

UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD  
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**Changing Governmentalities and Power Relations in Chinese  
Government's 'Community Construction' Practices**

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## Summary

### Changing Governmentalities and Power Relations in Chinese Government's 'Community Construction' Practices

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China has been experiencing a profound and massive social transition from a rigid socialism to a more diverse and fragmented society since 1978. To strengthen the state control of the grassroots society in the increasingly fragmenting society, the central government launched a nationwide 'community construction movement' in the 1990s with the rationality of establishing a street-level administration system in order to better implement reformed urban policies. Urban community (she-qu) has been designated as a new government technology to implement state control. The Chinese central government's 2006 'building a harmonious society' strategy further demonstrated that 'community' is targeted as an important approach to develop a more 'governing-at-a-distance' administrative mechanism at neighbourhood level.

The main objectives of this study are to explore Chinese street-level governments' shifting governing technologies and to map the changing dynamic of power relations between the government and social actors in the grassroots Chinese society. Drawing on Foucault's 'governmentality', this study looks at both the Chinese government's changing governing discourses and daily practices and the citizens' reactions to these technologies, or the process of 'subjectification'. An in-depth case study of a Beijing city-centre neighbourhood is carried out and data is collected according to qualitative methods including document analysis, interview and participant observation. The findings indicate that the Chinese government is changing its governing mode to explore more soft and covert control on society. The 'expertise' of specialists, professional institutions and non-government organisations is in many occasions used by the government as a tool to legitimise its objectives and practices. The terms 'public participation' and 'traditional morality' are widely used in government discourses to cultivate politically active and disciplined citizens and facilitate social mobilisation. The findings also suggest that living in pervasive discourses of 'harmony', Chinese citizens demonstrated multifaceted and ambivalent subjectivities: while in language many citizens express apathy or aversion as resistance to the government discourses, in daily life most of them still choose to obey the conventional norms and rules to be morally integrated and politically safe persons.

This study develops a new conceptual framework for understating the Chinese government's shifting governing approaches in China's social transition. It contributes to the knowledge of Chinese urban governance and the Chinese state-society relations by revealing the changing dynamics of power relations between the lowest level of Chinese government and the public in everyday neighbourhood lives. Meanwhile, it contributes to the theory of governmentality by opening discussions on government rationalities, technologies and the exercise of bio-power in non-western and non-liberal contexts. This study appeals to scholars who are interested in China's changing statehood, the landscape of Chinese urban governance and the power interactions between the Chinese government and the public.

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Changing Governmentalities and Power Relations in Chinese Government's 'Community Construction' Practices

*'The Chinese people remain intensively governed, but the mode of governing is changing. In place of the crude and occasional intervention of the state, China's people now face a much more subtle yet insidious form of power that is continuous and dispersed throughout the institution of modern society and within their own selves, and masked by the language of truth and power.'*

—Susan Greenhalgh and Edwin A Winckler (2005:326)

*'Community is the cell of society. The harmony of community is the foundation of social harmony. We should regard building harmonious communities as the access point of our work to build a harmonious society. To build harmonious communities we must focus on serving residents, promoting self-governing, maintaining social stability, launching socialist cultural activities, strengthening the grassroots leadership and try our best to construct urban communities into well managed, perfectly serviced, beautiful and civilized social units in order to lay a firm foundation for building a socialist harmonious society.'*

—Zeng Qinghong, the former vice-chairman of P. R. China, (2007)

## Chapter 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Community construction movement in China: an overview

China is experiencing a profound process of statehood change. Since the late 1970s, a series of economic reforms have been driving China to step away from a rigid socialism to a more open and diverse society. Population mobility kept increasing since the Chinese central government loosened its policy control on internal migration in the 1980s. In the realm of public administration, a massive and radical urbanisation process throughout this vast country attracted increasing government attention to urban policies. The urban economy developed at tremendous speed and played an increasingly important role in the Chinese national economy. Meanwhile, the proliferating urban economy and population led to a diverse Chinese urban social structure. The urban population shifted from a comparatively homogeneous industrial working class to a mixture of various classes and identities. Urban life became diverse as various interest groups became active in society.

For the Chinese government, administering an opening society with a huge and increasingly fluid population is an unprecedented challenge. The diversifying social stratification, increasing population mobility and influx of rural-to-urban migrants has brought about huge pressure for urban governance. The top-down socialist administration system which relied heavily on the state-owned enterprises (Dan-wei) turned out to be unsuited to the transitional urban society: on the one hand, the highly centralized welfare system posed a too huge financial burden on the central government since the state-owned sectors began to bankrupt in the 1990s; on the other hand, the urban policies in the socialist system excluded the rural-to-urban migrants out of the urban welfare system and undoubtedly, caused increasing social conflicts. In the 1990s, a series of reforms were adopted in the realm of employment, housing, and social insurance system in Chinese cities. A main government rationale was to hand over the public services which used to be

delivered directly by the central government and the state-owned enterprises to local governments, meanwhile devolving a part of this responsibility to private sectors, social sectors and individuals.

Meanwhile, as the socialist administration system gradually quit the stage with the bankruptcy of the state-owned sectors in the 1990s, the Chinese party state lost an important tool to exert direct intervention on individual lives. In order to retain control on the grassroots society, the Chinese central government's approach was to strengthen the street-level government and extend its power into the neighbourhood. The concept of 'community' (she-qu) was then introduced to Chinese people by the government as a political response to its governing limits: unlike Britain or US, in China community was firstly established as a specific administrative unit with clear geographical boundaries; more importantly, it refers to a street-level administration system – called 'She-qu system' – which was established to replace the state-owned enterprises, or 'Dan-wei' to implement grassroots public administration.

In the 1990s, a 'community construction movement' (she-qu-jian-she-yun-dong) was launched by the central government to promote the 'She-qu' system across the country. The aim was to establish an administration system at neighbourhood level to facilitate the implementation of reformed urban policies. Community has been used as a government technology to retain state control and regulate social order. During the last two decades the She-qu system has been promoted firstly in big cities, then in middle and small cities with support from all levels of government. The street-level government has been given comprehensive government functions and fiscal independence and its role in urban governance gained increasing attentions from both the politicians and the scholars. Since the early 2000s the governments in different cities actively launched various 'community construction' practices. As pioneers, Shanghai, Shenyang and Wuhan's governments developed different governing models according to institutional reforms. Their experiences were applied later in many other cities.

In 2006 the Chinese central government made an important strategic adjustment of governance to put its new focus on coping with increasing social conflicts brought by the accelerating economic development and aiming to increase the cohesion of Chinese society. The vision was established in a strategy of ‘building a harmonious society’ (gou-jian-he-xie-she-hui) which aimed to invigorate social morality, emphasise individual social responsibility, mobilise participation in specific areas while still maintaining firm, centralized control (Geis, 2009:76). The importance of community in maintaining social order was again articulated in the central government document (Zhong-gong-zhong-yang-guan-yu-gou-jian-she-hui-zhu-yi-he-xie-she-hui-de-ruo-gan-zhong-da-wen-ti-de-jueding (The central committee of the communist party of China on several major issues of building a harmonious socialist society), November 2006). Community was targeted as ‘the cell of society’ and harmonious communities were regarded as ‘the foundation of a harmonious society’ (ibid). The Ex-Vice chairman of P. R. China, Zeng Qinghong further pointed out that the ‘we should regard building harmonious communities as the main content of our work to build a harmonious society’. (Zong Qinghong’s speech on his inspection visit to Tianjin, December 2005)

The central government’s ‘building a harmonious society’ strategy articulated two policy instructions for the local government’s community construction practices. On the one hand, in order to ‘reinforce foundation work at the grassroots, on which the construction of harmonious society should be anchored’<sup>1</sup>, focus will still be put on the ‘grassroots regime construction’ (ji-ceng-zheng-quan-jian-she), or perfecting the street-level bureaucratic institution. On the other hand, new emphasis should be given to widening desirable participation from social/economic sectors and individuals to develop more collaborative community governance. As the former Chinese general secretary Hu Jintao emphasised in his speech of community construction:

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<sup>1</sup> (zhonggong zhongyang guanyu jiaqiang dangde zhizhengnengli jianshe de jueding (The central committee of the communist party of China’s decisions about strengthening the party’s ruling ability), passed on the Fourth Plenary Session of the 16th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2004 )

*'All social members<sup>2</sup> should work together to build a harmonious society under the Communist Party's leadership. The Communist Party will continue playing a crucial leadership role and...we should unite all the power we could unite and mobilise all the members we could mobilise. Building a harmonious society is the responsibility of every social member and the outcome should be enjoyed by everybody.'*

*'We should strengthen the individuals, enterprises and social organisations' sense of social responsibility and actively involve them into the community construction movement'*

*–Hu Jintao (zhong-gong-zhong-yang-guan-yu-gou-jian-she-hui-zhu-yi-he-xie-she-hui-ruo-gan-zhong-da-wen-ti –de-jue-ding, The central committee of the communist party of China's decisions about several major issues of building a harmonious socialist society, November 2006)*

The term 'social responsibility' was repeatedly emphasised by Chinese top leaders to demonstrate the government's intention to target individuals and non-government groups as new realms of policy intervention. Control is still deeply embedded in the Chinese Government's discourse of public participation. But instead of the socialist way of control in 1960-1970's which was directly and crudely exerted on individuals according to the socialist state-owned enterprises and the state machinery, the Chinese state party is subtly shifting its approach of control into more soft and undetected intervention which has been decorated by more vocabularies and strategies of 'participation'.

### **Why does this study matter?**

The political significance of community construction for China's social transition has been widely realised by both the Chinese government and the urban researchers. Wang (2009:107) claimed that for China the significance of community construction is 'much more than public administration system reform...but directly relates to two huge topics: the government's

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<sup>2</sup> The term 'social member' here has a similar meaning with 'citizen'.

regime construction and the development of grassroots democracy'. Much current Chinese community literature puts emphasis either on state control according to all kinds of government institutional reforms (Zhu, 1997; Yang, 2008, Hua, 1999, Xu, 2001; He, 2005, Wang, 2009; Cai& Lu, 2007) or the increasingly active roles the social actors played in recent years (Xue, 2002; Li, 2004; Cui, 2006; Pan, 2006; Zhao, 2008; Zhou, 2008; Song, 2012). There is still a lack of detailed empirical research exploring the changing dynamic of power relations between governments and the other stakeholders and 'this gap is impeding us from exploring the important change of interest pattern and power relations, which is the core content of community construction' (Wang, 2009:109). Many scholars have pointed out that the governments should devolve more power to economic and social sectors through these collaborations (He, 2005; Cui, 2006; Zhou, 2008) but little concern was given to how power was actually exercised in these relationships.

This study fills this gap by looking at street-level governments' everyday practice, including how they mobilise participation from individuals and private/social sectors and how the power relations change between the government and these others involved within this process. These practices are important and deserve further exploration for two reasons. First, the government increasingly employs the rhetoric of public participation in administering cities and neighbourhoods. Second, independently of government initiatives, citizens, private enterprises, social organisations and other stakeholders began to organise themselves to act and work with the government in their neighbourhoods. Both of these developments interact in complex and largely unknown ways in the current landscape of urban governance in China.

In a broader sense, this study opens discussions on the dynamics of state-society relations in China's changing statehood from a micro-scale : increasing collaborations and conversations between the street-level governments and non-government actors reflect more intimate interactions between the state party and society, which is in strong contrast with socialist China in the 1960s and 1970s. Community is the most active interface

between the state and society. It is the area where various new policies are ‘tested’ and local governments implement intimate face-to-face communications with citizens and social actors. The public-private interactions at the community level most directly reflect the government’s ambition to extend its power into society. Meanwhile, the ambivalent status of community between the state and society makes it a good sphere to explore the government technologies to mobilise civil participation while retaining state control.

## 1.2 Research aims and questions

This study investigates the Chinese street-level government’s ‘community construction’ practices that were carried out in response to the central government’s 2006 ‘building a harmonious society’ strategy. Using an in-depth case study, it aims:

- To explore the Chinese government’s changing technologies to govern the diversifying and opening urban society.
- To map the changing dynamic of power relations between the government and social actors in the grassroots Chinese society and further examine the dynamic state-society interactions in the realm of public administration in China.

To accomplish the research aims, four questions are addressed as following:

### **(1) What policy instruments does the Chinese central government use to retain control on the Chinese urban society?**

This question examines the reforms in public administration since the foundation of People’s Republic of China in 1949 from a broad view. It sets out to explore how Chinese government shifts its policy orientation to deal with the changing Chinese urban social structure. It focuses



on the central government's changing governing technology from the socialist 'Dan-wei' system which was operated by the state-owned enterprises to the regional 'She-qu' system which was taken charge by street-level governments. The concern of this question includes:

- The Chinese government's deeply-embedded governing value of 'control' and 'centralisation' in the urban administration system.
- The governing approaches in the socialist Dan-wei system from the 1950s to the 1970s
- The governing approaches in the She-qu system from the 1980s to now

**(2) How does the Chinese government implement control according to the community (She-qu) administration system?**

This question sets out to examine the Chinese central government's efforts to establish and empower the street-level government according to the community construction movement. It reflects the community construction movement from a critical perspective and tries to explore:

- The political rationality of community in China's context
- The ambivalent status of the community administration system between the state and society
- The way that power is exercised by the government and relevant actors within the community.

**(3) What technologies do Chinese street-level governments adopt to 'build harmonious communities' in their daily practices?**

This question investigates the Chinese street-level governments' approaches to widen public participation and develop a more collaborative governing mode in recent years. In governmentality theory, the term 'government technology' is used to describe the government's 'distinctive ways of thinking and questioning, relying on definite vocabularies and procedures for the production of truth' (Dean, 1995). Those technologies

are summarized in literature as: ‘methods of examination and evaluation; techniques of notation, numeration, and calculation; accounting procedures; routines for the timing and spacing of activities in specific locations; presentational forms such as tables and graphs; formulas for the organisation of work; standardized tactics for the training and implantation of habits; pedagogic, therapeutic, and punitive techniques of reformulation and cure; architectural forms in which interventions take place (i.e. classrooms and prisons); and professional vocabularies’ (Inda, 2005: 9; Miller and Rose, 1990: 8; Rose and Miller, 1992: 183). In this study, the government technologies refer to the ways that the Chinese government uses specific language, regulations, media publicity and other non-violent methods to define problems and objectives (problemise), to maintain control on the collaboration with non-government sectors and to cultivate self-regulated and politically collaborative citizens. Two kinds of government technologies in the ‘community construction’ practices are deeply explored including:

- The technologies that the community government uses to promote collaborations with private and social sectors. This kind of technology is usually implemented in the forms of established objectives and strategies, announced agendas and discourses.
- The technologies that the community government adopts to mobilise participation from the residents and maintain social order in the neighbourhoods. This kind of technologies are implemented according to symbolic devices such as propaganda, capacity building, media publicity, etc. It may be seen to apply to individuals to make people regulate themselves and behave according to specific social regulations. In this study, this kind of technology can be traced from the government’s mobilisation practices, capacity training projects, self-governing projects and the ‘socialist spiritual cultivation’ events.

**(4) How do the involved social groups and citizens interpret the government discourse of building harmonious communities and position themselves within this discourse?**

This question looks at the ordinary residents who live the government technology of community. It examines the way residents understand interpret the government's discourse of 'building harmonious communities', and how they position themselves within this discourse. There are three aspects I want to explore through the study on community construction including:

- The way that residents understand their roles and responsibilities in their community
- The way that residents interpret the government's rhetoric of 'harmony' in their everyday lives
- The ways that residents make sense of their lives and their relations with the party state in the ever-developing society

### 1.3 Theoretical framework

This study looks into the Chinese street-level government's practices from a governmentality perspective. The concept of governmentality, which was described by Michel Foucault as 'rationalism of governmental practice in the exercise of political sovereignty' (2004: 04) is concerned with how governments use specific 'technologies' to exercise power and to accomplish their aims (Foucault, 2000: 340-342) or from another perspective, how citizens are governed within a regime according to a series of governing technologies. From the governmentality perspective, the government's practices can be interpreted as a series of carefully designed, publicised and carried out activities with implicit rationalities. As Dean puts it (1999: 11):

*'Government is any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through our desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects and outcomes.'*

The rationale of adopting a governmentality framework is that it provides a promising tool for the analysis of China's transformation in statehood with focus on the government practices. The Chinese government's changing vocabularies of 'building a harmonious society', 'public participation' and 'social responsibility' all demonstrate the government's determination to deal with social conflicts by focusing on shaping individual conduct. The concerns of the governmentality framework including the government rationalities, the government technologies, the power/knowledge dualism and the process of subjectification all apply to today's China. The study of governmentality is so far mainly carried out within a liberal and democratic context and mostly neglected non-western as well as non-liberal contexts (Sigley, 2007). In China, proliferating academic concern on the China's social transition contributed to increasing studies on government behaviours and the rationalities behind. However, 'governmentality' has yet to be systematically used as a conceptual tool to analyse the government rationalities and to understand the shifting statehood from 'Maoist socialism' to 'Capitalism with Chinese characteristics'.

This study applies the governmentality framework in two aspects, Firstly in a broad context it is used as a theoretical tool to explain the Chinese central government's strategy of 'community construction': as centralized control becomes increasingly difficult with the opening up of society because of the shift to economic liberalism, the party state has to implicate society-based organisations and citizens in the governance of regions, cities and societal sectors. The rationality and technology of community, with its ambivalent status somewhere between the state and society, is an ideal candidate for an emerging govern-at-a-distance rationality. Secondly governmentality provides a framework to critically analyse

the government's everyday practices: as the governance discourse gives more concerns to the social regulations beyond the governments such as private sector, Non-government organisations and individuals (Rose, 1999:15-17, Benz, 2004), governmentality can be used to critically analyse these political processes and explore the conflicts within them.

Meanwhile, governmentality discourse gives emphasis to the issue of power, which is the one of the core concerns of this study. Foucault's genealogy of power/knowledge sees power as a kind of fluid and dynamic social relation that exists pervasive between everyone. As Diseger puts it in *The Fourth Face of Power* (1992: 980) that differing from previous debates on power, Foucault sees subjects or individuals as not biologically given, but constructed by society. Power on the other hand, plays a role in constructing subjects. The term governmentality was coined by Foucault to describe how power is exercised by the government over individuals to construct their subjects in the modern society. Foucault calls this kind of governmental power 'disciplinary power' or 'bio-power' and he claims that it is according to 'surveillance' and 'discipline' that the authorities exercise power on agents (Foucault, 1975). Meanwhile, he argues that political institutions and practices can redirect and influence the direction and intensity of disciplinary power according to technologies such as approval, law, monitor, problematisation, standardized tactics for the training and implantation of habits, professional vocabularies and so on (Inda, 2005: 9; Miller and Rose, 1990: 8; Rose and Miller, 1992: 183; Diseger, 1992:996). From this perspective, the power relations between Chinese government and citizens can be revealed from many aspects of the everyday neighbourhood lives: the government's vocabularies, activities, published strategies and established agendas; the non-government stakeholders' vocabularies, actions and habits and so on. All of these details manifest some micro power relations.

#### 1.4 Structure of this thesis

This thesis is structured into eight chapters. The first chapter is a brief introduction to this study. It outlines the main context of China's community construction movement and based on the lack of relevant study, it proposes the research aims, questions, theoretical framework and structure.

Chapter 2 provides a broad context of China's social transition. It starts from reviewing China's urbanisation process with a focus on the high-speed urbanisation process since 1978. Within this process, the Chinese economic and social structure underwent a series of radical changes and caused ensuing social problems in both urban and rural areas. In cities, population mobility kept increasing and urban governments confronted a huge challenge in providing social welfare and public service. The state-owned sectors became bankrupt and stopped providing social welfare and public services for urban residents. The socialist urban welfare system could not work in the opening society any more. In the 1990s, a series of reforms were adopted respectively in the employment, housing, and social insurance system across the country. A main principle was to hand over the social services which used to be delivered by the central government and state-owned enterprises to local governments and to devolve a part of responsibility to private sectors, social sectors and individuals. In this context, the street-level government came into power with the responsibilities to provide social welfare services and the term 'She-qu' (community) came into public discourses. The political nature of the concept of 'community' is discussed with further explanation on the ambivalent identity of the community administration system between the state and society. The local governments' practices to establish a community administration system in the nation-wide 'community construction movement' is reviewed and illustrates that the main rationality of community construction was to establish an administration system to strengthen state control in urban neighbourhoods. This rationality is demonstrated as the 'building a harmonious society' strategy (2006). Community is adopted as an important government technology to maintain social order and widen public participation within the social transition.

Chapter 3 reviews relevant literatures and introduces the theoretical perspective of this study. It firstly reviews the literature on China's changing state-society relations and points out that the community construction movement provides a good field to research the changing state-society relations in China's grassroots society. However, the current literature on Chinese community governance is mainly drawn within a western theoretical framework and lacks reflection on how the theoretical concept of 'governance' should be understood when applied in China's institutional context. In considering this, Foucault's perspective of 'governmentality' is well suited to this study since it provides a critical framework to analyse the Chinese government's rationalities within China's specific institution. This study builds an analytic framework to explore the government practices within China's context: it uses two of Foucault's core conceptions— 'government technologies' and 'subjectivity'—to explore the changing dynamics of power relation between the government and social actors.

Chapter 4 introduces the design of this study. It firstly outlines the research questions and the theoretical concerns with these questions. Then it justifies the rationale of adopting a qualitative approach and an in-depth case study to answer the research questions. The selection of the case is discussed and the adopted research methods are reviewed with further explanations on how they help answering the research questions.

Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 further explore the deeply embedded top-down state control in Chinese traditional administrative structure and the growing bottom-up civil power during the last two decades. Chapter 5 goes back to history and reviews China's public administration system from feudal dynasties to the 21st century and points out the controlling and centralised nature embedded in the formal institutional structure. It firstly reveals the ideology of centralisation and population mobility control in the historical urban planning culture and the long-lasting household registration system. Then it reviews the administration system reforms since the foundation of P. R. China and points out that no

matter in the socialist Dan-wei system or in the current She-qu system, the government never intended to release its control on the society. The rationality of She-qu is to extend government power into neighbourhood and implement more implicit control on the opening and diversifying society. Chapter 6 explores the rise of social actors at community level during the last two decades. It first reviews the involvement of economic and social actors at community level since the 1990s and indicates that pushed by market force, the street-level governments launched increasing collaborations with private and social sectors in order to decrease their administrative burden. Within the nation-wide community construction movement, governments in different cities explored various governing modes to involve social and private sector into community governance. The local governments' rationality is changing to develop a more widely-participated governing mode and the participation of non-government actors is increasingly emphasised in the government discourse.

Chapter 7 presents the street-level government's 'community construction' practices in the form of a case study of a neighbourhood in Beijing. According to interviews with relevant stakeholders and participant observation, it deeply explores the street-government's technologies to retain control in the neighbourhood and the residents' subjectification in this process. It also reveals the changing dynamic of power relations between the government and the involved social actors.

Chapter 8 draws conclusions for this study. It firstly summarises the findings from the empirical study. Then it relates these findings back to wider debates on Chinese urban governance and further discusses the theoretical implications of this study. Finally, it discusses some limitations of this study and further research areas.



