top-down Capital-developers	General profile
		Gender: Age: Occupation: *The participants may not give their personal details at their absolute discretion.*
Interviewer	Xiao Cheng	
Location		
Date		
Time		
Introduction	Hello, my name is Xiao Cheng and I am a PhD student from the Department of Architecture and Built Environment at the University of Nottingham, UK. Thanks for attending this interview, which will provide important information for my research.	
Overall Purpose of the Research	This study aims to understand the form tranformation in traditional towns and villages in China from a 'top-down' view. The transformation caused by this case are an important part of the phenomenon. A brief introduction of the case-*Relocation and Renovation of Dwellings and Houses in Inventory as a Form Renovation* You are invited to take part in this narrative interview to share with me the detailed stories of your involvement and experience in the transformation process, your contributions to it and opinions on it.	
Ground Rules	This interview will take around 45 minutes to 90 minutes of your time depending on the discussion. It will have two parts, the first is a pure narrative one, which will be dominated by you and allow you to say everything you want to say. The second part includes some follow-up semi-structured questions, which you can share your opinions by following my questions. The session will be audio-recorded however all the information will be anonymous and the data will be protected. The results of the interview will be used to understand the role of capital from top down in the process. Do you have any questions before we start?	
Genetrative narrative quesitons	Now, first, I want to ask you to tell me your detailed stories and experience in the process of this kind of form renovation brought by relocation and renovation practices(space production in inventory), especially facts that related to the logics, behaviours and reactions of the capital, represented by you developers. The best way to do this would be to start from the beginning of this kind of form change you were involved in, and then tell all the facts you know and you can say the one after the other until today, which were done by you to relocate or renovate the dwellings and houses in inventory. I will not interupt you, and you can take yout time in doing this, and please also give details, because for me everything about your experience is of interest.	
General protocals for follow-up semi-structured questions	Now, based on your interview, I will ask you some questions. 1. Ask information that was not clear, or was interesting and hence need more details in the narrative. 2. Protocals for follow-up semi-structured questions: 2-1. overall opinions on the space production in inventory 2-2. understandings of and opinions on the main reasons caused the change as relocation or renovation (how do you understand...) 2-3. understandings of and opinions on the role of captial of which you developers are on behalf in promoting the relocation and renovation of dwellings and houses in inventory 2-4. understandings of and opinions on the roles of local government power and designer in this process 2-5. understandings of and opinions on the local people's logics, behaviours and reactions in facing this gradual change 2-6. understandings of and opinions on the local people's everyday life and its changes in receiving the relocated or renovated living space 2-7. understandings of and opinions on the relations between the space producers, the designer and the receiver in this process 2-8. expectations for the future roles developers can play in relevant form changes in inventory	
Close the interview	Thank you very much for participating in the interview. If you have any further questions about my research, please do not hesitate to contact me.	