## **Chapter 2 China's Social Transition and the Community Construction Movement**

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores China's rapid social transition since 1978 with focus on the reforms in urban public administration system and the rise of community, or 'She-qu' as a grassroots administrative unit. The objective is firstly to describe the context in which the term 'community' emerged and developed with specific political rationalities in China, and secondly to review knowledge of the 'community construction' movement from existing literature. This chapter is framed in five main sections. It begins by considering China's fast urbanisation process and the fragmenting of social structure within this process. Section 2.3 introduces the urban policy reforms in the areas of employment, housing and welfare systems since 1978 which call for the birth of a new administration system at the grassroots level. Section 2.4 introduces the political meaning of 'community' in China, the ambivalent status of the community administration system between the state and the society and the process of the 'community construction' movement throughout China since the late 1990s. Section 2.5 analyses the central government's vision of 'building a harmonious society' in 2006 and illustrate how community is used as a government technology to retain control on the grassroots society. Section 2.6 reviews the literature on the community construction movement and identifies the gaps and limits in the current research.

### 2.2 China's urbanisation and social transition since 1949

In China, the development of community is linked closely with China's radical social transition, especially a series of reforms in urban public administration system. To

understand how community system works with its specific political rationale, it is important to explore how it is born in wider social and economic context. This section will review the pivotal context of the birth of community in China, including the unsteady urbanisation process and the fragmenting of urban social structure within this process.

### 2.2.1 Urbanisation process since 1949

China's urbanisation was an unsteady and massive process which was accelerated by policy adjustments more than by market forces (Li, 2009). Generally speaking, the process of China's urbanisation since the founding of the P. R China in 1949 experienced three phases (see table 2-1):

- Between 1949 and 1980, cities were targeted as the main areas to develop industry. The central government tried to evenly distribute industry in small and middle-sized cities around the country. The development of big cities was suppressed. The urbanisation ratio was controlled approximately to 18 percent with a slow incremental rise for thirty years.
- Between 1980 and 1995 the central government changed a series of policies and strategies to develop commerce in cities. The reforms pushed the country into a radical urbanisation process. During this phase stimulating urban economy was targeted as a key emphasis in government work and the urbanisation ratio increased from 19.39 percent to 29.04 percent with an average annual growth rate of 2 percent.
- Since 1995 the economic and social reforms were further promoted in all aspects. The urban economy played an increasingly important role in the national economy and China stepped into a phase of rapid urbanisation. The urbanisation ratio increased with great speed from 29.04 percent in 1995 to 49.68 percent in 2010. In the near future the registered urban residents in China will exceed rural residents and it is estimated that in another 5 to 6 years the number will reach 60 percent (Li, 2009).

Table 2-1 The proportion of registered urban and rural residents between 1949 and 2010

Phases	Year	Total Population (10,000)	Proportion of registered population ( percent)	
			Urban	Rural
I	1949	54167	10.67	89.36
	1952	57482	12.46	87.54
	1958	65994	16.25	83.75
	1960	66207	19.75	80.25
	1965	72538	17.98	82.02
	1970	82992	17.38	82.62
	1975	92420	17.34	82.66
	1980	98705	19.39	80.61
II	1985	105851	23.71	76.29
	1987	109300	25.32	74.68
	1990	114333	26.41	73.59
	1993	118517	27.99	72.01
	1995	121121	29.04	70.96
iii	1996	122389	30.48	69.52
	1999	125786	34.78	65.22
	2000	126743	36.22	63.78
	2003	129227	40.53	59.47
	2005	130756	42.99	57.01
	2006	131397	43.90	56.10
	2010	133972	49.68	50.32

Source: China statistic yearbook (1949-2010)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> In China the published statistics for urban population merely show the population figures calculated on the basis of household registry rather than the actual number of people. In the other word, it just indicates the number of urban Hukou holder. The guidelines for the third census (1982) state the that the population of a city or a county is made up of:

( i ) those who reside permanently in the city or county concerned and hold registry there;

Looking back at the urban policies since the foundation of P. R. China, a series of contradictory economic and social policies contributed to the contrast of urban development between Mao era (1949-1977) and post-Mao era (1978-present) and led to the dramatic urbanisation process.

In Mao's regime, the central government put focus on developing large-scale industry and making a defensive territorial planning in case of any war with the Soviet Union or western capitalist countries. The central government's policies were heavily inclined to industrial development and homeland security. The industrial enterprises were mainly allocated within small and middle scale cities in mountainous west China to ensure their safety. Two thirds of the population dwelled in vast rural areas and lived on agriculture. In the first ten years since the foundation of P .R. China (1949-1959), efforts were made to push forward urban construction due to 'strategic needs' and focus was mainly placed on developing industrial and natural resource-based cities. In 1949 there were only 132 cities around the state with 57.76 million registered urban residents and the urbanisation ratio was at a low level of 10.67 percent (Wang, 2011: 2). During the first Five-Year Plan period (1953-1957) 156 key projects were launched around the state to develop new resource-based cities such as Yuci which was focused on textile machinery and industry, Jixi, Shuangyashan, Jiaozuo, Pingdingshan and Hebi which were focused on coal industry, Ma'an shan which was focused on iron and steel industry and Yumen which was focused on petroleum industry. Meanwhile, existing industry-based cities like Wuhan, Chengdu, Taiyuan, Xi'an, Luoyang and Lanzhou were expanded with policy support (Wu, 2011). By 1957 the urbanisation ratio had raised to 15.39 percent. But still, the central government had no interest in developing non-industrial cities and big cities. Meanwhile in

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- ( ii ) those whose registry is outside the city or county concerned but have lived in the said city or county for one year or longer;
  - (iii) those who have lived in the city or county concerned for less than a year but moved their family registry into said city or county one year or more earlier;
  - (iv) those whose application for transfer of family registry to the city or county concerned is being processed at the time of the census; and
  - ( v ) those who have residential family registry in the city or county concerned but are living abroad at the time of the census.

rural areas, most peasant families still had self-sufficient lives with their farmland and posed little economic burden on the government. To retain people in rural areas as much as possible, in this period policy control on population mobility from moving to cities was quite strong. On the other hand, to avoid problems caused by the expansion of urban areas, the objective of urban policies was to ‘make the most use of middle-scale cities and allocate only one or two enterprises in one city to make the industrial distribution more even’ and ‘strictly control the urban population, especially the population of big cities’ (National Design Work Conference Document, 1957).

In the 1960s and 1970s, the natural disaster in the early 1960s and later Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) seriously hindered economic development. In the Cultural Revolution over 26 million young urban residents were exiled to the countryside to relieve the urban employment pressure according to a policy known as ‘Up to the Hill, Down to the Countryside’ (shang-shan-xia-xiang). From 1966 to 1976 there were only 26 new cities established and the urbanisation ratio stagnated between 17 percent and 18 percent. By 1978, the country had an urban population of 172.45 million in 1978, representing an urbanisation ratio of 17.92 percent (Li, 2009).

The 1978 open and reform policy was the trigger of China’s high speed urbanisation. The central government began to shift its emphasis of work onto economic development and launched a series of economic and social reforms to open China to the world. To stimulate the urban economy, the policy control on population mobility was loosened to expand the urban labour market and the urbanisation process accelerated with high speed. From 1980 to 1995, the urbanisation ratio rose from 19.39 percent to 29.04 percent (ibid) with steady speed. In this period the emphasis of urban policies notably shifted from ‘control the development of big cities’ to ‘encourage the development of big cities’. In 1992 the Fourteenth Congress of the Community Party established the overall objectives of developing a socialist market economy and the role of cities as regional economic centres was unprecedentedly valued. Since 1996 the policy control on population mobility was further weakened and the urbanisation had stepped into a phase of high speed. From 1996

to 2003 the urbanisation ratio increased 10 percent within only 7 years, which was four times that of the 1950s.

In the first decade of the 21st century, China's urbanisation kept increasing with a high speed, especially in big cities and metropolises like Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and coastal cities in southeast China. From 2000 to 2010 within 10 years the urbanisation ratio increased another 13.4 percent. By the end of 2009 among all provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities of China (excluding Kong Hong SAR and Macao SAR) there were 654 cities with 621.86 million people living in urban areas (China statistical yearbook 2000-2010). Big cities developed and expanded with a greater rate than small and middle scale cities. The number of cities with more than 500,000 residents was 12 in 1949, 45 in 1980, 58 in 1989, 68 in 1993 and by 2002 the number rose sharply to 450. The same trend could be traced from the million-scale cities: in 1978 there were only 13 million-level cities, in 1993 the number was 32, in 2002 it suddenly rose to 171 (China's statistical Year Book 1980, 1989, 1992, 1993, 2002). By 2009 there were 23 cities in China with a population of 2 million or more, 22 cities with a population of 1-2 million and 86 cities with a population of 0.5-1 million, 239 cities with a population of 200,000-500,000 and 273 cities with a population of 200,000 and less (China Statistical Year Book 2009).

With the rapid development of cities, especially big cities, the urban economy played an increasingly important role in China's national economy. Cities were targeted as an important arena to absorb the surplus rural labour and relieve the nationwide employment pressure, which was a primary issue of the central government. At the end of 2009, the number of employed people was 779.95 million, of which 311.20 million worked in cities and towns (China's statistical yearbook 2009). At the same time, the abrupt population boom in big cities launched a series of social problems in both urban and rural areas. In cities the discordant factors including housing shortage, public security crisis, environmental pollution and social segregation raised huge pressures for the urban public administration system. In rural areas a large number of farmers lost their land due to the expansion of urban built up areas and the living standard of rural residents dropped as more

and more elites rushed to cities (Li, 2009). These negative effects of urbanisation further aggravated the imbalance of development between cities and rural areas.

The emerging social problems in cities incited increasing attention from the government. To relieve the social segregation and urban-rural inequality, the Hu-Wen leadership<sup>4</sup> government (2002-2012) gradually shifted focus of governing from economic development to political stability and social cohesion. The central government's policies towards urban development became more rational and increasing focus has been put on (1) the balance of development among different scales of city and (2) the congruity of development between cities and countryside. In 2002 the Sixteenth Party Congress explicitly proposed that 'we should gradually increase the level of urbanisation, persist in balanced development of big, medium-sized and small cities and small towns and follow our own path towards urbanisation' (ibid). The national 'twelfth plan' (2011-2015) put forward the 'Urban-Rural Integration' (cheng-xiang-yi-ti-hua 城乡一体化) strategy and claimed that 'we should coordinate the balance of development between urban and rural in terms infrastructure coverage, public service and social administration'<sup>5</sup> (ibid).

In conclusion, the radical change of economic policy direction in 1978 triggered a massive and fast urbanisation process in China. During the last thirty years cities, especially big cities developed with amazing speed. High-speed urbanisation brought about many social problems within a short time and caused huge pressure for the urban administration system. In the 21st century, promoting the urban administration system and balancing the rural-urban disparity in development has been an important policy direction.

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<sup>4</sup> Hu-Wen leadership refers to the government led by general secretary Hu Jin-tao and Prime minister Wwen-jiaobao from 2002 to 2012

<sup>5</sup>十二五规划提出，“统筹城乡发展规划，促进城乡基础设施、公共服务、社会管理一体化。”

## 2.2.2 Social restructuring and ensuing social problems

Since China stepped into a fast urbanisation process, the rapid increase of the urban population led to a fragmenting of urban social structure. The urban population shifted from a comparatively homogeneous industrial ‘working class’ to a mixture of various classes and identities. Diversifying interest groups, an increase in the floating population and in the number of migrant workers, constantly challenged the original urban administration system and led to many social and administrative problems.

### (1) Social stratification

The changing social stratification was an important issue in the social transition (Lenski, 1966). Before the 1978 reform Chinese population was classified into three classes: the peasant class, the working class and the cadre class (Schurmann, 1966; Watson, 2010). Industrial and commercial sectors were located in cities and owned by the state. The economic structure was very unitary since most industrial and commercial sectors were state-owned. Most urban residents worked for the state-owned enterprises (Dan-wei 单位) and were classified as ‘working class’. A small portion of residents were classified as ‘cadre’ including university graduates, government officials, teachers and retired soldiers. In rural areas the economic structure was even more unitary and almost all rural residents belonged to the peasantry class.

The 1978 reform diversified the urban social structure in three directions. Firstly the urban economic structure became diverse and created more interest groups. Many state-owned enterprises became bankrupt. The laid-off workers were encouraged to seek job in private enterprises or start their own businesses. Meanwhile private sectors began to develop and citizens had more career choices. International investment was allowed to some extent and



became an important new economic power. Citizens working for different companies began to enjoy different income and welfare standards and the wealth gap was widened. Under this context people with different identities, careers and income levels formed many interest groups and aroused increasing social conflicts. Secondly, a large number of rural residents began to move freely between cities and countryside and formed a new social class called 'migrant workers' in a broader sense. Some of them gave up farming and permanently moved to cities while others regularly moved between cities and rural areas in search of temporary jobs. This amount of floating population was not registered in the urban household system (this system will be further explained in Chapter 5) and brought huge pressure on the urban public administration system. Thirdly, the urban life became more diverse with the urban development and urban residents developed different social classes according to their generation, life styles and standard of consumption. There were many doubts about whether a middle class emerged in China (Cheng, 2010, Chen & Goodman, 2012) but new names of social class like xiao-zi (means petty bourgeoisie), fu-er-dai (means rich and influential second generation), jiu-ling-hou (means the generation born in 1990s) became new standards of stratification and each of them developed their own culture. The Chinese urban society became more heterogeneous, open, fluid and diverse.

## (2) 'Floating population'

A fundamental characteristic of the urbanisation process was that the migration of surplus rural labour to the non-agricultural sectors in the cities. The Chinese vocabulary of 'floating population' (liu-ding-ren-kou) referred to 'those people who leave the place where their residence is registered or who leave the place of their domiciles in the legal sense and seek jobs or make a living elsewhere' (Wang, 2011). Before 1978 the number of floating population was small because it was difficult for both urban and rural residents to seek employment and apply for social welfare outside of the area where their households were registered. The movement from rural areas to cities was especially difficult due to policy control.

Since the 1978 reform the central government gradually loosened its control on population mobility. The household registration still existed, but people in both cities and the countryside were allowed to move away and seek jobs outside their registered area. Since the 1980s the population mobility in China increased with unprecedented speed. From 1979 to 2009, the number of floating population grew from 6 million to 211 million, which was approximately 16 percent of the national population (Wang, 2011). The increasing population mobility attracted increasing attentions from researchers and policy makers due to the challenges it took to the original urban welfare and public service system which only served the registered urban householders (Chang, 1996; Scharping, 1997; Huang & Yang, 2000; Goodkin & West, 2002; Shen & Huang, 2003; Liang & Ma, 2004). According to the 2010 Report on China's Migrant Population Development<sup>6</sup>, by 2050 there will be approximately 350 million floating population in China. The annual increase would be slower but steady and the coverage would be expanded from big and southeastern coastal cities to inland and provincial-level cities. Meanwhile, the migration of whole families will increase and most of them are inclined to settle down in the places they have moved to. There will be greater pressures on the administration system associated with their family members including their employment, welfare, medical care, offspring education, cultural identity and segregation (Li, 2009).

### (3) 'Migrant workers'

Among the floating population, the people who moved from the rural areas to cities for jobs were usually referred to as 'migrant workers' or 'peasant workers'. Basically migrant workers included three types (Li, 2009):

- The people who abandoned farming and permanently moved to cities. They had permanent jobs in cities and gradually blended into urban life. After several

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<sup>6</sup> the State Population and Family Planning Commission (2010)

generations they were identified as urban residents and themselves approved their identities as urban residents, too. These people were the first generation of migrant workers and they made up only a small proportion of migrant workers.

- The people who moved between cities and countryside and had temporary jobs in cities. Their movement was irregular and they intended to seek work in different cities. The majority of migrant workers fell into this category.
- The people who undertook both farming in rural areas and temporary jobs in cities. They moved regularly between cities and countryside according to season and still viewed themselves as rural residents.

By 2007, there were 120 million migrant workers among the 140 million floating population. 60 percent of them were working in middle and big scale cities, 20 percent were working in small cities and the remaining 20 percent were working in the industrialized and developed villages in the southeast coast area (Li, 2007).

According to China's public administration system, only residents who are registered as urban households can enjoy most welfare and social insurance provided by their employers or local governments. Therefore so far many migrant workers are still covered by little welfare and social insurance and most of them cannot enjoy the same housing, medical and education welfare as urban householders as long as their households are still registered in rural areas. It has been over 30 years since the first generation of migrant workers resided in cities. Their offspring were born and grew up in cities and have grown into a new generation of urban labour. However most of them are still registered as rural residents and cannot enjoy the same welfare as the urban residents. By 2009 among the 150 million migrant workers who worked in cities around China 61.6 percent of them were the new generation between the ages of 16 and 30 (Wang, 2011). This indicates that the new generation of rural migrant workers is playing an increasingly important role in the economic and social development of China, but their identity as rural residents in many aspects impeded them from enjoying the same education, welfare and career opportunity as

the urban residents. A survey in 2010 showed that only 21.3 percent, 34.8 percent and 8.5 percent of the new generation of rural migrant workers were entitled to pension, health insurance or unemployment benefits respectively (China's Statistic Yearbook 2010), which were classified as necessary for the most basic living standard by the government. The biased policy direction and crude administrative measure towards urban migrant workers such as illegal arrest and expulsion aroused radical social conflicts in the 1990s and seriously threatened China's social and political stability. In 2003 the central government began to change the policy direction to include migrant workers in the urban welfare system. It was obvious that in the future decades, the migrant worker would further increase and play an increasing important role in the urban development.

### 2.2.3 Summary

Since 1978, China stepped into a phase of high-speed urbanisation. Within this process, the economic and social structure underwent a series of radical changes in a mere three decades. In cities, the social stratification became diverse and urban life became more complicated as increasing interest groups became active in society. The population mobility has continued to increase with the loosening of the household registration system and administering the rural-to-urban migrant workers became a tough assignment for the government. The original welfare policies on migrant worker administration were incomplete and they led to many social conflicts. These conflicts brought about huge pressure for a different form of public administration. In considering the fact, the following section will further explore the government's attempts to reform urban public administration system since 1978.

### 2.3 Reforms in urban public administration system

The previous section of this chapter has discussed the wide context of China's urbanisation and the fragmenting of urban social structure since 1978. It has pointed out that in the

social transition a huge challenge has been posed to the urban public administration system. This section is concerned with how the central government attempts to reform the existing urban public administration system to deal with ensuing social conflicts and dislocations. Focus will be put on the policy reforms in the area of employment, housing and social insurance.

In the socialist welfare system (1949-1977), the central government was the main welfare provider for urban residents and it directly funded most of the urban welfare programs. State-owned enterprises were the main allocation mechanism for welfare and social insurance spending. With the central government allocating funds to the state-owned enterprises, the state-owned enterprises further take charge of allocating and administering the funds and providing all kinds of welfares to their employees. After 1978 reforms, urban economy became marketised and private sector became to occupy the market. The state-owned sectors soon lost their competitiveness and went bankrupt. More and more employees were laid off and became ineligible for any social welfare. For the central government, there were three pressing issues at the time including:

- (1) the rising unemployment rate caused by the bankruptcy of state sectors.
- (2) the urban housing shortage caused by the massive rural-to-urban migration.
- (3) the urgent need to development a new social insurance system which could cover the unemployed, laid-off workers, retired workers and urban migrants.

In the 1990s, a series of reforms were adopted respectively in employment, housing, and the social insurance system. The contrast of the urban welfare policies before and after 1978 is presented in table 2-2. Generally speaking, a main principle was to hand over the social services which used to be delivered by the central government and state-owned enterprises to local governments and to devolve a part of responsibility to private sectors, social sectors and individuals.

Table 2-2 China's urban welfare policies in China before and after the 1978 reform

Welfare	Urban Social policies	
	Before the 1978 reforms	After the 1978 reforms
Employment	<p>1. Full employment policy: all urban labourers could be assigned a job in either state or collective sectors; the wage was low but the welfare level was high.</p> <p>2. Lifetime employment: state workers were free from job loss once they were employed.</p>	<p>1978-1981: three-in-one policy launched the development of private sectors which encouraged more flexible employment pattern</p> <p>1981-1994: labour contract system began to replace the lifetime employment system and the labour market became competitive</p> <p>1994-present: labour contract system was promoted to cover all types of enterprises and employees. The labour market has become more competitive. Unemployment became the most pressing problem for government</p>
Housing	<p>1. Public housing: most urban houses and flats were owned by the government and state enterprises, and distributed to workers and staff free of charge;</p> <p>2. Low rent: the average rent of public housing and flats was even lower than the basic maintenance standard.</p>	<p>1979-1985: commercial residential housing became open to individuals. To develop property market, the price of property was divided into equal thirds split between the government, the individual buyers and their employers.</p> <p>1986-1990: the rent of public housing rose to promote private housing purchase.</p> <p>1991-1993: government continued to raise the rent of public housing and controlled the subsidy on public housing. However, preferential policies were established to encourage commercial housing purchase.</p>

		<p>1994-1998: housing fund system was established to strengthen the personal ability to purchase private housing.</p> <p>1998-now: public housing was gradually replaced by commercial housing and the housing fund system was developed. Housing policies were established to make sure more families with low income could purchase private housing.</p>
Social insurance	<p>1.The governmental granted financial subsidy towards food, clothing and other basic subsistence material so that urban residents could benefit from lower prices</p> <p>2.'Labour insurance' for workers in the state sector and governmental staff, covering pension, medical care, occupational injury, etc.</p> <p>3.Cash benefits for the urban 'Three Nos' (no working ability, no family and no income).</p>	<p>1. The government reduced its financial provision in social insurance and devolved responsibilities to enterprises, NGOs and individuals.</p> <p>2. Employees of all kinds of enterprises pay a part of welfare by their own.</p> <p>3.Minimal living allowance for the unemployed and low income families.</p>

Li, Q. (2009). Study on major social issues and solutions in Chinese urbanisation process. Economic Science Press. Beijing.

### (1) Employment system reform

With an extremely large population, the employment problem has been the most significant issue for the Chinese central government since the foundation of the P. R. China. With a socialist central-planned economy (1949-1977), the state controlled most of the industrial and commercial sectors and the government had the responsibility to ensure full employment for urban residents. Most of the urban labour was assigned a job in either the state or collective sectors and enjoyed quite a range of free welfare, although they had quite low wage. As employees of state-owned enterprises, people enjoyed an ‘iron rice bowl’ (tie-fan-wan), which meant they were free from the risk of losing their jobs. The central government shouldered this pressure of providing welfare for the state sector employees. After the 1978 reforms, the private sector and international enterprises developed quickly in cities and urban citizens had increasing choices of career. Employees were allowed to change and quit their job, and it was much easier to start a private business. Meanwhile, the urban labour market became diverse and competitive: on one hand the state-owned enterprises became bankrupt due to lack of efficiency and laid off a large amount of urban labour. This amount of people came into the labour market to look for re-employment. On the other hand increasing rural surplus labourers began to spill into the urban labour market and took up to a big proportion of jobs with lower wages. In this process, the central government established a series of policies to expand the employment market and reduce the unemployment rate.

Generally speaking since 1978 the employment system reformed underwent three stages (Ding & Warner, 2001). The first stage was between 1978 and 1981. As mentioned before (2.1.1), in the Cultural Revolution over 26 million young urban residents were exiled to the countryside to ease the urban employment pressure (Li, 2009) according to a policy as known as ‘Down to the Countryside’ (shang-shan-xia-xiang). After 1978, they were sent back to cities in batches and doubled the employment tension. It was estimated that in 1979 there were approximately 15 million jobless young people in Chinese cities (Warner, 1996). In this first three years of reform, a main objective was to allocate jobs for the unemployed



young people. A ‘three-in-one’ (san-jie-he-fang-zhen) policy<sup>7</sup> was established in 1980 to encourage the local labour bureaux, enterprises and individuals to develop more channels for employment. According to the policy, people were officially allowed to start private business. At the grassroots level, a large amount of ‘labour service companies’ (lao-dong-fu-wu-gong-si) were set up to provide skill training and job placement services for unemployed young people. Meanwhile, more flexible employment patterns including contractual workers (he-tong-gong) and temporary workers (lin-shi-gong) were allowed to stimulate employment growth.

The second stage was between 1981 and 1994 when the labour contract system began to replace the lifetime employment system and the labour market became competitive. Attempts were first made in Shenzhen, China’s first Special Economic Zone (Jing-ji-te-qu) and then promoted nationwide. In the early 1980s foreign investment companies were allowed to hire people by contract and later the practice was implemented in state-owned enterprises. By the end of 1982, there had been approximately 160,000 workers hired by contract in state-owned enterprises (Zhuang, 1994:410). In the labour contract system, enterprises enjoyed more freedom to sign contracts with qualified workers and dismiss surplus and unqualified employees. The contractual workers had to perform well to be competitive. At this stage, the coexistence of lifetime employment system and labour contract system contributed to a diverse urban labour market including the surplus rural labour, the employees in town and village enterprises, the employees in private enterprises, and self-employed labours and unemployed workers.

Since 1994 the Chinese employment system reform stepped into a new stage which aimed to promote the labour contract system and establish a rational employment system. The Labour Law of the People’s Republic of China promulgated in July 1994 required that all

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<sup>7</sup>。“三结合”就业方针的内容是“在国家统筹规划和指导下，实行劳动部门介绍就业，自愿组织起来就业和自谋职业相结合”。这一方针的实质是“以生产资料公有制为主体，多种经济成分并存”的经济政策在劳动就业政策上的体现，它的提出是我国政府劳动工作与就业政策的突破，指导了我国就业工作近 20 年。

employees, regardless of the ownership type of their employers must be placed on labour contracts. Meanwhile enterprises were granted more autonomy in enrolling contractual workers. By the end of 1996, approximately 106 million urban workers had been put on individual labour contracts, accounting for 96.4 per cent of all formal urban employment (Zhu, 1997). In the late 1990s the unemployment rate began to increase as the central government vigorously pushed the state-owned enterprises to restructure, merge or declare bankruptcy. Approximately 20 million workers were laid off by state-owned enterprises and most of them were middle-aged, poorly educated, unskilled and uncompetitive in the labour market (China Labour Bulletin, 2007). The re-employment of these laid-off workers was a big challenge and most pressing issue for the government. Since the 21st century, the Chinese government established various schemes and incentives to stimulate re-employment of laid-off workers but by 2005 only 32 percent of unemployed were re-hired (China's Statistical Yearbook 2005). Besides laid-off workers, the increasing rural-to-urban migrant workers and college graduates and young people also exerted huge pressure for the government. The first survey on Youth Employment conducted by MOLSS indicated that the unemployment rate of the population aged 15-29 years old was 9 percent in 2005, of which 72 percent were long-term unemployed. According to the United Nations' estimates, the proportion of the population aged between 15 and 59 in China will reach its peak and remain at a high level (more than half the total population) between 2010 and 2020, indicating that unemployment will continue to be a significant problem in the next two decades (Statistics: Projected Population in China, 1950-2060).

## (2) Housing system reform

Before the 1978 reforms, most urban houses and flats were owned by the government and the state-owned enterprises. The public housing was a large portion of the urban housing system. As part of basic social welfare, public housing was distributed to workers and staff free of charge or rented to them with a very low rent. In 1958, the average rent of public housing in Beijing was 0.22 rmb /sq.m /month , which was only 6.15 percent of the workers' average wage (Xie, 1999). Compared with other countries, this was a very low

rate. Within the thirty years after the foundation of P. R. China, the increasing urban population, industrialisation and urbanisation, the public housing system posed a huge burden for the central government. With limited fiscal budget the central government could hardly provide enough housing for urban residents. By 1978 there had been a serious housing shortage in big cities. The average living space of urban residents reduced from 4.5 sq.m/ capita in 1949 to 3.6 sq.m/ capita in 1978 and it was estimated that there was a shortage of 8.69 million households around the Chinese cities, which was 47.5 percent of the overall urban households (Hou etc, 1999).

To relieve the government's pressure in 1980, Deng Xiaoping<sup>8</sup> launched a series of urban housing reforms which gradually abolished the public housing system and built a marketised and comprehensive housing provision system. The reform could be divided into five phases: between 1979 and 1985 the central government firstly established some policies as 'tests' to encourage urban residents to purchase housing by themselves. Commercial residential housing was for the first time open to citizens to buy at full price. To promote the selling of commercial housing, the policy was that government pays a third, the individual buyers pay a third and their employers pay a third. Between 1986 and 1990, the central government began to raise the rent of public housing to promote private housing purchase. Between 1991 and 1993 the central government further raised the rent of public housing and controlled the subsidy on public housing. On the other hand preferential policies were established to reduce the price of commercial housing. Between 1994 and 1998 a housing fund system was established to strengthen the personal ability to purchase private housing. In this system the enterprises did not have to provide housing for their employees for free. Rather in all kinds of enterprise employees had to separate a part of their wage as 'housing fund' which would be used as deposit when they purchase private housing. Since 1998 public housing has been gradually replaced by commercial housing and the housing fund system has been promoted. More housing policies were established to make sure more families with low income could purchase private housing. Meanwhile, a

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<sup>8</sup> Deng Xiao-ping, the 1981 年至 1990 年担任中央军事委员会主席, 1982 年至 1987 年担任中共中央顾问委员会主任, 1978 年至 1983 年担任全国政协主席。

new welfare housing system was developed in addition to cater for the families with low income and difficulty in purchasing commercial housing.

So far China has developed different kinds of urban housing for families with different income levels. Commercial residential housing mainly catered to the families with moderate or higher incomes. It was developed by real estate enterprises and could be traded freely on the market. Policy-guided housing included houses for relocated households from shanty towns (hui-qian-fang), price-restricted commercial residential houses (liang-xian-fang), public rent houses and employer-built houses. These were mainly designed for families with lower or moderate income and had difficulty in purchasing houses independently. Social housing including low-rent houses (lian-zu-fang) and affordable houses (jing-ji-shi-yong-fang) was mainly aimed at those urban families with a low income. Those houses were fixed at comparatively at low rent. However, many cities are still confronted with a serious housing shortage.

### (3) Social insurance system reform

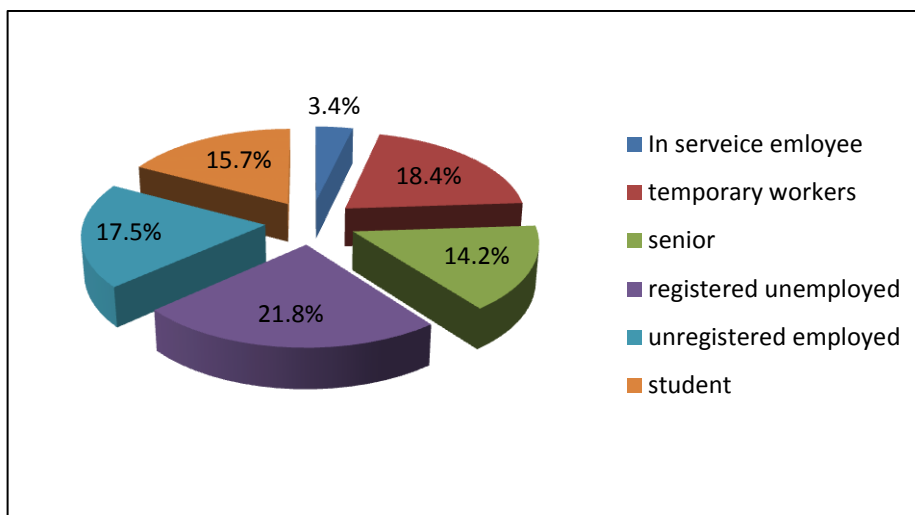
Before the 1978 reform, social insurance including pension, medical care and occupational injury was provided by the government according to the state-owned enterprises. As a matter of fact only the employees of state-owned sectors could enjoy the social welfare for free. On the other hand the state-owned enterprises developed their own welfare system along with their main business. For the ‘Three NOs’ which referred to the people with no working ability, no family and no income, the government distributed a small amount of cash benefits for them. Since 1978, the central government gradually cut off financial tie with the state-owned enterprises and stopped providing welfare for the employees and cancelled the state sectors’ compulsory obligations to provide welfare services. Meanwhile, many state-owned enterprises gradually cut off their social functions and cancelled their own welfare system. Under this context, the Chinese government began to develop a new welfare provision system in which more actors were involved in delivering social welfare

and more members could be covered by social insurance. In order to decrease its financial burden in social welfare, local governments reduced their share of financial provision in many welfare programs and devolved part of the responsibility to individuals, enterprises and social organisations. Deng and Ye (2000) concluded the shift of the government's responsibilities in four aspects including:

- regulation-maker: to formulate the rules and set basic standards for welfare projects;
- administrator: in charge of most welfare projects, and supervising the behaviour of related actors in other welfare projects;
- financial provider: although on a reduced level, the governmental budget is still the most important source for some welfare programmes;
- financial guarantor: in some welfare projects such as social insurance, the government is still responsible for guaranteeing financial viability should the system get into difficulties, even though it is no longer responsible for normal payments.

For the increasing unemployed and low-income families, the government established a 'minimum living allowance standard' and individuals and families with lower income than the standard could enjoy a government subsidy. At the end of 2009, there were 11.411 million households and 23.456 million urban residents that received the minimum subsistence allowance. The total expenditure of minimum subsistence allowance at all levels reached 48.21 billion Yuan throughout the year, of which the subsidy, from the central fiscal budget was 35.91 billion Yuan, accounting for 74.5 percent of all expenditures of the minimum subsistence allowance. Among the persons granted with the urban minimum living allowance, the registered unemployed persons took a largest proportion of 21.8 percent (Wang, 2011).

Chart 2-1 Urban minimum living allowance receivers in China, 2009



Source: Wang, G. T. (2011). *The state of China's cities 2010/2011*. Foreign Language Press, Beijing.

As the state-owned enterprises cut their welfare provision to a large extent since the 1990s, local welfare-related social organisations (NGO) began to develop with government support to take over increasing responsibilities in terms of the elderly, migrants, females and other disadvantaged social groups' care. At national level, some national and international charity societies and foundations were expanding to provide social services including poverty relief, education, medical care, etc. At the end of 2009, there were 38,060 elderly social welfare institutions nationwide, with 2.662 million beds and 2.109 million adopted persons (Wang, 2011).

In summary, this section has presented the Chinese central government's attempts to reform urban public administrative policies in response to the ensuing social conflicts. It has pointed out the main government rationality was to hand over welfare and social insurance expenditures and administration, which used to be delivered by the central government and state-owned enterprises, to local governments and to devolve a part of responsibility to

private sectors, social sectors and individuals. This shift in policy direction directly led to the change of urban governance system and explained the emergence of community in China as a political concept. The following section will discuss the specific meaning and status of community in China's context and how it is promoted by the central government according to a 'community construction' movement.

## 2.4 The community construction movement in China

The previous section has presented the urban policy reforms in the area of employment, housing and social insurance. All these reforms called for a new administration system at the grassroots level to replace the socialist Dan-wei to implement new urban policies and deliver better welfare to urban residents. Within this context, the term 'community' (she-qu) quickly came into public view in the 1980s as the government's political solution. It must be clarified that in China the term 'community' has a quite different meaning from that in a western liberal context. It is highly political and its meaning and function is linked closely with the government's policy practices. Therefore it is important to understand how 'community' is defined by the Chinese government, what function it is given by the government and how it is promoted by the government with specific governing rationale. This section will discuss the emergence of 'community' and the development of the 'community construction' movement in China, with a focus on the political nature of community and the government rationale behind the 'community construction' movement.

### 2.4.1. Community (She-qu) as a political concept in China's context

The term 'community' was introduced to China by scholars in Minguo Period (1912-1949) as a sociological concept. In the 1930s, the first generation of sociological scholars imported this concept from the Chicago School and translated it as 'She-qu' (社区) into

Chinese (Wu, 1935; Fei, 1939). The Chinese the word of 'she' means 'society' and 'qu' means 'area'. 'she-qu' refers to a both sociological concept and a geographical concept. The understanding of the concept in that period was clearly influenced by Tonnies' (1887: 34) research which defined community (Gemeinschaft) as 'groupings based on feelings of togetherness and on mutual bonds, which are felt as a goal to be kept up, their members being means for this goal' but put more focus on its spatial characteristics. As Fei (1939) defined, 'community' referred to 'a group of people which is geographically related to other according to genetic connection or social organisations'. Community research in this period was mainly carried out in rural settlements with emphasis on ethnographic studies (Yang, 1933; Wu, 1936; Fei, 1939; Lin, 1947).

When the Chinese Communist Party came into power in 1949, the central government banned sociology for its supposed opposition to Marxism and the vocabulary of 'She-qu' disappeared from public discourse for over 30 years. During this period (or Socialist Central-planned Economy Era, 1949-1978) the Chinese Communist Party adopted different administrative approaches for urban and rural residents: in urban areas the state implemented its control at the grassroots level according to state-owned enterprises and the basic administrative unit was the enterprise-constructed neighbourhood. In rural areas a grassroots administration system called People's Commune (ren-min-gong-she) was organised by local officials and worked as the basic unit to organise rural residents' work and public lives. The dual administration system underpinned the differentiation of the neighbourhood form between the urban and rural areas.

The 1978 economic reforms launched a radical and long-lasting impact on the grassroots administration system in both urban and rural areas. In cities a new neighbourhood-level administration system began to replace state-owned enterprises to deliver public services and social welfare to urban residents (Wang, 2009; Zhang, 2009). In the 1980s the National Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA) re-adopted the term 'she-qu' in government welfare programs. The term 'she-qu' was understood as 'a geographical area with clear



boundary and a street-level administrative institution which takes charge of the public affairs in this area' (Hua, 1999). In 2000, the term 'community' was officially defined by MCA as 'a social collective formed by people who reside within a defined and bounded urban districts' while the territory of community was demarcated as 'the area under the jurisdiction of the enlarged Residents Committee.' ( 'Minzhengbu guanyu zai quanguo tuijin chengshi shequ jianshede yijian', The ministry of civil affairs' opinions on promoting urban community construction across the country, 2000). As a matter of fact, the term She-qu is highly political and usually refers to an administrative unit in China's context:

- Firstly, it refers to a specific administrative unit with clear geographical boundaries.
- More importantly, it refers to a street-level administration system.

David Bray (2006) concluded the characteristics of She-qu as following: first, the nature and functions of She-qu is determined by the government; secondly, it would perform a largely administrative role; thirdly, each She-qu has a clearly demarcated space (Bray, 2006). In a nutshell, in China the term 'She-qu' referred to a concrete neighbourhood-level administrative unit in urban areas (Fei, 1939; Xu, 2001; Bray, 2006; Wang, 2009). It had a clear boundary and specific institutions which took charge of it.

#### 2.4.2 The ambivalent identity of the community administration system

In most Chinese cities there is a two-tier community administration system which consists of the Street Office (Jie-dao-ban-shi-chu) and the Residents' Committee (ju-min-wei-yuan-hui). This system works between the local governments and citizens and is regarded as an important tool to implement state control on society. In law, this system was established to promote self-governance of citizens but in many circumstances, it works in a very bureaucratic way (see table 2- 3 and table 2-4).

Table 2-3 The ambivalent function of the community administration system

Functions	The community administration system	
	Street Office	Residents Committee
In Law	<p>(1) Help municipal government and district government implement correspondent policies.</p> <p>(2) Supervise Residents Committees with their daily work.</p> <p>(3) Reflect the multitude's opinions to higher level government.</p>	Organise self-governance and coordinate with the street office
In Reality	Very comprehensive functions. Holding responsibility for community economy, employment, safety, public health, welfare, environmental maintenance, political stability and many other community issues.	<p>Accomplish all kinds of political assignments deployed by the Street Office</p> <p>Organise community cultural, sport and health events</p> <p>Organise community-based self-governing projects</p>

Table 2-4 The ambivalent identity of the community administration system

Identity	Street Office	Residents Committee
In Law	Government delegated organ, not a level of government.	Mass organisation with the members democratically elected by residents
In Reality	Have most government functions and is usually recognised as a level of government	Often described as the 'leg' of the Street Office. Usually financially control by the Street Office. The key

		members are usually designated by the Street Office and the election process is highly political
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The ‘Street Office’ (Jie-dao-ban-shi-chu) was a street-level government delegated organisation which was firstly established 1954. The official institutional functions of the street office defined by the 1954 *Urban Street Office Organisation Regulation* were: (1) Help municipal government and district government implement correspondent policies. (2) Supervise Residents Committees with their daily work. (3) Reflect the multitude’s opinions to higher level government. However in reality, the Street Office was granted comprehensive government functions during the last two decades and ‘from an analytical perspective it stands as a part of the party-state’ (Read, 2003:55). As the street offices developed quickly as a street-level regime, in many aspects they behaved as a level of government.

The ‘Residents Committee’ (Ju-min-wei-yuan-hui) on the other hand, referred to a neighbourhood-based resident self-governing organisation. According to the 1954 *Urban Street Office Organisation Regulation*, the Residents Committee was a ‘mass organisation founded by residents and has its members democratically elected by the multitude’ to ‘coordinate with street office to implement policies and accomplish relevant work targets’. The members of a Residents Committee work full time as ‘representative of residents’ and should be democratically elected by all the community members. According to the 1954 regulation, the Residents Committee was supposed to be independent from the Street Office and to represent residents’ interests. The relationship between the Street Office and the Residents Committee was in principle equal and the Residents Committee was not responsible to any government department. However in reality, the Residents Committees were usually financially controlled by the Street Office and had to accomplish many political tasks apportioned by the Street Office in their daily work. In many literatures RC was described as a ‘leg’ of the statutory government system (Zhu, 1999; Kang, 2007; Li, 2004; Zhang, 2009).

In summary, China's community administration system has an ambivalent identity between the government and citizen. Although in the legislative system it is supposed to represent the citizens' interest, in reality it usually works as a bureaucratic system and involves a considerable degree of government control (the state control according to the community administration system will be further explored in Chapter 5).

#### 2.4.3 Community construction movement: promoting the street-level administration system throughout China

To better implement new urban policies on employment, housing and social insurance, the national Ministry of Civil Affairs (BCA) launched a 'community construction' movement (she-qu-jian-she) in 1991 to promote the She-qu system throughout the state and to develop it into a comprehensive administration system. In the 1990s, focus was firstly put on empowering street-level governments in big-scale cities and granting them with service functions according to the government's welfare programs. In December 1994, the Ministry of Civil Affairs held a national conference for exchanging experiences on community services. Community service was officially defined at the conference as:

*Welfare services for residents that are established with the initiative and financial support of the government to meet the multiple needs of residents in the community, based on the street, township and the Residents' Committee [levels], which organise and provide services through mobilising various resources of the community. Community services consist of welfare and convenience services, and are the important part of the social insurance and social services system. (Ministry of Civil Affairs, 1995: 12)*

According to the definition, it was clear that the government intended to encourage the street-level governments to explore local resources and become more financially

independent. Apart from social welfare, the issues of elderly care, migrant administration and disadvantaged group relief were delegated as basic community services, too. In the 1990s, the rising unemployment rate became a tough problem for the central government and ‘solving employment for urban residents’ was designated as another important content of community service. In 1995, the central government launched a national Reemployment Program (zai-jiu-ye-gong-chen) to encourage urban laid-off workers and unemployed residents to become self-employed and actively explore ways to become re-employed. Community was chosen as the main channel to deliver government support including lower tax rates, special bank loans and easy access to government grants to the unemployed residents. Meanwhile, the municipal and district governments gradually retreated from their responsibilities in delivering social services and devolved more practical responsibilities to street-level governments (Xu & Chow, 2006).

In 1999, the Ministry of Civil Affairs launched a pilot program to promote the She-qu system in small and middle-scale cities across China. 26 cities participated at national level (see appendix) and over 100 cities participated at provincial level. One year later, the State Council published official instructions to emphasise the importance of She-qu system and required local governments to ‘reform urban grassroots administration system, enhance She-qu functions, consolidate the organisational and mass base of the Communist Party in urban management, strengthen political power at primary level and promote self-governing organisation construction, expand grassroots democracy, maintain social stability and coordinate urban economic and social development’ (Minzhengbu guanyu zai quanguo tuijin chengshi shequ jianshede yijian’.The ministry of civil affairs’ opinions on promoting urban community construction across the country, 2000).

Since the 21st century, the She-qu system has been further promoted while the central government began to devolve to street-level governments more fiscal independence and decision making rights. In the early 2000s cities around the state began to implement large-scale institutional reforms which aimed to expand the scale and functions of street-level governments in order to implement more assignments from higher levels of government. Besides delivering basic community service, the street-level government now has the

responsibilities of developing community economy, attracting investment, conducting local events, solving social conflicts, promoting local culture, organising local party construction and many other public affairs. The burden of grassroots administration was gradually passed down to street-level governments. Meanwhile, the housing reform since the 1990s contributed to more diverse and mixed urban neighbourhood forms. Apart from the compound units (dan-wei-da-yuan) which were built by the state-owned enterprises in Dan-wei era, there were newly constructed commercial residential neighbourhoods, traditional city centre neighbourhoods which were formed before the foundation of P. R. China, urban peripheral neighbourhoods which had mixed residents from both urban and rural areas and multi-functional neighbourhoods which included residential housing, commercial and other types of housing (Li, 2009). The She-qu systems in different cities and different types of neighbourhood developed into diverse forms.

In summary, the term ‘She-qu’ is defined by the Chinese government as a political concept with specific rationalities. Firstly, it refers to a specific urban administrative unit with clear geographical boundaries. More importantly, it refers to a street-level administration system. The community administration system has an ambivalent identity between the government and citizen. Although in the legislative system it is supposed to represent the citizens’ interest, in reality it works more like a bureaucratic system. Therefore differing from the western understanding of community, the concept of ‘She-qu’ itself involves a considerable degree of government control. The main government rationale to promote the She-qu system around China is to establish an administration system to strengthen state control in urban neighbourhoods. The following section will discuss the Chinese central government’s new governing strategy of ‘building a harmonious society’ which further emphasises the role of She-qu in maintaining social order. It will further explore how She-qu is regarded by the central government as an important technology to implement state control at the grassroots level.