Appendix I: Protocol for interview with designers in sub-case 2

Interview Protocol 2-4: with designers in sub-case 2	
Case Name	Relocation and Renovation of Dwellings and Houses in Inventory as a Form Renovation
Interviewee	Middle Designers — General profile Gender: Age: Occupation: *The participants may not give their personal details at their absolute discretion.*
Interviewer	Xiao Cheng
Location	
Date	
Time	
Introduction	Hello, my name is Xiao Cheng and I am a PhD student from the Department of Architecture and Built Environment at the University of Nottingham, UK. Thanks for attending this interview, which will provide important information for my research.
Overall Purpose of the Research	This study aims to understand the form tranformation in traditional towns and villages in China from a 'middle' view. The transformation caused by this case are an important part of the phenomenon. A brief introduction of the case-*Relocation and Renovation of Dwellings and Houses in Inventory as a Form Renovation* You are invited to take part in this narrative interview to share with me the detailed stories of your involvement and experience in the transformation process, your contributions to it and opinions on it.
Ground Rules	This interview will take around 45 minutes to 90 minutes of your time depending on the discussion. It will have two parts, the first is a pure narrative one, which will be dominated by you and allow you to say everything you want to say. The second part includes some follow-up semi-structured questions, which you can share your opinions by following my questions. The session will be audio-recorded however all the information will be anonymous and the data will be protected. The results of the interview will be used to understand the role of designer in the middle in the process. Do you have any questions before we start?
Genetrative narrative quesitons	Now, first, I want to ask you to tell me your detailed stories and experience in the process of this kind of form renovation brought by relocation and renovation practices(space production in inventory), especially facts that related to the logics, behaviours and reactions of the designer. The best way to do this would be to start from the beginning of this kind of form change you were involved in, and then tell all the facts you know and you can say the one after the other until today, which were done by the designer to help relocate or renovate the dwellings and houses in inventory. I will not interupt you, and you can take yout time in doing this, and please also give details, because for me everything about your experience is of interest.
General protocals for follow-up semi-structured questions	Now, based on your interview, I will ask you some questions. 1. Ask information that was not clear, or was interesting and hence need more details in the narrative. 2. Protocals for follow-up semi-structured questions: 2-1. overall opinions on the space production in inventory 2-2. understandings of and opinions on the main reasons caused the change as relocation or renovation (how do you understand...) 2-3. understandings of and opinions on the role of designer of which they are on behalf in helping promote the relocation and renovation of dwellings and houses in inventory 2-4. understandings of and opinions on the roles of local government power and capital (developer) in this process 2-5. understandings of and opinions on the local people's logics, behaviours and reactions in facing this gradual change 2-6. understandings of and opinions on the local people's everyday life and its changes in receiving the relocated or renovated living space 2-7. understandings of and opinions on the relations between the space designer, the producers, and the receiver in this process 2-7. expectations for the future roles the designer can play in relevant form changes in inventory
Close the interview	Thank you very much for participating in the interview. If you have any further questions about my research, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Appendix J: Table for observation in the residential district of M

Observation Table	
Location	M (as an example)
Date & Time:	05/07/2019 8:00 am – 14:00 pm

Principle: The observation will start from a direct one, and by deeper understanding the field, with the observer's own relevant experience gained from these similar places (the observer also being a Huizhou local for more than 20 years) compared with the fresh phenomenon observed, it may turn to a participant one. The observation aims to watch the physical settings of the environment, the events happening there, and the behaviour, activities, interactions, conversations, daily practices of the local individuals. The meanings underlying these activities will be collected through possible conversations and interviews with the people met in the sites. The observation will be mainly conducted in public places in each NRD. If possible, observation can be done inside people's private living space (e.g., if being allowed and invited).

Filed Notes		**Possible Questions and Answers**	
Objectives	**Methods**	**Objectives**	**Methods**
physical settings, events, behaviours, activities, interactions, practices	sketches, photos, notes (with the help of above maps)	reasons, meanings, why and how?	casual interviews and conversations

Appendix K: Table for observation in the residential district of XG

Observation Table	
Location	XG
Date & Time:	13/08/2019　　8:00 am – 14:00 pm

Principle: The observation will start from a direct one, and by deeper understanding the field, with the observer's own relevant experience gained from these similar places (the observer also being a Huizhou local for more than 20 years) compared with the fresh phenomenon observed, it may turn to a participant one. The observation aims to watch the physical settings of the environment, the events happening there, and the behaviour, activities, interactions, conversations, daily practices of the local individuals. The meanings underlying these activities will be collected through possible conversations and interviews with the people met in the sites. The observation will be mainly conducted in public places in each NRD. If possible, observation can be done inside people's private living space (e.g., if being allowed and invited).

Filed Notes		Possible Questions and Answers	
Objectives	**Methods**	**Objectives**	**Methods**
physical settings, events, behaviours, activities, interactions, practices	sketches, photos, notes (with the help of above maps)	reasons, meanings, why and how?	casual interviews and conversations