## 2.5. She-qu as a government technology to ‘Build a Harmonious Society’

To cope with ensuing social conflicts aroused by China's high-speed urbanisation and social transition, in 2006 general secretary Hu Jintao announced the central government's vision of 'building a harmonious society', which aimed to re-inaugurate social morality, emphasise individual social responsibility, mobilise participation in certain areas while still maintaining firm, centralized control (Geis, 2009:76). On the Sixth Plenum of the 16<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of the Communist Party<sup>9</sup> Hu recognized the increasing social conflicts in China and pointed out that 'in the new century we are confronting with unprecedented chances and challenges. ... Most particularly, we are now in the pivotal stage of economic and social reform. The profound transform of social structure will inevitably bring about enormous vitality as well as various conflicts for our development. ... We must insist on taking economic development as our central task meanwhile protruding the importance of building a socialist harmonious society'. He insisted that 'generally our society is harmonious' and attributed the factors that jeopardize social harmony as 'unbalanced development between cities and rural areas, environmental stress posed by huge populations, conflicts in social employment, education, medical care, social insurance and public security, imperfect legal system, dis-honesty and moral failure among some people, ill-adaption of some cadres and leaders to the new social environment, corruption in certain arena, and penetration of hostile forces has threatened national security and social stability.'<sup>10</sup>

Apart from the environmental and institution-related problems, a noticeable emphasis on the problematisation of the government is one that attributes threats to society as caused not only by sabotage by 'enemies', but also by personal shortcoming and moral failures among civilians and government officials within China's society (Leung, Yip, etc. 2012).

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<sup>9</sup> 中国共产党第十六届中央委员会第六次全体会议

<sup>10</sup> 目前，我国社会总体上是和谐的。但是，也存在不少影响社会和谐的矛盾和问题，主要是：城乡、区域、经济社会发展很不平衡，人口资源环境压力加大；就业、社会保障、收入分配、教育、医疗、住房、安全生产、社会治安等方面关系群众切身利益的问题比较突出；体制机制尚不完善，民主法制还不健全；一些社会成员诚信缺失、道德失范，一些领导干部的素质、能力和作风与新形势新任务的要求还不适应；一些领域的腐败现象仍然比较严重；敌对势力的渗透破坏活动危及国家安全和社会稳定。

Following this rationality, a principle of ‘building a harmonious society’ is established as follows:

*‘The principle in building a harmonious society include: adherence to a people-centred’ (yi-ren-wei-ben) approach, putting the maximisation of benefits for the people and the country as the starting and standing point of our work.’<sup>11</sup>*

This significant change in vocabulary from ‘mass’ (qun-zhong, means the collective characteristic) to ‘people’ (ren, emphasising the individual characteristic) demonstrated the government’s new work orientation which targeted ‘self’ as a new area of policy intervention. ‘Strengthening the national moral standard, cultivating responsible citizenship, promoting harmonious interpersonal relationships’<sup>12</sup> were listed as the government working objectives by 2020. In the plenum Hu further elaborated the working contents of moral crusade as ‘actively advocate patriotism, collectivism, dedication, comity and socialist values on honor and disgrace, strengthen people’s faith and confidence in Communist Party’s leadership and socialism, foster civilized social atmosphere... oppose money worship, hedonism and extreme individualism, promote the part of traditional morality which could benefit social harmony...’.

Meanwhile, another principle of building a harmonious society is described as to emphasise the individual’s social responsibilities and to mobilise public participation under the Party state’s leadership:

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<sup>11</sup>必须坚持以人为本。始终把最广大人民的根本利益作为党和国家一切工作的出发点和落脚点，实现好、维护好、发展好最广大人民的根本利益，不断满足人民日益增长的物质文化需要，做到发展为了人民、发展依靠人民、发展成果由人民共享，促进人的全面发展。

<sup>12</sup>到2020年，构建社会主义和谐社会的目标和主要任务是：...全民族的思想道德素质，科学文化素质和健康素质，良好道德风尚，和谐人际关系进一步形成...



*'All social members should work together to build a harmonious society under the Communist Party's leadership. The Communist Party will continue playing a crucial leadership role and must insist on scientific government, democratic government and legal government. We should unite all the power we could unite and mobilise all the members we could mobilise. Building a harmonious society is the responsibility of every social member and the outcome should be enjoyed by everybody.'*

In the light of the above, social morality, individual social responsibility and wider participation within the CPP's control are the main rationalities of the 'building a harmonious society' strategy. Transferring them into action, Hu Jintao deployed concrete assignments at the grassroots level by concluding that 'we should extensively launch all kinds of movement in the name of 'Building a harmonious society' at the grassroots level, especially at neighbourhood and family level. We should strengthen individual, enterprises and social organisations' sense of social responsibility and actively involve them into our grassroots work.'<sup>13</sup> She-qu was targeted as a crucial arena to implement relevant policies. Zeng Qinghong, the former vice-chairman of P. R. China (2003-2008) later re-emphasised the importance of implementing the 'Building a harmonious society' at She-qu level in 2007 as following:

*'Community is the cell of society. The harmony of community is the foundation of social harmony. We should regard building harmonious communities as the access point of our work to build a harmonious society. To build harmonious communities we must focus on serving residents, promoting self-governing, maintaining social stability, launching socialist cultural activities, strengthening the grassroots leadership and try our best to*

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<sup>13</sup> 广泛广泛开展和谐创建活动，形成人人促进和谐的局面。着眼于增强公民、企业、各种组织的社会责任，把和谐社区、和谐家庭等和谐创建活动同群众性精神文明创建活动结合起来，突出思想教育内涵，广泛吸引群众参与，推动形成我为人人、人人为我的社会氛围。

*construct urban communities into well managed, perfectly serviced, beautiful and civilized social units in order to lay a firm foundation for building a socialist harmonious society.*<sup>14</sup>

The central government's 'building a harmonious society' strategy articulated a new working orientation for the community construction movement. Besides perfecting the bureaucratic administration system to strengthen state control at the grassroots level, more emphasis is given to moral cultivation and promoting wider participation from NGOs, the private sector and citizens to develop a 'govern-at-a-distance' administrative mechanism. As the importance of the She-qu for building a harmonious society is repeatedly emphasised by the central government, street-level governments' 'community construction' practices are inevitably a principal concern of this study. The following section will attempt to explore how the community construction movement is discussed in the current literature.

## 2.6 Academic discussions of the community construction movement

In the previous sections of this chapter I argued that the community construction movement was closely related to China's specific context of social transition and had explicit political meanings. Within this context, most relevant literature on the community construction movement is concerned with the change of wider social context, especially the change of urban administration system from the Dan-wei system to the She-qu system. From the 1980s to the late 1990s, the main concern of Chinese community literature was the government's institutional reforms on the She-qu system, especially the roles of the street-level government play in community construction. Since the early 2000s, a new concern of Chinese community literature has been the increasingly active roles that social and private

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<sup>14</sup>曾庆红在谈到构建社会主义和谐社会时强调，‘社区是社会的细胞，社区和谐是社会和谐的基础。构建社会主义和谐社会应当把构建和谐社区作为重要切入点。加强和谐社区建设要坚持以服务群众为重点，以居民自治为方向，以维护稳定为基础，以文化活动为载体，以党的领导和党的建设为关键，努力把城市社区建设成为管理有序、服务完善、环境优美、文明祥和的新型社区，为构建社会主义和谐社会奠定坚实基础。’

sectors play in the community construction movement. This tendency is undoubtedly, driven by the central government's strategy to widen public participation in order to 'build a harmonious society', as mentioned in the last section. This section will discuss how government practices and the non-government actors' growth are respectively concerned with the community construction movement by the academia. It will also point out the limits of the current literature.

### 2.6.1 Literature on institutional changes

In the 1980s and 1990s, the central government put the emphasis of the community construction movement on establishing She-qu as a street-level regime and improving its government functions. At this stage, the broad context of the urban administration system change from the Dan-wei system to the She-qu system was been widely discussed in Chinese community literature. Much research was carried out around the topic of institutional reforms of the She-qu system and concern was given to the devolution of power from the central government to local governments and street-level governments. The street-level government was believed to replace the Dan-wei and to play an increasingly important role in urban governance in the future (Hua, 1999; Yang, 2008; Cai & Lu, 2007; Wang, 2009). Meanwhile, the power shift between the Dan-wei system and the She-qu system widely discussed, too. Hua (1999) reviewed the changing role of street-level governments in urban administration system since the foundation of P. R. China. He concluded that for China the urban community development was closely related to the revival of street-level political power in response to the collapsing of the Dan-wei administration system. Zhu (1997: 142) further pointed out that the transition from the Dan-wei system to the She-qu system was actually the transition of the state's approach of control on society from the state-owned enterprises to street-level governments. Yang (2008) analysed the devolution of power from Dan-wei and the central government to street-level governments and claimed that the newly formed neighbourhood-based social units – community – were going to play an increasingly important role in solving various

social problems within China's social transition. It has been widely believed that the community system would inevitably replace the Dan-wei system and become the basic unit of Chinese society in the future (Xu, 2001; He, 2005, Yang, 2008; Wang, 2009).

## 2.6.2 Literature on the participation of social actors

Since the early 2000s, the increasing involvement of non-government actors in the community administration has led to discussions and attention to the roles different actors play in the new governing pattern (Xue, 2002; Li, 2004; Cui, 2006; Pan, 2006; Zhao, 2008; Zhou, 2008; Song, 2012). This tendency is undoubtedly driven by the central government's strategy to widen participation from the private and social sectors in providing community service. The community-based organisations have been discussed due to the increasingly important role they play in delivering social welfare, community care and other public services. Yan (2011) claimed that China was in the key period of social transition and many social problems could be resolved according to the community administration system. In the areas of migrant assistance, elderly care, youth education, poverty relief, public health and social welfare there was huge need for professional help from NGOs. Therefore delivering social services by NGOs was considered as the most promising orientation of community service in the future. Hou (2005) analysed the development of community-based organisation in Shijingshan District of Beijing and pointed out that in the current administration system a community with only 5-9 Residents' Committee members had to administer 1500-3000 families, which was a huge burden for the government. In the past decade the community-based organisations including elderly association, women's association and disabled associations organised abundant community events to improve the communication between neighbours and delivered various services to community members. With these community-based organisations, residents had more channels to express their opinions and resolve conflicts with the government. The community-based organisation played a role of 'mediator' and 'bridge' between residents and the government. In addition, the community-based organisation had a strong ability to mobilise residents to participate

in community affairs and this was an important step to promote the grassroots democratic system (Derleth, 2002; Hou, 2005). Cui (2006) claimed that the charity work NGOs carried out in the community was a precious moral power in the current society and could facilitate the forming of a positive moral order.

Some scholars explored the development of community-based organisations from the perspective of social capital (Benewick et al., 2004; Wu & Yang, 2006; Gu & Zhang, 2008; Yan, 2010; Chen & Lu, 2009; Neal & Perkins, 2011) and pointed out that the community-based organisations played an important role in building trust and communications among community members, which were important factors of community social capital aggregation.

With more acknowledgements on the importance of community-based organisations, the impediment of the development of community-based organisations in the current institution has been explored (He, 2005; Hou, 2005; Cui, 2006; Zhang, 2009). Street-level governments' administrative interference, lack of dependence on decision making rights and excessive reliance on government for finance and other resources were the most criticised factors (Chen, 1999; Xiang, 2006; Lu & Chen 2008; Chen, 2011). Other restraining factors include lack of authority, poor personnel quality and loose disciplines (Cheng, 2005; He, 2005).

### 2.6.3 Limits and gap:

The political significance of community construction for China's social transition has been widely realised by both governments and researchers. Relevant discussions put much emphasis on the government's attempts of institutional reforms at the grassroots level and tried to explore an ideal approach for China. Recent research gave more concerns to the newly-

involved actors including the private sector, community-based organisations, residents and other stakeholders as collaboration across sectors has been promoted in increasing areas. Experiences in the last decade proved that community construction did not only mean perfecting the government's institutional structure, but involving social and economic sectors to develop a more collaborative administrative mechanism. However, there is still a lack of detailed empirical research exploring the changing dynamic of power relations between the government and the other actors. As Ding (2006) stated, the diversification of interest group in community would inevitably lead to more frequent and complicated 'game' between the government and other sectors therefore balancing the interest among stakeholders was the key factor to building 'harmonious' communities. Many scholars have pointed out that the government should devolve more power to economic and social sectors within the collaborations (He, 2005; Cui, 2006; Zhou, 2008) but little concern has been given to how power was actually exercised in these collaborations. This gap, 'is impeding us from exploring the important change of interest pattern and power relations, which is the core content of community construction' (Wang, 2009).

## 2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the broad context of the community construction movement in China. To conclude, the radical change of economic policy direction in 1978 triggered a massive and fast urbanisation process in China. During the last thirty-five years, the economic and social structure underwent a series of radical changes and cities developed with amazing speed. The accelerating urbanisation and diversification of the urban social structure has pushed the original urban welfare system towards a series of reforms in the employment system, housing system and social security system. According to these reforms, most of the social services which used to be delivered by the government and state-owned enterprises (Dan-wei) and could only be enjoyed by unit workers had been handed over to street-level governments and aimed to cover more social group. She-qu became a new administrative unit to deliver various social services. Meanwhile, the original social order which was based on state-owned enterprises was broken with the bankruptcy of

the state-owned sectors and neighbourhood became a new administrative unit which was utilised by the central government to maintain social order (Bray, 2006).

It has been repeatedly emphasised that the development of She-qu was closely related to China's specific context of social transition and had explicit political meanings. Since the late 1990s, developing the She-qu system was listed as the most important government work to improve the urban administration system. The 'community construction movement' was vigorously promoted nationwide by the central government to encourage explorations on innovative approaches of community governance. Generally speaking, the strategy of 'community construction' was proposed by the Chinese central government with the rationality of (1) establishing a new neighbourhood-based social order in cities which could replace the collapsing Dan-wei –based social order; (2) cultivating a comprehensive administration system and strengthening the state power at the grassroots level and (3) developing a social administrative pattern which involved more non-government power and reduce local governments' burden on social service and welfare delivering. The central government's 'building a harmonious society' strategy (2005) once again emphasised the importance of community construction in maintaining social order and implementing government control on the grassroots society.

Relevant Chinese community literature explores the community construction from both institutional and actor-centred aspects. From the institutional perspective abundant research was carried out to illustrate context transition in terms of the urban administration system from the Dan-wei to the She-qu and the rising role of the street-level government. In recent years non-governmental actors became active in the community administration and attracted more academic discussions. From the actor-centred perspective some research gave interest to the increasingly important roles of the community-based organisations, residents and other interest groups. However, there is still a lack of empirical study exploring how street-level governments interacted with social actors in the community construction practices. It is necessary to give more attention to the street-level government's community construction practices and to explore the changing power

relations in this process. The next chapter will turn to the theoretical understanding of the Chinese government's practices within the transitional statehood and it will build a theoretical framework to research the street-level government's community construction practices.



## Chapter 3 Theoretical Framework

### 3.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to introduce a theoretical perspective to analyse the Chinese government's community construction practices. In order to develop this perspective, this chapter firstly reviews relevant Chinese political literature about China's changing statehood and urban neighbourhood as a field to research China's changing state-society relations. The following section reviews the literature on China's community governance and explores how the western concept of 'governance' is applied in China. The third section of this chapter introduces Foucault's perspective of 'governmentality' and explores why and how it can be applied in this study to better understand community governance in China. The last part of this chapter builds an analytical framework of this study based on the core concepts of the governmentality framework.

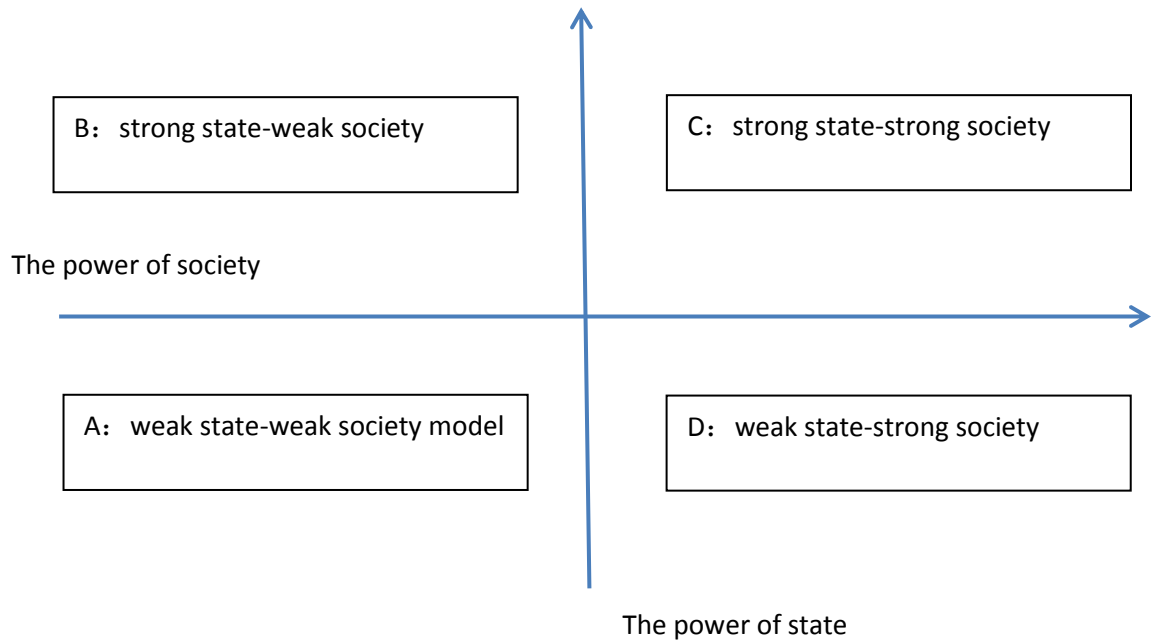
### 3.2 Community as a field to understand China's state-society relations

The 1978 reforms opened up a new stage for research in politics and social transition in China. By the early 1980s Harry Harding already noted that the studies of contemporary Chinese politics had shifted their focus, from state socialism, followed by the Cultural Revolution, to the performance of governments in the Post-Mao era (Harding, 1984) and 'in place of the Soviet and American inspired approaches, ...scholars turned to models of state-society relations drawn from the European tradition' (Perry, 1994). Issues including transformation of statehood, development of civil society and the 'socialist market economy' entered the central stage of Chinese study and the causes, characteristics and

consequences of those political issues were frequently analysed in the sphere of ‘state-society relations’ (Kelliher, 1992; Gui, 2007; Zhang, 2009).

Then, what is the state-society relation? Or more essentially, what is the ‘state’ and what is the ‘civil society’? These questions have been widely discussed by western theorists as the underpinning of state-society discussions. The first kind of view reduces both state and society into a series of ‘actors’ or ‘institutions’ and refers the state-society relations to the interactions between the tangible public institutions and social actors. This kind of view derives from Max Webers’s political sociology which defines the concept of ‘state’ as ‘a hierarchical bureaucratic apparatus’ (Kohli, 2004). The traditional approach with this ontology presumes a sharp analytical distinction between the state and society and treats them as ‘opposite’ to each other. This state-society dichotomy approach is widely applied in China in the analysis of the changing statehood. Many scholars viewed the 1978 economic reform which abandoned the socialist planned economy and embraced neo-liberal market economy as the watershed of Chinese state-society relations, with the essential question of ‘where is China’s statehood transferring to?’ A most popular perspective to talk about the state-society relation is to follow the traditional criteria which divides the state-society relation into four ‘paradigms’ from the macro view as follows (see Chart 3-1). Under these criteria, the Mao-era China is usually classified as having a ‘strong state-weak society’ statehood, which was the worst combination for the growth of civil power. Since the 1978 reform, the proliferation of private sector and social organisations were widely viewed as the emerging and growing up of social power which ‘challenged’ the sovereign state. Meanwhile, as the representatives of state, the governments adopted a series of political strategies to adjust their relationship with social actors. Under this context, much research gradually simplified the state-society relations as the ‘public-private sectors relations’ and restrained this topic in a narrow scope.

Chart 3-1 The paradigms of state-society relation



This paradigm of state-society relations has been challenged as the interactions between governments and social actors became more diverse and the boundary between state and society blurred. ‘Work in numerous fields, from public policy and public administration to local governance, political culture and economic sociology, reveals important dimensions of state-society relations that can rarely be fully grasped by means of the traditional state-society dichotomy’ (Sellers, 2010). Moreover, the idea that ‘governments represent the state and social institutions represent society’ has proven to be unable to explain many power interactions in contemporary society and the question of ‘what is state and what is society’ came back into view. As Perry (1994:707) claimed that, ‘the traditional paradigm of the state-society relations whether interpreted as a homogenised society facing a uniform state (Kelliher, 1992), as a strengthening society undermining a discredited state or even a complex interweaving of state and society. Terms such as ‘state’ and ‘society’ are simply

too general to capture the enormous variation that differentiates one Chinese region –or level of government – from another.’

Based on these critiques, recent research on China’s social transition gradually shifted its emphasis away from broadly modelling China’s state-society relations and gave more concern to the complexity of social movements and different levels of government’s practices. The state-society relationship was explored in broader and more multiple dimensions according to more detailed and micro-level empirical cases. In the area of public administration, neighbourhood became a new field to research the state-society nexus as the street-level government became increasingly powerful and actively launched interaction with the social actors and citizens in the community construction movement. As discussed in Chapter 2, the development of community is closely related to China’s new urban policies on employment, housing and social insurance. Community is the field where various new policies were ‘tested’ and local governments implement intimate face-to-face communications with citizens and other social actors, which makes it a good sphere to reflect the dynamic power relations between the government and different social actors.

Meanwhile, the ambivalent status of community between the state and society aroused a lot of academic concern on the state’s power exercise in neighbourhood. Much community literature described community as the ‘frontier’ of the state-society interactions in China and took it as an entry point to research the state’s control over the Chinese grassroots society (Gui, 2007; Wang, 2009; Chen, 2010; Yue, 2010). Relevant literature contributed three kinds of academic views on the state power at the neighbourhood level. The first kind of view thought that compared to socialist China, the current Chinese government was losing its ability to launch mobilisation at the neighbourhood level. Meanwhile, as the Dan-wei system disappeared and the She-qu system developed in China, the state’s control on society will further be weakened in the future. Pan’s (2006) research on urban neighbourhood argued that the community construction movement was shifting the function of the Residents’ Committee from a bureaucratic institution to a service provider. Lin’s (2003) research further pointed out that as the street-level government changed its

governing mode, the Residents' Committee will eventually be independent from the government and become a real self-governing organisation. In that case, there will be civil power growing at the neighbourhood level beyond the state control.

The second kind of view on the other hand, argued that the Chinese government was actually trying to penetrate its power into the grassroots society according to the community construction movement. State control was demonstrated in more invisible ways in this process. This kind of view is expressed in much research on the street-level government's 'regime construction' practices (Xu, 2001; Li, 2002; Liu, 2005). Zhu (1997) analysed the change of state power in a Shanghai neighbourhood since 1949 and identified that the street-level government consolidated its power through the nationwide 'grassroots regime construction' (ji-ceng-zheng-quan-jian-she) movement. The so-called governing pattern of 'small government, big society' did not come into reality. Rather, the state shifted its way to implement control from the Dan-wei system to the She-qu system and enhanced its power within the community construction movement. Liu (2005) further argued that according to establishing a street-level regime, the Chinese central government successfully build a closer link between local governments and citizens. The hierarchical administration system in socialist China was replaced by a regional administration network in this process and the state managed to extend its power in the grassroots society.

Based on these two opposite visions, Zhu (1997) attempted to further expound the ambivalent interactions between the Chinese state and society in neighbourhood. He argued that in Chinese neighbourhood, the state-society relations are implemented in complex and dynamic ways in which we can both see the state penetrating into and at the same time, withdrawing from society. To be specific, the state kept a balanced and dynamic relationship with society in neighbourhood. The state still has frequent contact with society but the relationship between them became loose and was maintained in more diverse ways rather than mere direct control. At the same time, the state has not managed to totally penetrate into the grassroots society yet. Therefore the government was eager to strengthen

its ability to launch social mobilisation in neighbourhood at the moment (Zhu, 1997: 107). Zhu's research to some extent mentioned the complexity and dynamic of the state-society interactions, but he failed to further explore how these complex and dynamic relations are reflected in the government's everyday practices.

In summary, the community construction movement opened a new window for us to observe the changing state-society relations in China. In neighbourhood, increasing contacts between street-level governments and social actors reflect more active and varied interactions between the state and society. In order to better understand the complex and dynamic state-society interaction, it is necessary to further explore the government's everyday practices. The next section will move to literature on China's community governance and review how Chinese government's practices are understood within western theoretical frameworks and the limits within this approach.

### 3.3 Literature on China's community governance

#### 3.3.1 Western understanding on governance theory

Governance theory has been widely applied in western world in the area of public administration since the 1990s. The term 'governance' was initially adopted by international organisations with broad meanings. The Commission on Global Governance (1995) proposed a comprehensive definition of governance as following:

*It is the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and cooperative action may be taken. It includes formal institutions and regimes empowered to enforce compliance, as well as informal*

*arrangements that people and institutions either have agreed or perceive to be in their interest.'*

Academic literature on governance argued that governance theory provided a new framework for understanding changing processes of governing and moreover, the changing state-society relation in the era of globalisation (Rosenau, 1995; Stoker, 1998; Hewitt de Alcántara, 1999). The value of 'governance' is generally interpreted as a new meaning and process of government which involves public, private and voluntary sectors and emphasises collaboration and power dependency among them (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992; Kooiman, 1993; Rhodes, 1996; Stoker, 1998). As Rhodes (1996:652-3) described, governance signifies 'a change in the meaning of government, referring to a new process of governing; or a changed condition of ordered rule; or the new method by which society is governed'.

In western literature, 'self-governance' and independence from the government are regarded as the most important factor of governance. As Rhodes (1997) described that, governance meant 'self-organising, inter-organisational networks with a significant degree of autonomy from state'. Stoker's (1998) definition of governance also emphasised 'autonomy', 'beyond government', 'self-governance' and 'mutual dependency of actors'. As he put that (1998:18):

1. Governance refers to a set of institutions and actors that are drawn from but also beyond government.
2. Governance identifies the blurring of boundaries and responsibilities for tackling social and economic issues.
3. Governance identifies the power dependency involved in the relationships between institutions involved in collective action.
4. Governance is about autonomous self-governing networks of actors.
5. Governance recognizes the capacity to get things done which does not rest on the power of government to command or use its authority. It sees government able to use its new tools and techniques to steer and guide.

With the global change of governing culture to reduce the resource reliance on government and involve more private sectors and NGOs, the value of governance soon entered the vocabulary of government officials in both developed and developing countries to promote 'efficient and accountable government' and 'sensible and effective use of a wider range of tools beyond the direct provision of services' (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992).

### 3.3.2 Community governance literature in China

The term 'governance' (zhi-li) appeared in the Chinese community literature in the early 2000s. Yu (2000) firstly introduced the concepts of 'governance' and 'good governance' into China's public administration and argued that the government should change its administrative approach from 'government' to 'governance' in search of a more efficient and profitable public administration system. This point of view undoubtedly echoes the central government's need to involve more private and NGOs in community construction in order to decrease its burden on community service delivery. Soon the governance theory was advocated by Chinese scholars to be applied in the community construction and the term 'governance' was widely used in the literature of community construction (Wang and Hu 2000; Shen and Zhou 2003; Kong 2003). Based on governance theory, much relevant literature put its focus on the government's changing functions in the new administration system. It has been widely agreed that the Chinese governments should actively change its role in community construction from a 'government' (tong-zhi-zhe) which emphasised 'planning' (ji-hua) and 'administration' (xing-zheng) to a 'governor' which focused on 'management' (guan-li) and 'coordination' (xie-tiao) (Xu, 2001; Xue, 2002; Li, 2004; Pan, 2006; Huang, 2006& 2007; Peng, 2007; Zhang, 2009). Be more specific, street-level governments should devolve more public services including sanitation, energy, infrastructure and social welfare provision to private sectors and NGOs according to contract, authorization and entrusting (Zhang 2009). Meanwhile, street-level governments should work on coordinating the interest distribution among stakeholders rather than deciding the interest distribution (He, 2005).



In China, the research on community governance was just in the ascendant (Hu 2005). But while most literature on Chinese community construction adopted the term ‘governance’, few made any effort on declaring what this term actually means in China’s context. When western scholars used the term ‘governance’ in their analysis of China’s social reforms and government function changes (Lieberthal 2004; Saich 2004; Bray 2006), they in many circumstances ignored the non-democratic and non-liberal nature of Chinese society. Chinese scholars on the other hand, failed to consider the liberal context that was required for governance theory and assumed that it can be applied in China’s context as long as the government would proceed to reforms. The political nature of community construction and the strong state control in community administration was often overlooked in the literature and ‘governance’ was regarded as a therapy that could dramatically improve the grassroots administration system. Some scholars mentioned the context difference when applying western theories in China and pointed out it should be more cautious when using a term born in a liberal context (Li, 2003; Kong, 2003; Hu 2005). As Sigley put that:

*...It is misleading to assume that ‘autonomy’ in the Chinese instance readily equates to ‘autonomy’ as it is understood within Western forms of political rationality. The plethora of new governmental terms and concepts that have emerged in Chinese discourse over the last two decades at first glance appear to have direct and obvious links to foreign counterparts, and no doubt many of these have been ‘imported’ through closer working links with international governing institutions and the domestic resurgence of the social sciences. A closer reading, however, reveals that Chinese notions such as zi-zhi (自治) and zhi-li (治理), which are generally rendered as ‘autonomy’ and ‘governance’ respectively, must be understood within the complex socio-historical terrain of modern China (2007:489).*

In summary, the current literature lacks reflection on how the term ‘governance’ should be understood in China’s institutional context. While the fundamental factors in governance theory such as the democratic process, civil society, autonomy and self-governance cannot be achieved in contemporary China, it is conceptually more productive to explore the

meaning of community governance according to the government's daily practices and the political rationale behind them rather than directly applying governance theory in China as a 'solution'. In considering this, the next section will introduce the governmentality perspective to this study and explores how it can be used to analyse the Chinese government's community construction practices and the governmental power within them.

### 3.4 The governmentality framework

The concept of governmentality, which was defined by Michel Foucault as the 'rationalism of governmental practice in the exercise of political sovereignty' (2004: 04), provides a new perspective to understand the governmental power in modern society with a special focus on government practice. According to Foucault, governmentality is concerned with how governments use specific 'technologies' to exercise power and to accomplish their aims (Foucault, 2000: 340-342). From the other side, it presents how citizens are governed within a regime according to a series of governing technologies.

Foucault proposed the concept of 'Governmentality' in his lecture before the College de France (Foucault, 1991). The notion derives from the French word 'gouvernemental', meaning 'concerning government' (Senellart, 2004:406). In Foucauldian perspective, government is presented as a methodologically and rationally reflected 'way of doing things' for acting on the actions of individuals so as to shape, guide, correct and modify individual conduct (Burchell, 1996: 19). As Dean puts it (1999: 11):

*'Government is any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through our desires, aspirations,*

*interests and beliefs, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects and outcomes.'*

On the basis of this conceptualization, 'governmentality' is described as 'the conduct of conduct' by Foucault. Instead of understanding the state power as directly imposing constraints on individual freedom by institutions, the governmentality perspective looks at governmental power as acted upon individuals in all aspects of their lives in much more diverse, indirect and invisible ways. As Rose and Miller (1992: 174) described that in modern society, governmental power is as broad as a system of actor networks and functions 'through a profusion of shifting alliances between diverse authorities in projects to govern a multitude of facets of economic activity, social life and individual conduct.' Meanwhile, rather than forcing or forbidding certain individual activities, the governmentality perspective sees governmental power as acted upon individuals by shaping individual's values and conducts, or, 'subjectivity'. This kind of political power is described as 'bio-power', or 'bio-politics' by Foucault.

To be more specific, Foucault observed the power exercised in the institutions of modern society and he claimed that in modern society the authorities do not often exercise power on agents in violent ways any more. Rather, it was according to 'surveillance' and 'discipline' that the authorities tried to regulate and guide individual behaviours and accomplish their governing objectives. This technology, which emphasised the individual's self-regulation, was often referred to as 'technology of self' and in our society, bio-power is increasingly exercised by institutions in this form (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982: 7). As I will argue later, knowledge, professional, governmental and academic, is intimately tied to the mechanisms of surveillance. Whilst under surveillance, and under the sway of authoritative knowledge, agents unconsciously and automatically self-regulate their behaviour and bodies. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977), Foucault described in great detail how the bio-political power was widely applied in various modern institutions such as the hospital and the school. He used the Panopticon as both a demonstration of and

metaphor for surveillance and discipline within society. In the centre of Bentham's model for a prison there was a tower which was the observer, or controller, and could see every cell at all times. The individual is isolated and cannot escape the gaze of the observer, who in looking at him, is controlling. Foucault sees how this type of disciplinary power of institutions, such as the prison, infiltrates into society. As he stated that, 'The Panopticon is a marvellous machine which, whatever use one may wish to put it to, produces homogeneous effects of power' (Foucault (1977) page 202). Therefore, whether the building was a school or a hospital they were organised and operated all the same as they fulfil the same function to exert power. As Foucault observed that, 'is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons' (Foucault (1977) page 228). Political institutions and practices can redirect and influence the direction and intensity of disciplinary power according technologies such as approval, law, monitor, problematisation, standardized tactics for the training and implantation of habits, professional vocabularies and so on (Inda, 2005: 9; Miller and Rose, 1990: 8; Rose and Miller, 1992: 183; Diseger, 1992:996). Meanwhile, the legislative activities of governments could reinforce and legitimate those technologies of disciplinary power.

Based on the notion of bio-power, Foucault further claims that subjects as not biologically given but always produced by a pre-existing system of power-relations. Living in pervasive bio-power, the individual's subjectivity is constantly shaped and reshaped by all kinds of government technologies. Foucault uses the term 'subjectification' to describe the process that subjectivity is formed. More specifically, it means 'the forms of individuals and collective identity through which governing operates and which specific practices and programmes of government try to form' (Dean, 1991). In terms of the question of 'how is subjectivity shaped by the bio-power,' Foucault believes that there is close internal relationship between 'what we know' and 'how we do', or knowledge and power. By 'creating knowledge', government institutions can shape and regulate individuals' values and actions. Foucault (2000) believes that when individuals are targeted as the 'objects' of governmentality, new forms of knowledge and new discourses are implanted to them in various ways and in this process power is acted upon individuals. As the different forms of

knowledge generate different definitions of what is ‘true’ and ‘false’, they establish ‘rights’ and ‘wrongs’, thus constructing a new way of life. In Foucault’s first major book, *Madness and Civilisation* (1961), he examines the establishment of ‘madness’ and, thus, the eventual creation of the asylum in dealing with the ‘mad’. Foucault demonstrates that ‘...a new Reason and a new Madness, new because one has come to dominate and exclude the other...’ (Sheridan (1976) page 17). Foucault saw this as the movement towards the isolation and observation of a whole category of people. During this period ‘madness’ became a new discipline to condition human behaviour and attitudes towards the masses changed. In the Foucauldian perspective, knowledge and power are closely dependent on each other and can produce and be produced by the other. ‘There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations’ (1977:27). The power-knowledge relation is a circle (Digeser: 989) and it is in the interaction of knowledge and power that the ‘disciplines’ and more broadly— the social order, is formed.

In a broader sense, the governmentality framework provides us a new perspective to understand state-society relations. Contrary to the perspective which viewed state and society as tangible, a priori objects, Foucault used a ‘historical ontology’ (Foucault, 1984: 45) to expound the concept of ‘state’ from a more universal perspective. He claimed that the state is not an object that is always already there, nor can it be reduced to an illusionary or ideological effect of hegemonic practices. Rather, the state is conceptualized as a “transactional reality” [*r álit é de transaction*] (Foucault, 2004: 301). In the other words, the state is not just an ensemble of bureaucratic institutions. Rather, it is a dynamic ensemble of relations and syntheses that at the same time produces the institutional structure of the state. From this perspective, the bureaucratic institutions of government are not viewed as the representatives of the ‘state’. Rather, they are actors who can use ‘political technologies’ (Foucault, 1997:67) to influence the relations and syntheses of state. As Rose and Miller put it:

*'The state can be seen as a specific way in which the problem of government is discursively codified, a way of dividing a 'political sphere', with its particular characteristics of rule, from other, 'non-political spheres' to which it must be related, and a way in which certain technologies of government are given a temporary institutional durability and brought into particular kinds of relations with one another.'* (Rose and Miller, 1992:176-177)

Foucault's historical ontology of the state separated the concept of 'government' and 'state' and provided a more dynamic perspective to understand the increasingly complicated interactions between government and other social actors in the modern society. In Foucauldian view there is not a clear and static 'boundary' between state and society. Rather, the difference between state and society continues to be influenced and redefined by specific governmental technologies. Therefore what matters in the discussion about state-society relations is not 'what kind of state-society relation are we in' but 'how government uses technologies to define and change the current state-society relations'.

### *Foucault's limits*

Critiques of governmentality suggest that the concept remains entangled with structuralist themes (Biebricher, 2008; Dupont and Pearch, 2001; Lemke, 2000) and neglects agency, although Foucault denied he was a structuralist. As Bevir described 'Foucault's focus on episteme<sup>15</sup> and neglect of agency means his archaeologies consist of synchronic snapshots, with little attention being given to the diachronic processes by which one episteme gives way to another' (2010:424).

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<sup>15</sup> Foucault defined episteme *Power/Knowledge* as: 'I would define the episteme retrospectively as the strategic apparatus which permits of separating out from among all the statements which are possible those that will be acceptable within, I won't say a scientific theory, but a field of scientificity, and which it is possible to say are true or false. The episteme is the 'apparatus' which makes possible the separation, not of the true from the false, but of what may from what may not be characterized as scientific.'

Moreover, in many discourses Foucault put most emphasis on the government technologies but rarely talked about the other actors' influence on the government and their reactions to the governments' governmentalities. To overcome the blind spot, we should go back to the governments' daily practices and give concern to a series of 'how' questions together with the 'governmentalities': How do governments communicate with other actors to implement those governmentalities? How do other actors react to those governmentalities and finally, how do these interactions contribute to new administrative technologies or, new 'governmentalities'? In Foucault's work on 'genealogy' and 'power/knowledge' he gave more concern to the fundamental power relations between subjects and these discussions 'to some extent overcome the limitations of poststructuralist treatments of subjectivity and explanation' (Bevir, 2010:426). As Bevir claimed:

*'His genealogies replaced his quasi-structuralist episteme with more fluid discourses and power/knowledge. The very fluidity of discourses seems to preclude synchronic explanations of their content as being defined by the relations among the units of which they are composed...I want to suggest that genealogy is a mode of inquiry based on a form of historicism that highlights nominalism, contingency, and contestability. I then want to argue that this account of genealogy helps solve the main problems critics associate with Foucault's work.'* (2010: 428)

*Why use the governmentality framework?*

The rationale of using a governmentality framework, rather than other western theories of governance to research the Chinese government's 'community construction' practices is that it overcomes the boundary between liberal and non-liberal political context and therefore it is well suited to be used in China's authoritarian context. As discussed before, the western governance theories, when 'imported' to China, often overlooked China's political structure and non-liberal context. As the fundamental factors in governance theory such as the democratic process, civil society, high degree of autonomy and self-governing network cannot be achieved in contemporary China, the discourse on governance in China can only scratch the surface of government's vocabularies and practices, but can never touch the

essence of the problem: the strong state control behind the vocabularies of ‘autonomy’ and ‘governance’. Without considering China’s centralised and non-liberal political context, the western theories of governance are just garden in the air: it looks close and beautiful, but it means nothing for people living on the ground.

The governmentality on the other hand, provided a more grounded and handy perspective to look at the government’s everyday practices by concerning on the political structure and rationalities behind them. It is well-suited to be applied in traditional China because as centralised control becomes increasingly difficult with the opening up of Chinese society, the state has to implicate society-based organisations and citizens in the governance of regions, cities and societal sectors. The Chinese government’s changing vocabularies of ‘building a harmonious society’, ‘public participation’ and ‘social responsibility’ all demonstrate the government’s determination to ‘softly’ and ‘indirectly’ deal with social conflicts and to put more emphasis on shaping individual conduct and cultivating desired citizenship. The concerns of the governmentality framework including government rationalities, government technologies, the power/knowledge dualism and the process of subjectification all apply to today’s China. In recent years the proliferating literature on China’s changing statehood contributes to an increasing number of studies on the government’s changing governing practices. Studies of governmentality have emerged in the realms of governance, development, education, the environment, community, religion and sexual health (Jeffreys and Sigley, 2009; Dutton, 2009; Xu, 2009; Harwood, 2009; Bray, 2006; Hoffman, 2009; Cooke, 2009; Jeffreys and Huang, 2009). However, ‘governmentality’ has not been systematically used as a conceptual tool to analyse the government rationalities in the landscape of Chinese community governance. The rationality and technology of community, with its ambivalent status between the state and society, makes is an ideal candidate for governmentality research.

Meanwhile, governmentality discourse gives emphasis to the issue of power, which is one of the core concerns of this study. The genealogy of power/knowledge in the



governmentality framework provided a good view to understand the government's power exercises at the community level. The Foucauldian perspective on power is microscopic and he appeals to analyse power at the most grassroots realms of society: he chose places such as asylums, prison, clinic and even family to research the exercise of power in people's everyday life because he believed that 'it is only through an intensive, nominalistic cataloguing of specific practices that this form of power reveals itself' (Digeser: 985). This perspective provided a suitable way to look into the power exercises in neighbourhood. Neighbourhood is the area where the street-level government have face-to-face contact with citizen and the power relations in neighbourhood directly reflected the interactions between the state and society. The power relations between Chinese government and citizens can be revealed from many aspects of everyday neighbourhood life: the government's vocabularies, activities, published strategies and established agendas; the non-government stakeholders' vocabularies, actions and habits, etc. All of these details manifest some micro power relations. Therefore, neighbourhood is a feasible realm to research power relations at the grassroots level of society. The Foucauldian perspective is well suited to explore the complexity and dynamic of the power relation between the government the social actors in neighbourhood.

Moreover, governmentality provides a more critical framework to analyse the Chinese government's governing practices. Critiques of governance theory claim that governance discourse often ignores the political sphere and relies heavily on practical technologies to solve social problems rather than reflecting on more fundamental political conflicts and 'fail to take note of important aspects in the analysis of political processes...' (Mayntz,2004:74; Smouts,1998). As Lemke (2007:14) describes: the governance literature 'assumes that political decisions are based on neutral facts or rational arguments, thereby ignoring the role of strategy options and political alternatives', which to some extent 'marginalizes central conflicts between different social groups and classes or downplays contradictions between political interests and objectives'. The 'governmentality' framework would do well to analyse the 'role of strategy' and exploring the political processes behind the government practices. This strength to some extent 'enables us to overcome some theoretical blind spots of the governance discourse that dominates

contemporary accounts of state transformations and policies' (Lemke, 2007:13). As the Chinese community governance discourses give more concern to the social regulations beyond the governments such as private sector, non-government organisations, and individuals, governmentality can be used to critically analyse these political process and explore the conflicts within them.

### *How to use the governmentality framework?*

The governmentality framework provides four main dimensions to understand and interpret government practices (Dean, 1999:23). First, it concerns the government's rationalities in defining some problems and objectives and making them visible to public and obscuring other problems and making them invisible and 'not important'. It raises questions of 'who and what are to be governed', 'how relations of authority and obedience are constituted in space', 'how different locales and agents are to be connected with one another', and 'what problems are to be solved and what objectives are to be sought'. This dimension allows us to critically analyse the government's strategies, objectives and published information. The second dimension concerns the technical aspects of government, as Dean (1995) called the 'techne of government', or the 'distinctive ways of thinking and questioning, relying on definite vocabularies and procedures for the production of truth'. Those technologies are summarized in literature as: 'methods of examination and evaluation; techniques of notation, numeration, and calculation; accounting procedures; routines for the timing and spacing of activities in specific locations; presentational forms such as tables and graphs; formulas for the organisation of work; standardized tactics for the training and implantation of habits; pedagogic, therapeutic, and punitive techniques of reformulation and cure; architectural forms in which interventions take place (i.e. classrooms and prisons); and professional vocabularies' (Inda, 2005: 9; Miller and Rose, 1990: 8; Rose and Miller, 1992: 183). The third dimension is concerned with the knowledge claim of the government including its 'specific ways of acting, interviewing and directing, made up of particular types of practical rationality' and the mechanisms, techniques and technologies it relies on. The fourth dimension is concerned with the government's 'characteristic ways of forming subjects, selves, persons, actors or agents'. This dimension concerns the forms of

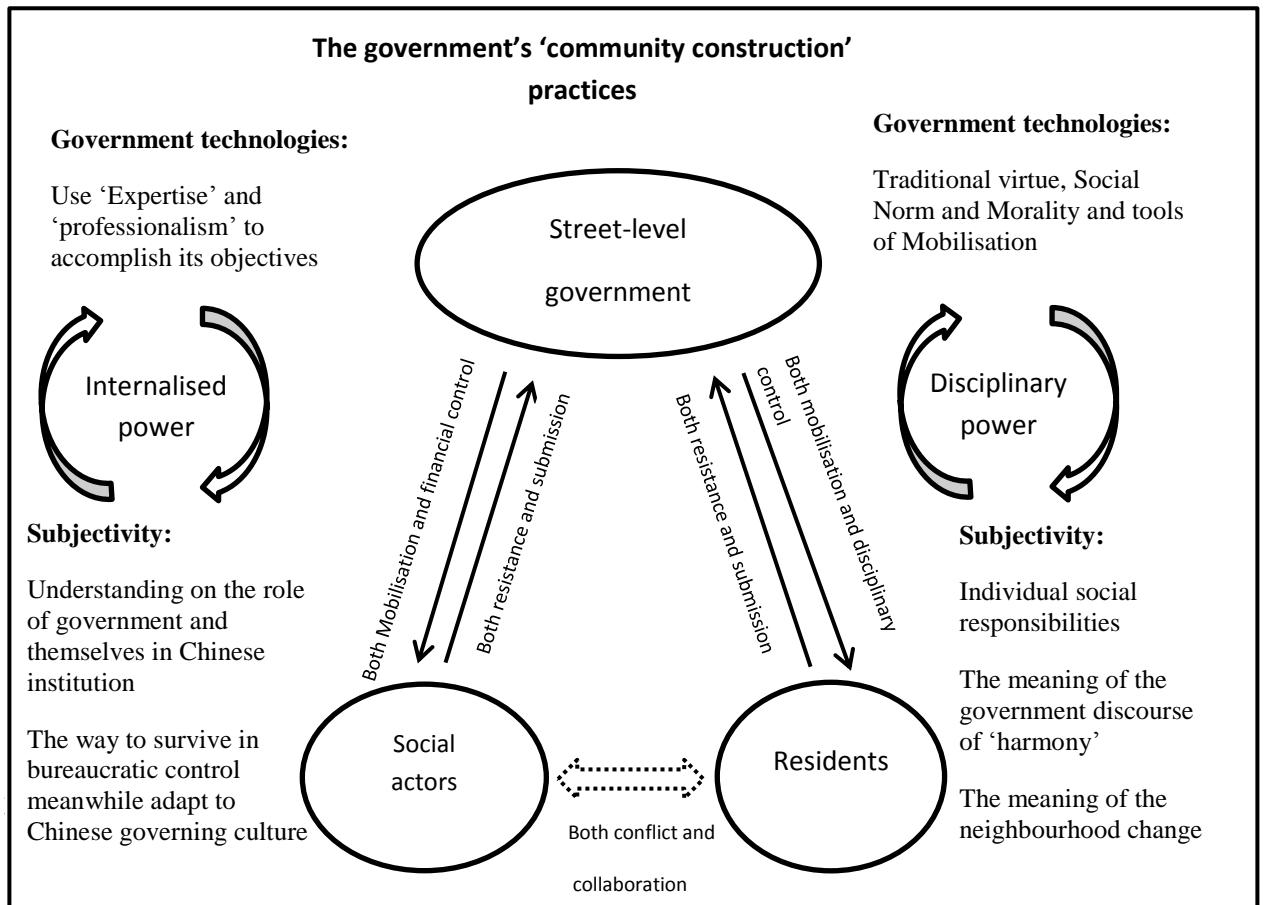
individuals and collective identity through which governing operates and which specific practices and programmes of government try to form.

In this study, governmentality can be applied to explore these dimensions of both the central government and the street-government's practice. Firstly it can be used to explore the Chinese central government's rationalities in its strategy of 'community construction' and its vision of 'building a harmonious society'. As centralized control becomes increasingly difficult with the opening up of society because of the shift to economic liberalism, the central government has to implicate society-based organisations and citizens in the governance of regions, cities and societal sectors. The rationality and technology of community, with its ambivalent status somewhere between the state and society, is an ideal candidate for an emerging governing-at-a-distance rationality. Secondly governmentality provides a framework to analyse local government's everyday community construction practices. The street level government's interactions with the social actors and citizens reflect its changing rationalities, governing technologies and knowledge claims. Governmentality can be used to critically analyse these political processes.

### 3.5 An analytical framework of this study

As stated in the last section, Foucault's theory of governmentality provides a critical perspective to analyse the government practices and is well suited to be applied in China's community construction. Based on the governmentality framework, this section will build an analytical framework of this study. This analytical framework focuses on two dimensions of the governmentality theory – the 'government technology' and the 'subjectification'— in order to explore the power interactions between (1) the government and the private/social sector and (2) the government and citizens (see Figure 3-1):

Figure 3-1 A governmentality analytical framework to research community construction practice



### 3.5.1 Governmenta technologies

In this study, the government technologies, or the 'techne of government' (Dean, 1995), refer to the ways that the Chinese government uses specific language, regulations, media publicity and other non-violent methods to define problems and objectives (problemise), to maintain control on the collaboration with non-government sectors and to cultivate self-regulated and politically collaborative citizens. Two kinds of government technologies in the 'community construction' practices are deeply explored including:

(1) The technologies that the community government uses in the collaborations with private and social sectors to retain overall control. The concern here is how the government internalises the power relationship between itself and the social/private sector in order to retain the decision making rights meanwhile gets professional assistance from the private/social sector. The technology can be explored by answering the following questions:

- What kind of knowledge claim does the government use to legitimise its collaboration with the private/social sector?
- How does government make uses of the ‘expertise’ and ‘professionalism’ of social and private sector to accomplish its objectives?
- What kind of responsibility/decision making right has been devolved to the social and private sector in the collaboration?
- How does the government balance centralisation and devolution in its contact with the private/social sector?

(2) The technologies that the community government adopts to exercise disciplinary power on residents which aim to mobilise participation from the residents and maintain social order in the neighbourhoods. This kind of technology is more tacit and covert. As mentioned before, it is applied on individuals to make people regulate themselves and behave according to specific social regulations. It is often implemented according to symbolic devices such as propaganda, capacity building, medium publicity, etc. To explore it it’s necessary to interpret the government narratives, vocabularies and actions and then extract the government rationalities from these discourses and practices. In this study, this ‘technology of self’ can be traced from:

- The government’s mobilisation practices in all kinds of self-governing projects, cultural events and ‘socialist spiritual cultivation’ activities which aims to conduct community members to voluntarily govern themselves.
- The way that the government publicise ‘traditional virtues’ and ‘social norms’ in order to conduct good social order in neighbourhood and family.

- The way that the government makes use of use ‘morality’ to mediate conflicts and conduct desired behaviours

### 3.5.2 Subjectification

Apart from considering the government practices, the concept of subjectification provides an insight to view the street-level government’s governmentalities from the subject’s perspective: besides understanding what governmental power has been exercised and how it is exercised on social actors/citizens, concern should also be given to ‘how do the social actors/citizens form and change their understanding about who they are on effect of the governmental power’ and ‘what kind of citizenship has been formed by the governmental power.’ In this study the process of subjectification is explored in the following aspects:

- (1) The way that the residents understand their social responsibilities and their roles in the community.
- (2) They way that the residents interpret the government discourses of ‘harmony’ in their real lives.
- (3) The way that the residents make sense of their own lives within the fast changing community and society.

Of course the process of subjectification is heterogeneous and complicated and in many circumstances, it can be ambivalent. As Foucault put that, ‘subjects are gradually, progressively, really, and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts, etc....’ (Foucault, 1976: 97-98). Butler (1995: 45–46) described the paradoxical simultaneity of mastery and submission in the process of subjectification and said that: ‘Submission and mastery take place simultaneously, and it is this paradoxical simultaneity that constitutes the ambivalence of subjection. Where one might expect submission to consist in yielding to an externally imposed dominant order, and to be marked by a loss of control and mastery, it is paradoxically marked by mastery

itself ... the lived simultaneity of submission as mastery, and mastery as submission, is the condition of possibility for the subject itself.' In this study, both the resistance and the submission of subjects towards the governmental power will be explored and focus will be put on how they are simultaneously expressed in individual's conduct and language.

### 3.6 Conclusion

This Chapter reviewed relevant literatures and introduced the theoretical perspective of this study. It firstly reviews the debates on China's changing state-society relations and points out that the community construction movement provides a good field to research the changing state-society relations in China's grassroots society. However, the current literature on Chinese community governance is mainly drawn within a western theoretical framework and lacks reflection on how the theoretical concept of 'governance' should be understood when applied in China's institutional context. In considering this, Foucault's perspective of 'governmentality' is well suited to this study since it provides a critical framework to analyse the Chinese government's rationalities within China's specific institution. In considering this, this study builds an analytic framework to explore the government practices within China's context: it uses two of Foucault's core conceptions—'government technology' and 'subjectivity'—to explore the changing dynamics of power relation between the government and social actors.

Having laid out the theoretical basis of this study, the next chapter moves on consider how to apply the theoretical framework with detailed research methods.

## **Chapter 4 Methodology and Research Methods**

### 4.1 Introduction

In the last chapter I introduced the governmentality framework to this study and justified why and how it can be applied in exploring the Chinese government's community construction practices. This chapter aims to introduce the design of this research which applies the theoretical framework on a specific case with a series of detailed methods. This objective is achieved in four sections. In the first section, it firstly outlines the research questions and my research concerns within these questions. Then the section justifies the rationale of adopting a qualitative approach and an in-depth case study in this study. The third section introduces the selection of case study and gives an overall description of the selected case. In the fourth part the adopted research methods are reviewed with further explanation on how they help me answering my research questions.

### 4.2 Research Questions

It has been concluded in chapter 2 that against the background of massive social and economic transformations in contemporary Chinese society and subsequent urban public administration system reforms, there is a lack of empirical research exploring the interactions between China's grassroots governments and other involved social actors at the community level. This is important for two reasons. First, the government increasingly employs a rhetoric of civic participation in administering cities and neighbourhoods. Second, independently of government initiatives, citizens organise themselves to solve problems in their neighbourhoods. Both of these developments interact in complex and largely unknown ways in the current landscape of urban governance in China. To fill this gap, this study examines a street-level government's community construction practices in Beijing between 2006 and 2011. It uses Foucault's perspective of 'governmentality' to analyse the government practices and discourses



and explore the changing dynamic of the power relations between the government and involved actors. More specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

**Question One: What policy instruments does the Chinese central government use to retain control on the Chinese urban society?**

This question examines the reforms in public administration since the foundation of People's Republic of China in 1949 from a broad view. It sets out to explore how Chinese government shifts its policy orientation to deal with the changing Chinese urban social structure. It focuses on the central government's changing technology from the socialist 'Dan-wei' system which was operated by the state-owned enterprises to the regional 'She-qu' system which was taken charge by street-level governments. The concern of this question includes:

- The Chinese government's deeply-embedded governing value of 'control' and 'centralisation' in the urban administration system.
- The governing approaches in the socialist Dan-wei system
- The governing approaches in the She-qu system

**Question Two: How does the Chinese government implement control according to the community (She-qu) administration system?**

This question sets out to examine the Chinese central government's efforts to establish and empower the street-level government according to the community construction movement. It examines the central government's rationality of community construction from a critical perspective and seeks to explore:

- The political rationality of community in China's context
- The ambivalent status of the community administration system between the state and society

- The way that power is exercised by the government within community.

**Question Three: What technologies do Chinese street-level governments adopt to ‘build harmonious communities’ in their daily practices?**

This question investigates the Chinese street-level governments’ technologies to widen public participation and develop a more collaborative governing mode in recent years. It puts focus on two kinds of government technology in the ‘community construction’ practices including:

- The technology that the community government uses to promote collaborations with private and social sectors. This kind of technology is usually implemented in the forms of established objectives and strategies, announced agendas and discourses.
- The disciplinary technology that the community government adopts to mobilise participation from the residents and maintain social order in neighbourhoods. The disciplinary technology is implemented according to symbolic devices such as propaganda, capacity building, media publicity, etc. It may be seen to apply to individuals to make people regulate themselves and behave according to specific social regulations. In this study, this kind of technology can be traced from the government’s mobilisation practices, capacity training projects, self-governing projects and the ‘socialist spiritual cultivation’ events.

**Question Four: How do the involved social groups and citizens interpret the government discourse of building harmonious communities and position themselves within this discourse?**

This question looks at the subjectification process of the ordinary residents who live in the government technology of community. It examines the way residents understand and interpret the government discourse of building harmonious communities and how they position themselves within this discourse. There are three aspects I want to explore through the study on community construction including:

- The way that residents understand their roles and responsibilities in their community
- The way that the government's rhetoric of 'harmony' is interpreted by the residents in their everyday lives
- The ways that the residents make sense of their lives and their relations with the party state in the ever-developing society

#### 4.3 Methodological Approach

To answer my research questions, I adopted qualitative approaches in this study to explore the government practices and the residents' daily lives. A basic value of qualitative research is that people's own definition of a situation is an important element of any social process (Hakim, 1987). Qualitative research is concerned with actors' own accounts of their attitudes, motivations and behaviours, meaning it is richly descriptive and illuminates motivations connecting attitudes and behaviour (ibid), and the meanings that actors attach to their situation and their environment (Wagenaar, 2011). In this perception, qualitative methods allow in-depth and detailed research into people's daily lives. The ability of qualitative approaches to capture people's perceptions, experiences and meanings make them well-suited to help me analyse both the government and the other actors' actions, narratives and discourses and find out the meanings of them.

Doing qualitative research is a process of understanding and interpreting the observed world for me. As Denzin and Lincoln (2008:4) state: 'Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that

make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversation, photographs, recordings, and the memos to the self...This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.’ In my research, interpretation lasted throughout the whole research process and helped me to construct a more comprehensive representation of the changing governing mode. This process helped me to understand the government documents, interview transcripts and observed neighbourhood activities within a specific context: the information that the government implied beyond the political vocabularies, the emotions, thoughts and attitudes that the interviewees expressed through their talk and the implicit message that people gave according to their actions.

As I was interested to explore real stories in real life, I chose a neighbourhood and carried out an in-depth case study. The case study strategy was adopted as it helped me relate these abstract government discourses to a practical, real-world context and understand them through the stories of those involved and through my own observation. ‘The basic idea is that one case (or perhaps a small number of cases) will be studied in detail, using whatever methods seem appropriate. While there might be a variety of specific purposes and research questions, the general objective is to develop as full an understanding of that case as possible.’ (Punch, 1998: 150) An intensive case study allows in-depth analysis of different actors’ motivations, strategies and interactions with others and facilitated my understanding of the complex social phenomena by allowing me to ‘retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events’ (Yin, 2003:2). In this project, the purpose of a case study was to conduct an in-depth examination of the grassroots government’s governing practices. It was based on an intensive period of research in which interviews and observations were adopted to better understand the ‘real-life’ events and the meanings behind them.

A single case study can never reflect the grassroots government’s community construction practices all over China. As I mentioned in chapter 2, the community construction movement is

carried out in flexible ways by the grassroots government in different cities, and different types of neighbourhood with varying institutions. The focus of this study is to examine the new governing mode which is top-down promoted by the Chinese central government throughout the country with a unified ‘spirit’ –that is, to shift the previous commanding, straight forward control into more soft and covert control. The case study was not supposed to represent the specific governing practices in most Chinese urban communities, but to represent the **process** that the new governing mode exercised over actors and the changing power relations between the central government, the grassroots government and citizens in this process. In this perspective, in-depth research on a single case allows me to tell the story of changing modes of urban governance and its impact in China since the possibility of generalization is not embodied in the number of cases but in the representativeness of the case for the process of administrative change and the power relations in that process.

#### 4.4 Case Selection

When selecting a case, the most important issue for me was whether it has observable and investigable government practices and participation from social actors. The scale of city, neighbourhood type<sup>16</sup> and government institutional setting varied in different cases but they did not impede me to reach a generalized conclusion about the ‘process’ that I was trying to reveal. In the light of above considerations, I addressed the following criteria for the potential case research:

- Explicit ‘community construction’ practices of the government

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<sup>16</sup> Some scholars classified Chinese urban neighbourhood into the following types: the compound units (dan-wei-da-yuan 单位大院) which was built by the state-owned enterprises, newly constructed commercial residential neighbourhood (shang-ye-xiao-qu 商业小区), traditional neighbourhood which was formed before the foundation of P. R. China, urban peripheral neighbourhood which had mixed residents from both urban and rural areas and multi-functional neighbourhood which included residential housing, commercial and other types of housing (Li, 2009).

- Representative stakeholders, including the street office, residents' committee, NGOs, community-based organisations and residents.
- Observable interaction between stakeholders: iconic events, obvious conflict, public activity, social movement, etc.
- Accessible to the researcher

In the following step I started my pre-field work. When I searched relevant information online there were as expected a numbers of report with the title of 'community construction practices' in different cities. The government's community construction practices were various in content including charity activities, cultural events, neighbourhood regeneration and so on. Most reports just described the government's contribution and rarely mentioned the other actors. To facilitate the investigation, I focused on those projects which involved participation of more stakeholders and comparatively long-term public-private collaboration. Then I narrowed down my concern on two kinds of government practices:

- (1) The community-level planning projects which involved multiple stakeholders, especially NGOs and the private sector which were playing an increasingly active role in local governance. If I could follow a planning project, it was easy to observe the process that different stakeholders mediate with each other and strive for interest. It was also easy to collect the data I need in a comparatively short time.
- (2) The self-governing projects which were widely promoted by the grassroots government in recent years. In these projects the resident representatives were supposed to establish their own community-based organisations and take charge of the self-governing projects. However, as introduced in chapter 2, in China many community-based organisations were still financially and administratively dependant on the government. I supposed there would be interest power relations between the government and the representatives in these projects.

After two months' desk work I targeted Nanluogu Alley in Beijing as my potential case study area. This neighbourhood used to be deprived and insignificant in the early 2000s. Since 2005, the tourist industry began to proliferate in Nanluogu Alley and this neighbourhood soon became well-known as a tourist spot. In recent years the community government launched various practices to promote participation from private (local entrepreneurs) and social (NGO) sectors to develop tourism and meanwhile actively promoted neighbourhood self-governing projects. In media reports Nanluogu Alley was often described as changing from 'a neighbourhood in the shade' to 'a vital place and various voices'. This rapid change in governing strategy and increase of actors implied Nanluogu Alley was a good case for me to explore the 'process' of community construction. More concretely, Nanluogu Alley was interesting to me and suitable as my case study for the following reasons:

- The government conducted active practices to promote wider public participation and self-governance

Nanluogu Alley is a good example in which the community government made prompt and intensive policy reactions to the central government's 2006 'building a harmonious' instruction. In 2006 the community government formulated a 15-year community development plan in which 'building harmonious communities' was listed as the overall development objective. Following the new objective, the community government established a new strategy to promote 'multi-stakeholders' involvement' (duo-yuan-can-yu 多元参与) in community construction. Between 2006 and 2011 the community government of Nanluogu Alley established some long-term collaborations with planning institutions, the local chamber of commerce, social organisations and private enterprises in different kinds of neighbourhood-based projects. Meanwhile, the community government began to intensively launch self-governing projects since the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

- An active community with various actors and interactions

Besides the typical actors (including the street office, the residents' committee and the residents), I traced online and found that in recent years, quite a few non-government actors were invited to play roles in Nanluogu Alley's tourist development. The planning organisation was firstly hired by the government to formulate the 2006 community development plan. After the project it established a comparatively stable and long-term relationship with the government to provide technical suggestions and solutions to practical problems. The local chamber of commerce played an increasingly active role in all kinds of tourist events. The NGOs involved in the self-governance projects as 'technical assistants' and some community-based organisations were reported in media as operating effectively. I also found out that there were some activities which aimed to promote communications among the non-government actors.

- Previous knowledge on this neighbourhood and social connection

In 2005 I participated in Nanluogu Alley's community development plan project as a student of the Urban Planning Centre of Peking University (UPCPU). I did a 3 months' field investigation including interviewing residents, recording public hearings and formulating part of the planning scheme. This experience provided me some foundational knowledge of the neighbourhood and connection with the community government officials. It would be easier for me to get access to the government officers and some residents as an ex-project staff. Also, my connection with UPCPU gave me access to the updated data since it kept its collaboration with the community government of Nanluogu Alley in the last few years.

#### 4.5 Methods of Data Collection

In July 2010 I started my 12-month field work in Nanluogu Alley. The field work was divided into the following four stages:

##### **July 2010- August 2010:**



In this stage I did some desk-based research on government documents and relevant literature before carrying out the fieldwork. I did an overall review on Nanluogu Alley's development, the established policies, big events and relevant media reports. After collecting the updated information, I established a framework for the in-depth interview in the following stage. I also contacted with the Urban Planning Centre of Peking University and found out they were having a joint project with the Jiaodaokou Street Office to have a mid-stage assessment for the 2006 Community Development Plan. I talked to the director of UPCPU and was approved to participate in the project.

**September 2010- January 2011:**

The stage was my first intensive fieldwork. I worked in the Mid-stage Planning Assessment project and investigated Nanluogu Alley as part of the project. As a staff member I got the chances to attend government meetings, the symposiums between government and planners/ local chamber of commerce/ NGO/residents' representatives. I also gained support from the Street Office to interview the Residents' Committees and the local entrepreneurs.

**February 2011-March 2011:**

In this stage I suspended my fieldwork because of the cold weather and Chinese New Year. I analysed the data collected from the Mid-stage Assessment project and extracted the issues I planned to further investigate in the following fieldwork.

**April 2011- July 2011:** interview with NGO, activists, wardens and local residents

The stage was the second intensive fieldwork. In this period I did the investigation in my personal name. I followed some neighbourhood self-governing projects which I was interested in and interviewed the involved actors, including government officials, RC members, activists, NGO and local residents.

In my fieldwork I used a mixture of qualitative methods to collect data, including document analysis, in-depth qualitative interviews and participant observation. These methods were designed and conducted in accordance with the research progress rather than in a linear sequence. A combination of different methods was supposed to guard ‘against research bias and check out accounts from different informants’ (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984: 68) and in my case, a mixture of methods helped me to formulate a more comprehensive answer to my research questions. For instance, to analyse the community government’s practice of promoting self-governance, I firstly need to go back to government documents and find out the policy context: what instructions did the municipal and district government deploy to the community government? What policies did the community government establish in respond to these instructions and do they have any conflict with the community government’s own interest? Qualitative interviews were the most direct way to understand the actors’ opinions while observation on the meetings, public hearings and symposiums were also useful for me to know what was going on when different actors communicated with each other.

#### 4.5.1 Document Analysis:

To understand the policy context of Nanluogu Alley’s development, I collected the Municipal-level, district-level and community-level government planning documents which set the development orientation for Nanluogu Alley. They consisted of the Municipal and district government documents including *Beijing’s Eleventh Five-year Development Plan* (2006-2010), *Beijing City Master Plan* (2004-2020), *Beijing Historical City Conservation Plan* (2002), *Dongcheng District Construction and Development Plan During the Eleventh Fiver-year Plan* (2006-2010). Local official documents including archives, the *Jiao-dao-kou Community Development Plan* (2006), the *Nanluogu Alley Conservation Plan* (2006), the *Jiao-dao-kou Community Development Plan Mid-stage Assessment Report* (2011) and the Street Office’s annual work reports and censuses were also collected and analysed.

The municipal-level and district-level documents were collected before the fieldwork. They provided me with a broad picture of upper-level government's plan for Nanluogu Alley and the policy instruction on the street-level government. I accessed the documents mentioned above mainly in two ways. One was from the on-line platform which is open for consultation by public by the Municipal government, Dong-cheng District Government and Jiao-dao-kou Street Office. The other was from the Beijing Municipal Institute of City Planning and Design, which was producing the master plan and controlled the detailed plan for Nanluogu Alley and Beluogu Alley. These two channels complemented each other to help get access to all necessary official documents in study areas. The community-level documents on the other hand, were mainly collected during the mid-stage assessment project. They directly reflected how community government implement the top-down policy instruction in their practical work meanwhile consider for their own interest. I was able to collect these documents because I participated into the formulation of the mid-stage assessment report.

#### 4.5.2 Qualitative interviews

Qualitative interviewing was an important method in my fieldwork. For me it was a direct tool to understand not only what people did and experienced, but also how people interpret the meanings of their experiences to their lives. As Weiss (1995:1) put that: 'Interviewing can inform us about the nature of social life... we can learn also, through interviewing, about people's interior experiences. We can learn what people perceived and how they interpreted their perceptions...we can learn the meanings to them of their relationships... ' In my research I used interviews to accomplish the following two aims:

- Describing a process: the general concerns were about 'what are the processes by which an event occurs?' and 'what are the consequences of an event?' Qualitative interviews can elicit the processes antecedent to an outcome of interest (Weiss, 1995:10). In my research I was interested in the process of the community government launching collaboration with social/private sectors and promoting the

residents' self-governing projects. I was interested in 'how were these projects carried out?' and 'what were their influences to the involved actors' lives?'

- Learning how events are interpreted: 'Qualitative interviewing enables us to learn about perceptions and reactions known only to those whom they occurred.' (Weiss, 1995:10) In my research how people interpreted what they experienced in the 'community construction' movements was the main concern of my third research question. (How do the local residents make sense of the government discourses/practices and their neighbourhood lives in the new governing mode?) It was also the issue which has been rarely mentioned in the current Chinese community research (as I concluded in chapter 2).

In the fieldwork I carried out 49 in-depth interviews with 7 categories of involved actors. Open interview was adopted because it ensures flexibility in the way issues are addressed by the informant. It also enabled comparatively long-lasting conversations and in-depth exploration on several predetermined questions. The actors I interviewed include:

- Government officials from the Street Office: 8 interviews were carried out with Street Officers in the mid-stage assessment project, including the Chief Director, 5 Branch Directors and 2 staff members.
- Representatives of the Residents Committee: 8 interviews were carried out with RC members with the Street Office's support. Most of the interviewees were directors or project administrators who communicated a lot with the Street Office.
- The wardens and volunteers: 8 interviews were carried out with the wardens and volunteers .
- NGO workers: 2 interviews were carried out with workers from a NGO which established long-term collaboration with the Street Office- the Shining Stone Community Participation Centre, including the director who took charge of most

self-governing projects in Nanluogu Alley and a member of staff who participated in a specific project.

- Local entrepreneurs: 6 interviews were carried out with local entrepreneurs, all of whom were members of the local chamber of commerce.
- Planners: 5 interviews were carried out with the planning team, including the Director, the Project Administrator and 3 planning students
- Ordinary local residents: 12 were carried out with local residents. They were all door-to-door interviews

I approached my interviewees mainly in three ways as three different identities. Firstly as a member of 2011 Community Development Plan Mid-stage Assessment Project, I had the chance to officially interview some Street Officials and RC members about their work experiences, the obstacles they confronted and the perception about the self-governing projects. Due to my previous experiences in Nanluogu Alley, I also got some support from the Street Office and the 200 planning team in terms of relevant data and other materials. Secondly I called and visited some interviewees by myself as a student who was doing research in this neighbourhood. Thirdly I was introduced by my friends who lived in Nanluogu Alley as an ‘acquaintance’ to their neighbours. Before I started the interviews, I informed the respondents the contents of the research including the purposes of research, the sources of funding, and the questions I would raise in the interview as well as the potential audiences for and use of the findings. I also promised the respondents that our conversation would be confidential and the interview contents would not be used in other purpose than my PhD research. I got the authority from the participants on the use of the data by asking them to sign an agreement before starting the interview.

When I carried out the interviews, I found that my different identities brought me both advantages and impediments. For example, when I tried to get the approval of residents to interview them, the interviewees always asked me ‘which institution are you from’ and ‘what is your identity’ first with very suspicious attitude. When I introduced myself as

working in the government's planning assessment programme, I was often refused by residents at the very beginning. However, the business owners and the RC members usually would be very supportive in providing me possible help because they hoped to get more financial support from the Street Office according to me. On the other hand, when I introduced myself as a student studying in UK, usually I got very few appointments from the government and the business owners, but I got more chances to interview NGO workers because they were interested in what kind of study I was carrying on and that international experiences I could share with them. I also got more appointment with residents although they usually very short and hasty answers since they thought that as a student I and my research could hardly change anything. Lastly, when I was introduced by my friends to their neighbours according to private relationship, I was immediately treated as an 'insider' and I got massive data. The interviews were usually carried out during dinner, walking, cooking and other casual occasions and the interviewees were much more relaxed to express their real and complete opinions on my questions.

During the interviews I set neutral, non-leading questions which did not imply to them what answer was wanted or appropriate. At the beginning most of the interviewees would make very official narratives, even by reading their report to the government. But when I asked more detailed questions about their experiences and feelings, they gradually stop guessing what I wanted to know from them and talked more discursively. I needed to capture useful information from their discursive speech but I believed that making them talk comfortably was better than carrying out the rigid formal interviews. I gained the approval of 42 interviewees to tape record the conversation. For the other 7 interviews I recorded them by pen. The interviews lasted 30-40 minutes on average while the ones with residents, NGO, wardens and activists usually lasted for more than one hour and the ones with government officials, RC members and entrepreneurs were around 30 minutes. The interviewee list and interview questions were listed in the Appendix.

#### 4.5.3 Participant Observation

In a general sense participant observation was more than just a method but described a basic resource of all social research. (Silverman, 2006: 68) It was both consciously and unconsciously used throughout my fieldwork to help me understand the community life and social actors' actions. As Atkinson and Hammersley (1994:168) put that: 'all social research is a form of participant observation, because we cannot study the social world without being part of it. From this point of view, participant observation is not a particular research technique but a mode of being-in-the-world characteristic of researchers.' Participant observation gave me direct understand of 'what people actually do', rather than 'what people think and feel', which could be better explored through interviews. It also provided rich detailed information about the process of events which cannot be obtained through document materials and people's narratives: the neighbourhood environment and people's activities in it; the atmosphere and details of events; people's attitude, tone and their appearance when they mediate with other stakeholders.

In the fieldwork I planned intensive observation in two periods. In July- August 2010 I did 10 official observations on the neighbourhood as a preparation for the following intensive fieldwork. I attended all kinds of community events including group dancing, daily exercise, sport games and outdoor movies. The observations were carried out at different times of the day in the places where local residents often gather to have conversations, exercises and other activities. Each observation lasted 2-3 hours. When observing these activities, I wrote a memo and recorded the issues that interested me: the way local activists organised events, the common topic of neighbour casual talk, the communication between event organiser and participants and so on.

During the 2011 Mid-stage Assessment Programme (September 2011- December 2011) I participated in relevant government meetings, discussions, symposiums, public hearings and consultations with planners, specialists, local entrepreneurs and resident representatives. In these meetings I recorded the participants' way of speaking and observed the way they

mediate with the government. I also kept memos about the government officials' reaction and rhetoric. These observations gave me direct understanding about how community government communicated with the representatives of social/private sectors and residents. I also participated in several self-governing projects and observed how resident representatives carried out the whole project, how they deal with the government and other stakeholders to strive for their interest and how the NGO helped them to organise these projects.

## 4.6 Data Analysis

The data was mainly analysed in two stages: during the fieldwork I carried out a case-centred analysis on the basis of my initial observation, research diary and interviews and tried to extract some issues to further explore; after the fieldwork I integrated all collected data and further carried out issue-centred analysis.

### 4.6.1 Data analysis during the fieldwork

In the first intensive fieldwork I attended all kinds of meetings/symposiums/public hearings which involved more than one stakeholder. I carried a diary with me and wrote down the main discussed topics and the interesting points I found in the conversations, including the words and actions of the stakeholders, the way they express their attitude and the 'atmosphere' of the meetings. These records provided me some information which couldn't be reflected by sound recording. After my first intensive fieldwork I collected a large number of meeting records and used my research diary. Then based on these concrete cases I started my initial coding. 'Coding is the pivotal link between collection data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data. Through coding, you define what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means' (Charmaz, 2006:46). I categorised and coded information according to my research questions and generalized



some issues that I wanted to further explore in the next intensive fieldwork (see table 4-1). The conversation between the government and planners, local entrepreneurs and specialists led to the issue of ‘what roles do these actors play?’ and an initial finding that the government were actively importing ‘expertise’ into its decision making processes. However, to what extent these social actors gained decision making rights remains to be further explored. Observation on the neighbourhood self-governing projects aroused my interest on the role of ‘activists’ in organising events and mobilising participation. It led to the further question of ‘how are the activists mobilised by the government and how do they mobilise wider participation?’ Finally, I noticed the absence of ordinary residents in the public hearings and many self-governing projects. This phenomenon inspired me to further explore how they looked at the government’s discourses and practices.

Table 4-1 Case-centred analysis

<b>Cases</b>	<b>coded key words</b>	<b>Rising issue</b>	<b>Initial finding</b>
Symposium between the Street Office and planner	Objective making, technical suggestions, land use restructure, industrial restructure	The role of planners	Import of ‘expertise’ in public-private collaborations
Symposium between the Street Office and chamber of commerce	Industrial restructure, policy control on over commercialization, cultural events	The role of local entrepreneurs	
Nanluogu Alley cultural forum	Specialist consultation	The role of specialist	
Symposiums between the Street Office and Residents’ Committee	Residents’ Committee’s daily work, policy support from the Street Office, neighbourhood conflicts	RC members’ changing position and improving mediating skill	The role of activists in mobilising public participation
Neighbourhood self-	Activists, NGO, conflict	The process of	

governing project	mediation, operation of community-based organisation	mobilisation, different participants' roles in self-governing projects	
Public hearings and self-governing projects	Few ordinary people attended	Absence of ordinary residents' participation	Residents' attitude towards government discourses and practices

#### 4.6.2 Data analysis following the fieldwork

In the second intensive fieldwork I carried out follow interviews with government officials, planners, NGO workers, local entrepreneurs, RC members, wardens, volunteers and ordinary residents. I transcribed the 42 interviewed which I did tape record and collected the notes of the 7 interviews which I didn't record. Based on the issues I extracted from the initial data, I further categorized my interview materials according to the projects that they described and did focus data coding. 'Focus coding means using the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes to sift through large amount of data. Focused coding requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorize your data incisively and completely.' (Charmaz, 2006: 57) In terms of the first issue that the 'import of 'expertise' in public-private collaborations I coded the government's narratives about 'welcome the professional suggestions' while 'insist on making decisions by ourselves' and drew a further conclusion that the government just treated expertise as a tool to rationalise its objectivities rather than a new mechanism to better solve problems. Then I looked into the interviews about self-governing projects and coded the activists' narratives about how they were organised by the government and how they carried on these projects. I extracted the following key words: 'activist system', 'progressiveness', 'activism', 'self-dedication', 'ethical order' and did further discussions on the hierarchy in activist system, the Maoist

mobilisation and the Confucian moral cultivation in the self-governing projects. Finally I analysed the interviews with activists and ordinary residents about their opinions on the governments' 'building harmonious communities'. I coded their narratives into three categories: the understanding about their role and social responsibility, their opinion about community harmony and their attitude towards neighbourhood development. The conclusion I reached was that the activists and ordinary residents developed divergent subjectivities from the government discourse and technologies.

Table 4-2 Issue-centred analysis

<b>Issues extracted from initial data analysis</b>	<b>content of following interviews</b>	<b>Coded information</b>	<b>Further findings</b>
Import of 'expertise' in public-private collaborations	community development plan project (2006)	'Welcome the professional suggestions' / 'Insist on making decisions by ourselves'	The government's ambivalent attitude towards 'expertise': seeking for a balance between authority and liberalism
	mid-stage assessment project (2010)		
	Nanluogu cultural festival (2010)		
	Nanluogu development forum (2010)		
Role of activists in mobilisation of public participation	Juer community activity room regeneration project (2008)	Activist system/ Progressiveness/ Activism/ Self-dedication/ Ethical order	A hierarchical self-governing system/ Maoist mobilisation/ Confucian moral cultivation
	Nanluo community handicraft workshop project(2009)		
	Gulouyuan Community courtyard renovation project (2009)		
	Community public patrol project (2010)		

Residents' attitude towards government discourses and practices	Activists and ordinary residents' opinion about the government discourses and practices (2011)	Role and social responsibility/ the discourses of Harmony/ Neighbourhood development	Divergent understanding of government discourses and practices between activists and ordinary residents
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#### 4.6.3 Obstacles:

While doing research, being an 'outsider' is important for researcher to maintain objective. Burgess (1988:23) argues that 'being a stranger, an outsider in the social setting gives the researcher scope to stand back and abstract material from the research experience'. Thus 'they are sometimes able to rise above the prejudices and closed minds of insiders'. However in the interviews when I addressed some detailed questions, I failed to define myself as a real 'outsider' because when I had to understand the talker's experiences and feelings according to with my own experiences and feelings. The process of keeping outside was difficult for me when I analysed the collected data as well. As a Chinese citizen, my knowledge and experiences would inevitably influence my understanding and interpretation of the story. The research process was in itself a process of interacting between me, the project, and people that might be involved in the project, which made it hard to define myself as an outsider. This problem was especially conspicuous when I tried to analyse my data in the perspective of 'governmentality'. I found it difficult to explore and analyse Chinese problems from a critical and 'outside' perspective. My supervisors offered me great help on this problem. When I wrote the report they provided me many practical cases in European countries and taught me how to analyse these examples from the perspective of governmentality. When I compared these western cases with my case I found it easier to figure out my perspective and analyze my data from a theoretical point of view.

#### 4.7 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the design of this study including the research questions, the methodological approach, the case selection, the research methods used to collect data and the data analysis process. I want to end this chapter by reemphasising that I designed my research by doing in-depth research on a single case study because I wanted to use this case study to explore the detailed ‘process’ surrounding the changing dynamic of power relations. The selected case study does not necessarily represent the grassroots government’s community construction practices all over China. It is supposed to represent the process that the new governing mode is exercised by actors and the changing power relations between the central government, the grassroots government and citizens in this process. The next two chapters will move on to further explore the deeply embedded top-down state control in China’s traditional administrative structure and the growing bottom-up civil power with the community construction movement.

## **Chapter 5 State Control in China's urban administration system**

### 5.1 Introduction

It has been discussed in previous chapters that the urban neighbourhood became a new field in Chinese political research as the street-level government became increasingly powerful in the last three decades. Recent literature often described the urban neighbourhood as the 'frontier' of the state-society interactions in Chinese society (Gui, 2007; Wang, 2009; Chen, 2010; Yue, 2010) and developed different academic views on how state power was exercised at the neighbourhood level. Some scholars believed that compared to the Maoist China, the current Chinese government was losing its ability to mobilise citizens at the neighbourhood level and state control on society will further be weakened in the future (Lin, 2003; Pan, 2006). Others argued that the Chinese government was actually trying to make its power penetrate into the grassroots society by strengthening its administrative control on the urban neighbourhood since 1978 (Xu, 2001; Li, 2002; Liu, 2005). However, the scope of research on this subject within the post-1949 China has been limited and has overlooked a number of important questions concerning the political context of China: What are the traditional Chinese governing values and approaches at the neighbourhood level in history? How do these traditional governing values influence the current street-level government's daily practices, and how are they challenged by the proliferating western liberal governing values nowadays? Only by figuring out these questions can we approach the nature of transitional statehood of China and better understand the changing dynamics of the state-society relations in China's grassroots society.

The objective of this chapter is to explore the long-lasting centralised state control in China's grassroots society from a Foucauldian perspective. This objective is achieved according to three sections. The first section goes back to history and draws a review of the

traditional approaches of the Chinese government to implement state control in Feudal dynasties. The second section then reviews the ‘Dan-wei’ administration system between 1949 and 1978 and explores the direct state control within the Maoist regime. The third section moves on to look into the power shifts in the Chinese grassroots society since 1978 and further explore how state power is exercised in the current She-qu system according to more soft ways.

## 5.2 Traditional approaches to implement state control

For over two thousand years China had been a very hierarchical and static society. Two kinds of value were deeply embedded in China’s administration system: centralisation and population mobility control. In feudal dynasties these values were implemented by the government according to two approaches. One was the imperial power-centered urban planning which restricted the citizens’ activities in specific urban areas. The other one was the household registration (hu-kou) system which classified citizens according to identity and limited the population migration between rural areas and cities.

### 5.2.1 Centralised neighbourhood spatial planning culture

In feudal China, state control was explicitly demonstrated by the traditional planning culture. Ancient Chinese cities, especially capitals were designed in a centripetal spatial pattern to emphasis the imperial power. Neighbourhoods did not emerge naturally with citizens’ daily needs but were planned in a specific place with a specific scale to facilitate urban administration. The classic planning guide of *Zhou-li. Kao-Gong-Ji*<sup>17</sup> which is

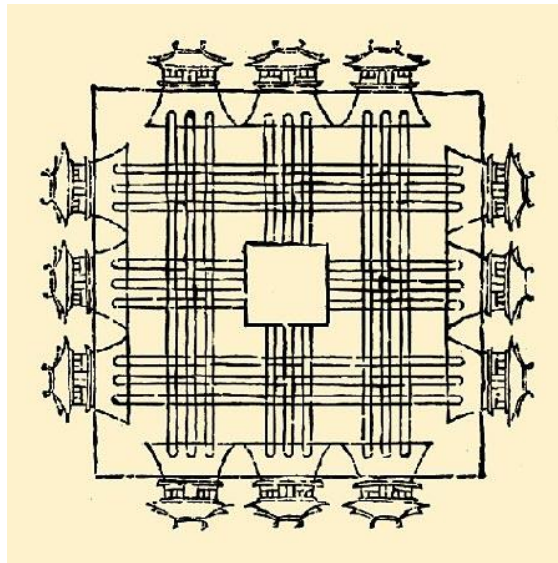
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<sup>17</sup> Zhouli.Kaogongji is the most well-known urban design guide book in Chinese history. It was compiled towards the end of the Chun-Qiu period (BC770-BC476) and it illustrated a mature planning value system which emphasised the power of feudal empires.

regarded as presenting the Chinese traditional culture, illustrated an ideal urban outlet in feudal time (see Figure 5-1). It describes that:

‘In an ideally-planned city, there should be a palace located in the middle of the city, surrounded by temples and markets, and an auspicious number of nine gates facing different directions. The urban area should be walled and gated in order to prevent the free passing, in and out, of both urban and rural residents.<sup>18</sup> Within this city, the main roads divide the urban area into different residential areas. People in different social class should live in different neighbourhoods with the people of their kind. The commercial activities within the city are allocated at the planned markets within specific time slots...’

Figure 5-1: The centralised urban planning guideline in <Zhouli. Kaogongji>



Source: Zhouli.Kaogongji. Jiangrenyingguo, Song Edition

The Zhouli planning method illustrates a deeply ingrained and internalized government rationality of ‘centralisation’ that informs Chinese traditional public administration. It is obvious that every principle in *Zhouli* is aimed at emphasising the imperial power and controlling citizens’ activities. The urban roads, neighbourhoods, gates and other

<sup>18</sup> Zhu, X. (Tang Dynasty). “官街皆用墙,居民在墙内,民出入处皆有坊门,坊中甚安” in *Zhu Zi Yu Lu*.



infrastructures are not designed to meet the residents' daily needs but are created by the rulers to facilitate administration and implement control on the citizens' mobility.

During the last two thousand years the planning principles in *Zhouli* were repeatedly exercised to build the capitals of feudal dynasties<sup>19</sup>. Together with curfews and restricted mobility as governing technologies, the whole governmentality is seen in action. In most of these cities, the urban neighbourhoods—which were usually called as 'Fang'—played an important role in urban administration to implement state control. The Fang was set up as an administrative unit with clear geographical boundaries and surrounding walls. The government's control on the Fang was very strict. The neighbourhoods were usually gated and residents were only allowed to enter and exit their neighbourhoods within specific time slots. The contact between residents of different Fangs was limited and a strict curfew was declared to prevent residents moving outside their neighbourhood in the evening. Each Fang was taken charge by a government official, whose function was similar to the Street-level government today.

### 5.2.2 Population mobility control according to the 'household registration' (Hu-kou) system

Apart from the spatial planning, The Chinese government used another important approach to implement population mobility control, which was the household registration (Hu-kou) system. The household registration system has been implemented in China for over 2000 years. It's purpose was to restrain population mobility and administer the population according to their social class (Chan, 2008).

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<sup>19</sup> the Chang-an of Tang dynasty (current city of Xi'an), Bian-liang of Song dynasty (current city of Kaifeng), Da-du of Yuan Dynasty (current city of Beijing) and Beijing of Ming and Qiang Dynasty all have an urban pattern which was designed according to the guideline of *Zhouli*. Kaogongji.

The household registration system was believed to have evolved from the population statistics system in the West Zhou Dynasty (1046BC-771BC) (Lu, 1999). Under the West Zhou Dynasty nation-wide population statistics were collected every three years in cities and rural areas with specific officials called ‘Si-hu’ taking charge of the demography. In Han Dynasty (25-220AD) the population statistic system was promoted nationally and first chancellor Xiaohe officially applied the term ‘Hukou’ as the basic unit of census and a means to implement social control. Citizens were recorded by the unit of family and people from one family were registered as in one ‘household’ (Hu). Once the citizens were registered into a certain household, their personal information was recorded by the government and they were forced to live where they were registered.

In the feudal dynasties the household registration system was continually used by the central government as a means of levy and conscription. The Tang Dynasty developed a sophisticated Hukou system which classified citizens into nine grades (hu-fen-jiu 户分九) according to their social status and levied them in different standards. The Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties all imitated the Tang’s household registration system and classified citizens according to their land property, social status and career. Peasants were always classified as the lowest social class and they suffered comparatively heavy taxes and levies.

When the Chinese Communist Party came to power in 1949, it subtly inherited this feudal administrative approach despite its communist declaration. In January 1958, the first household management law –The People's Republic of China Household Registration Ordinance<sup>20</sup>—was promulgated to implement a city-rural dual management system (Cheng-xiang-er-yuan-guan-li) which had been adopted since

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<sup>20</sup> The People's Republic of China Household Registration Ordinance. Passed on the 91<sup>st</sup> conference of National People’s Congress, implemented in 1958.

the Han Dynasty. This ordinance classified citizens into two categories according to their birth places: urban citizens were registered as 'Urban Householders' and rural citizens were registered as 'Rural Householders'. While the Urban householders (in socialist China they were usually referred to as the working class) enjoyed a range of low-price social welfares such as medical care, housing and education, the Rural householders (usually peasants) were excluded from the national welfare system and enjoyed very few social and economic resources (Ji, 2004; Yao 2004). As with the feudal dynasties, the peasants were still tacitly classified as the under-class.

This dual classification of citizenship led to a series of social problems for China's later urban grassroots administration. According to the 1958 ordinance, the movement of people between rural and urban areas was strictly restricted: rural citizens had to undertake a complicated application process from a limited quota through relevant bureaucracies if they wanted to seek a job in the cities. Urban citizens were not allowed to move around freely or work in the areas other than where they registered their households. With these measures in place, the government placed little pressure on population migration control during the 1960s and the 1970s. The household system reduced the national population migration rate sharply from an average of 3 percent in the first half of the 1950s to around 2 percent in the 1960s. In the 1970s the household registration policy retained a tight control of population movement. The population migration rate remained under 2 percent until the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 (Yao, 2004).

Following the 1978 reforms population mobility increased sharply alongside the urbanisation process in most Chinese cities and the urban government shouldered an unprecedented challenge concerning population administration. To stimulate the urban economy in the 1980s, the policy control on population mobility was loosened slightly to allow rural residents to work temporarily in cities. In some economic development zones (jing-ji-kai-fa-qu) such as Shenzhen and Zhuhai, specific

policies were established to encourage migrant workers to move into cities. In the past two decades, the migration of urban residents between cities has been much more flexible and the rural residents were allowed more freedom to work in the cities. However, in most parts of China the household registration system is still working as a chain to impede rural migrant workers from enjoying the social welfare they deserve. Although the migrant workers were counted as urban residents in official census, they could not enjoy the urban householders' welfare such as housing, medical care, social security and their offspring's education whilst their households were still registered in the rural areas.

In the 1980s the central government began to reform the household registration system. The transfer of household registration place and household type were allowed according to a newly established 'Nong-zhuan-fei' policy (See table 5-1): before the reform the change of household type from 'rural household' to 'urban household' was a critical step. Migrant workers needed to apply to the central government for the change of household type. After the reform this step was cancelled and the most important step became the change of household registration place. Migrants were required to apply to local governments for a 'migration permit' to change their household registration from a rural area to an urban area. In this case, local governments gained more control in deciding the household transfer in their administrative jurisdictions, however, it raised many questions such as the illegal selling of household quotas. This reform was criticised because it did not abolish the household system and only served to empower local governments. This, 'in many cases actually made the permanent migration of peasants to cities harder than before' due to the corruption within local governments Chan (2008).

Table 5-1 The Urban Household Approval Procedures for Migration

Process	Approving Authority	Significance	
		Before the nongzhuanfei reform	After the nongzhuanfei reform
Step 1: nong-zhuan-fei (from “agricultural” to “non-agricultural” household)	Central government	Critical	Not needed
Step 2: obtaining local household (from non-local to local)	Local government	Usually followed nongzhuanfei approval	Critical

Source: Chan, K.W. and Buckingham, W. (2008). Is China Abolishing the Hukou System? *The China Quarterly*, Volume 195, Page 582–606.

Since 2000 China gradually phased out the Nong-zhuan-fei system and adopted new reforms on household registration system. In late 2005 a national reform was launched to cancel the original household registration system. By March 2009, 13 provinces had abolished the classification of ‘Rural household’ and ‘Urban household’ and replaced them with classifications of ‘permanent household’, ‘temporary household’ and ‘visitor household’ (Wang, 2012). However, the reform of household registration is at an early stage and cannot yet eradicate the social segregation between city and rural areas. At the broader level, the household registration system, as a major division between the rural and urban population, remains potent and intact.

### 5.3 State control in the socialist Dan-wei society (1949-1977)

Influenced by the traditional values, the grassroots administration system established after the foundation of P. R. China worked with two main characteristics: firstly, at the grassroots level the state continued to use the neighbourhood as an administrative unit to extend its power into society; secondly, the household registration system was used as a main government technology to restrain the rural-to-urban migration. Generally speaking, China's urban administration system underwent dramatic reforms from a Dan-wei system to a She-qu system since 1949. However, the government technology of 'Fang', which divided urban area into administrative units and govern urban residents according to those geographical divisions, was continually used by the Chinese Communist Party in both the socialist Dan-wei and the She-qu system to implement administrative control on urban neighbourhoods.

In the first thirty years of P. R. China's history the central government adopted a rigid socialist public ownership system. The state owned most industrial resources and most enterprises were state-owned, known as 'Dan-wei'. The state implemented direct control on citizens through these enterprises: when a citizen worked for a certain enterprise, his/her welfare, housing, medical care and even the education and employment of his/her offspring were all taken charge of by his/her employer, or the Dan-wei. The urban citizen's life was likely to be restricted within a gated neighbourhood where all kinds of public services and facilities were provided by the Dan-wei. This form of neighbourhood, which was called 'unit compound' (dan-wei-da-yuan), was the most common dwelling form in China's cities. In unit compounds the enterprises not only provided basic public services, infrastructures and public goods, it also had a direct intervention into citizens' personal lives such as marriage, family relations and even personal behaviour. In this way, most employed urban citizens were administrated by their Dan-wei and the state implemented a population management system according to its control on enterprises. The social structure was like a beehive system: individual citizens worked and lived in a certain gated area (most unit compounds were quite close to the factories) and the urban areas were made up of a series

of gated unit compounds. The central government was located at the hub of this system and took charge of the collection and distribution of resources (Xu, 2001). The local government on the other hand, played limited roles in urban administration system.

Meanwhile, in the Planned Economy era (1949-1977) central government continued with a strong control on population mobility according to the household registration system. Rural residents were strictly prohibited to move to cities and urban residents could not relocate themselves easily. In this way, in cities there were only a small number of residents who were not included into the Dan-wei system including the disabled, unemployed and some socially disadvantaged groups. To administrate this group of people, a street-level administration system – S-R system – was established at neighbourhood level as a supplement to the Dan-wei system.

### 5.3.1 Establishment of the S-R system as a supplement of Dan-wei

The P. R. China's urban government is a two-tier system including municipal government and district government. District government was set as the lowest level of statutory government in the government system in the early 1950s. In Dan-wei society the emphasis on population administration was low for the urban government. Therefore, the central government decided there was no need to set a lower level of official government to administrate people outside of the Dan-wei system. Consequently, the central government established a 'delegated organ' (pai-chu-ji-gou) at the street level as a 'stopgap measure to organise urban residents who do not yet belong to any Dan-wei' (Bray, 2006: 533). The delegated organ, named 'Street Office' (Jie-dao-ban-shi-chu), was granted basic government functions but did not have core government rights such as statutory planning or publishing official laws and policies. The official institutional functions of the street office defined by the 1954 *Urban Street Office Organisation Regulation* are: (1) Help municipal government and district government implement correspondent policies. (2)

Supervise Residents' Committees with their daily work. (3) Reflect the multitude's opinions to higher level government.

The institutional setting of Street Office was quite similar to district government and like many of the street-level regimes in history, it had comprehensive functions and limited autonomy. Most staff for the Street Office were enrolled through open recruitment and not counted as government workers (gong-wu-yuan). The director (zhu-ren) and some 'key roles' however, were designated by the district government and were classified as government officials. The director of the Street Office was described as 'street-level minister' in folksay as he/she had to take charge of all kinds of street-level affairs. The detailed responsibilities of the Street Office could be placed into four categories:

- the economic work including attracting investment, assisting local tax collection and economic statistics
- the social work including birth control, labour security, sanitation, cultural and scientific education and other civil affairs
- the party-mass work including party construction, labour union management, and the Communist Youth League<sup>21</sup> construction
- the military work including conscription and militia training.

It was clear that the Street Office's role was more than a local service provision institution. Significantly, it had a close relationship with the Party state and the local military power which guaranteed the state control of its citizens at street level.

Meanwhile, at neighbourhood level, a neighbourhood-based resident self-governing organisation called 'Residents' Committee' (Ju-min-wei-yuan-hui) was established to work

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<sup>21</sup> Communist Youth League is a youth movement of the People's Republic of China for youth between the ages of fourteen and twenty-eight, run by Communist Party of China.



with the Street Office. According to the 1954 *Urban Street Office Organisation Regulation*, a Residents' Committee was a 'mass organisation founded by residents and has its members democratically elected by the multitude' to 'coordinate with the Street Office to implement policies and accomplish relevant work targets'. The members of Residents' Committee worked full time as 'representatives of residents' and were paid by the Street Office. In the *Residents' Committee Constitutive Law of People's Republic of China* (1989) the Residents' Committee's functions were only roughly defined as two categories. The first was to conduct community affairs such as promoting legal and scientific knowledge at community level, organising various 'socialist spiritual civilization' movements, mediating conflicts and other civil affairs. The second was to assist the government to accomplish community work including public security, sanitation, birth control, community education and poverty relief. Be more specifically, the functions of the Residents' Committee include five main kinds of work (Read, 2003:63-64):

- Conveying the information from the state. The Residents' Committees regularly receive updated information about state laws, campaigns, programmes and policies and their work involves conveying this material to residents for their information. This is achieved through visual displays in the neighbourhood or through interpersonal contact with residents.
- Facilitating welfare programmes. The RC members keep in contact with disadvantaged individuals including the unemployed, disabled, elderly people and migrant workers. For each of these vulnerable individuals, the RC members help the state to determine the eligibility for public assistance.
- Participation in public health programmes, such as sanitation programmes, community-based health service and free medical service.
- Assisting the police with neighbourhood security matters. Officers from the local

public security substation (pai-chu-suo) regularly visit the Residents' Committee for updated information regarding the neighbourhood crime and conflict. In addition to everyday disputes, the RC members also monitor for the police officers any potential dissent or political disruption.

- Maintaining the household registration system. The RC members' principal work is to assist the police to update and increase the accuracy of the household registration list. Meanwhile, they also need to register the migrant residents and foreigners in order to have as accurate information as possible concerning local residents.

In principle, the Residents' Committee was supposed to be independent from the local government system and representing the residents' interests. The RC members should be democratically elected by residents and the relationship between Street Office and RC in principle should be equal. However in reality, in many occasions the Residents' Committee worked as a branch of the Street Office and its main function was to accomplish the tasks apportioned by the Street Office. Although the RC members were elected by the residents, the director who made decisions was usually designated by the Street Office. Many RC members were required to accomplish political assignments for the Street Office such as population census, floating population registration and management, minority group care, helping mobilisation and organising community events and many other trifle matters.

The Street Office and the Residents' Committee formed a grassroots administration system – S-R system (jie-ju-zhi)– which worked beyond the Dan-wei system. Some scholars called it 'community government' (David, 2006). This name illustrated the ambivalent nature of the S-R system. They were partial government and partial non-government organisations, there were blurred legal definitions about their functions and responsibilities and they were treated as government by the ordinary people yet representatives of the community by the government. Nevertheless, basically they were treated as the real 'grassroots government

institutions' by society. The establishment of the S-R system demonstrated the central government's willingness to maintain its control at the grassroots level.

### 5.3.2 Power disparity between the Dan-wei and the S-R system

In the so-called 'planned economic era'(1949-1977), the Dan-wei system and the S-R system together constituted China's urban grassroots administration system. But power was disparate between them. The state-owned enterprises had comprehensive functions and developed with strong local influence while the S-R system worked as a supplement of the Dan-wei system and enjoyed very limited authority.

Basically, the social structure in socialist China was hierarchical: most citizens were controlled by state-owned enterprises which were directly controlled by the government. At a regional level, the S-R system worked at neighbourhood level similar to local government but with very limited authority and power. Within this system, state-owned enterprises developed comprehensive functions and became powerful at a local level. Many literatures described Dan-wei as a mini society in this period. Meanwhile, the S-R system was gradually squeezed into the margins within the public administration system and lost its functions in successive political movements. The unbalanced power distribution lasted through the planned economy era in the Dan-wei society.

In 1957, the National Urban Design Congress proposed the requirement to 'make the most use of middle-scale cities and allocate only one or two enterprises in one city to make the industrial distribution more even' and claimed that 'there is no need to carry out large-scale urban planning work immediately' (Chinese National Design Work Conference Document on the National People's Congress, 1957: 13). The central government completely avoided urban planning and decided to promote the Dan-wei system around the state. Enterprises

began to substitute most administrative functions of the primary government to take care of the 'working class' residents. Most large enterprises had their own 'Property-owner Committee' (ye-zhu-wei-yuan-hui) which was founded by their employees and replaced the Residents' Committee in function. Meanwhile, government invested most of the capital in hand into direct production departments and was reluctant to invest in urban infrastructure construction and citizen welfare promotion. This pushed work units to provide services which should be supplied by the S-R system including housing, pension, welfare, medical care, compulsory education and some public transportation. According to the *Labor Insurance Regulation* published in 1951, enterprises should pay social insurance benefits including endowment insurance, medical insurance, work injury insurance and maternity insurance for their employees. Meanwhile, according to Li (1992), over 75 percent of urban housing was provided by work units before the housing provision reform launched in 1994 and most of the remaining housing, although registered to the housing authority, was actually controlled by enterprises. Dan-wei began to act as a superpower at local level. Cities were broken down into a series of mini societies which were controlled by Dan-wei.

During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) the central government further strengthened the administrative power of Dan-wei and the S-R system was transferred into a pure political institution called the 'Revolutionary Committee' (ge-ming-wei-yuan-hui). The main work of the Revolutionary Committee was to conduct all types of grassroots political movements including delivering individual denouncement and organising the intellectual young 'down to the countryside' (shang-shan-xia-xiang). The Revolutionary Committees were nominally in charge of urban neighbourhood affairs but actually handed most resources over to Dan-wei. The government power was almost vacant at the street level in cities (Zhu, 1999).

#### 5.4 State control in the post Dan-wei society

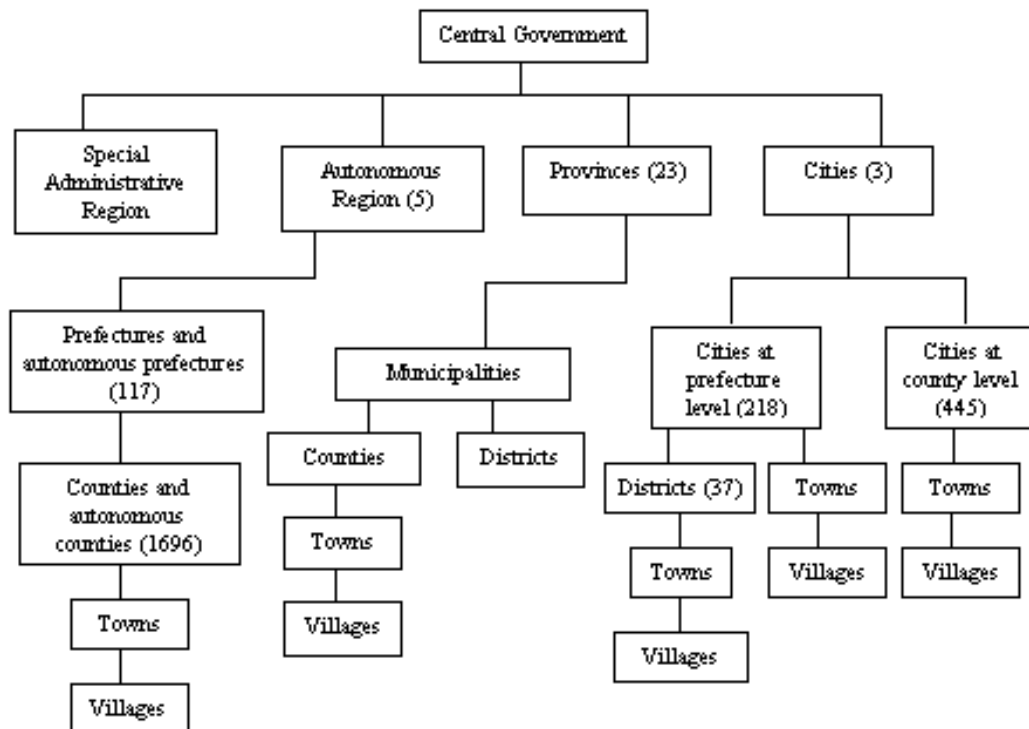
The 1978 'Reform and Open' (Gai-ge-kai-fang) policies radically reshaped the power structure within the government system and at the grassroots society. In the 1980s the urban governance system was gradually reformed in many aspects including the central-local government relationship, local government functions, fiscal system control and for the private sector market to adapt to the market economy and stimulate economic growth. Local governments were empowered with more discretionary power and fiscal independence. This power restructuring directly led to the rise of She-qu as a street-level political power.

#### 5.4.1 Rising roles of local governments

When the Communist Party came to power in 1949, it adopted a four-tier local government system which included region, province, county and village. In the 1980s the local administration system was adjusted into a province- city-county-village four-tier system to emphasise the administrative role of cities and this system is working until today (see figure 5-1). In this hierarchical system, the central government holds the most power and prevented local government from having too much autonomy. In the planned economy era, the municipal governments were compelled to submit all revenues to the central government and they then received the majority of funds for construction and fixed asset projects from the central government (Zhang, 2002). Local governments were highly dependent on central government and possessed limited practical power. Meanwhile, the hierarchical government structure contributed to a large-scale local government system which was all-embracing in responsibility but deficient in autonomy. Along with the ordinary public services (deliver public services including education, traffic planning, housing, library, local entertainment facilities, environmental control, refuse collection, town and regional planning and collection of local revenue) local governments also administered the services usually provided by the central government, for example, public health, police, public security, foreign affairs, international trade and market surveillance. Since every level of local government was organised with a structure similar to the central

government to deliver all kinds of services at a local level, their autonomy was limited to a great extent. Although local governments possessed administrative, juridical and military, most government departments took orders from their superior departments allowing governments at a high level to easily control their subordinates according to financial and administrative means (Xie, 2010).

Figure 5-2 The government structure of P. R. China



Source: [www.unescap.org](http://www.unescap.org)

After the 1978 reforms, the central government began to adjust the central-local relationship in order to delegate more functions to local government. Municipal governments were empowered in two main aspects: the first was the increase of municipal governments' fiscal independence and the second was the devolution of urban land use

discretion to municipal governments. The central government began to share the tax with the municipal governments and granted local government greater autonomy in allocating revenues. The central government then significantly reduced its investment on local projects and pushed local government to develop more diversified development mechanisms. Local loans, municipal bonds and foreign investment began to play important roles in the local fiscal system and local governments gained more control on urban development having control of these funding resources.

Apart from managing the fast-increasing private enterprises, the municipalities also inherited rights from the central government to take charge of the capital improvement projects of state-owned enterprises. Table 5-2 manifests the radical shift of capital construction investment (Ji-ben-jian-she-tou-zi) in state-owned units in Shanghai from 1950 to 1997. Central government withdrew from being the sole investor to playing a minor role during this period and the 1978 reform was obviously a turning point. In 1980 the portion of central funds for the first time reduced to below 50 percent and thereafter the percentage reduced rapidly. After 1995 the central investment proportion stabilised under 4 percent. On the other hand non-government investment including foreign investments, local loans and bonds played an increasingly important role in the capital construction from 1978 and by 1997 these forms of investment constituted almost half of the total investment. Local government gained stronger control of the local economy in less than two decades past the 1978 reform. Significantly, the state-owned enterprises which used to be prominent shrank abruptly in economic structure and their roles were subordinate to local governments. Geographically, this tendency has spread from big cities in south-east China nationwide over the last thirty years. Except for some industrial cities in which state-owned enterprises were still the local economic controller, in most places economic control has transferred from the central government to local governments.

Table 5-2 Shift of capital investment in state-owned units in Shanghai (1950-1997)

Year	Amount (Million CNY)	Share of the total (percent)		
		Central	Local	Other funds
1950	15.6	100	0	0
1955	243.3	99.1	0.9	0
1960	1222.6	58.4	41.6	0
1965	511.6	55.3	44.7	0
1970	775.0	67.3	32.7	0
1975	2117.5	83.0	17.0	0
1980	2573.6	47.5	16.4	36.1
1985	5705.0	19.8	39.7	40.5
1990	10762.0	8.8	25.0	66.2
1995	52771.0	2.7	56.0	41.3
1996	64204.0	3.8	57.0	39.2
1997	77643.0	2.8	52.4	44.8

Source: Zhang, T.W. (2002). Decentralisation, Localization, and the Emergence of a Quasi-participatory Decision-making Structure in Urban Development in Shanghai. *International Planning Studies* Volume 7, Issue 4, p303-323.

Another profound devolution process was accompanied by the land ownership system reform established by the 1982 Constitution which declared that ‘the urban land belongs to the state and the rural land belongs to the peasantry’ (ibid). The state separated the ‘land ownership’ from the ‘land use right’ in urban areas according to the 1982 Constitution: the ownership of all the urban land within built up areas belonged to the government but the



land use right could be temporarily ‘transferred’ (or sold) to enterprises and individuals by local governments. The ‘land use right transfer fees’ then became an important aspect of local revenue. In the new system urban residents could only ‘use’ the land for seventy years, after which they had to return the land together with the buildings and attachments on it back to the state. The same ruling applied to the enterprises, schools and any other institutions in urban areas. The 1990 *Provision Regulation on the Granting and Transferring of Land Rights over State-owned Land in Cities and Towns* recognized the ‘land use rights’ as a commodity and allowed the transfer of land use rights. According to the national policy, land use rights can be ‘transferred’ to an individual by paying the local government a correspondent land premium in an open market under the ‘supervision’ and ‘management’ of local governments. The municipalities inherited rights to decide urban land use from central government and the municipal planning and land bureau became important power-holders in the land use decision making process. The land transfer and auction became a major income source for local revenue. As China stepped further into the economic and social transition and allowed an increasing number of stakeholders into the urban economy, further decentralisation developed at a local level. The delegation of power was promoted between the municipal government and lower levels of public institutions in many big Chinese cities during the 1990s. District-level government began to share taxes with municipal government and enjoyed greater independence in allocating local revenue.

In the late 1990s, municipal-level governments were designated by the central government in its pilot programmes as the main actors to lead the ‘community construction’ practices in different cities. Their role was described by the central government as ‘to conduct and help the Street Office and the Residents’ Committee to formulate community development planning and ensure the carrying out of community construction practices.’<sup>22</sup> (The central government document, 2000). In the central government’s pilot programme in 1999, 26

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<sup>22</sup>中共中央办公厅文件(中办发[2000]23号)中共中央办公厅 国务院办公厅关于转发《民政部关于在全国推进城市社区建设的意见》的通知 5.1: ‘要指导和帮助城市街道办事处、社区居委会做好社区发展规划, 保证社区建设的发展有计划、有步骤地进行.’

municipalities were elected to carry out community construction practices and their experiences were summarised in the central government's 2000 document. Since 2000, the central government decided to further promote the community construction movement in more cities and municipal governments officially began to take on the role of conducting the community construction practices in cities. Lacking a theoretical guide and policy guide, the community construction movement was carried out in varying forms by municipal governments. Municipalities of Beijing, Shanghai and many big cities actively reformed their urban administration system to further involve district-level government and street-level governments into urban governance. The middle and small-scale cities on the other hand, usually dismissed the role of district governments and directly focused on empowering street-level governments.

#### 5.4.2 Growing up of the street-level regime

As the practitioner of 'community construction', street-level governments received substantial financial and policy support from the municipal government in the community construction movement. Basically, the growing up of the street-level regime has experienced two phases. The first phase was between the 1980s and 1990s when the central government focused on devolving the function of public service delivery to the She-qu system. The second phase was after the late 1990s when the She-qu system was promoted nationwide by local governments and developed with more comprehensive functions.

##### *Phase One: develop the public service function of the She-qu system*

In the 1980s, the national Ministry of Civil Affairs began to devolve a part of function of public service to the Street-level government and actively introduced the concept of 'She-qu' into urban administration for the first time. In 1989 the National People's Congress

passed the *Residents' Committee Organic Law of the People's Republic of China* which clearly pointed out that 'the urban She-qu should carry out all kinds of public service for the residents living in its jurisdiction'. The term 'She-qu' was officially cited in law and it was defined as its main function was set as 'to provide public services to residents.' By the end of 1989, 66.9 percent of the urban street-level governments had begun to deliver public services including housing, unemployment pension and medical care to urban residents (Zhang, 2009). In the 1990s, the central government massively reformed the national social welfare system to delegate the function of delivering urban residents all kinds of social insurance to the She-qu system. The retired and laid-off employees of the state-owned sectors were thus officially disengaged from their former employers in terms of welfare and their social insurance was provided by the urban Street Offices. Meanwhile, the urban Street Offices also took charge of providing government allowance and community care to the unemployed, minority and vulnerable groups and migrant workers. By 1999, there had been 9.32 million urban residents covered by the social insurance offered by the She-qu system (Wang, 2010). The She-qu system became Municipal governments' main approach to deliver public service at the grassroots society. In the central government's documents, the significant role of the Street-level government in community construction was emphasis as following:

*'In the pivotal phase of China's social transition, the urban She-qu system, including the urban Street Office and the urban Residents' Committee, form the basic structure of China's urban administration system. What they (the Street Office and the Residents' Committee) shoulder now is the significant task of reforming the Chinese urban governance system. Their roles in community construction are crucial and the need for them to improving their own institution is especially urgent.'* ( 'Minzhengbu guanyu zai quanguo tuijin chengshi shequ jianshede yijian', The ministry of civil affairs' opinions on promoting urban community construction across the country, 2000).

*Phase Two: Expand the function of the She-qu system*

In the early 2000s the central government began to work on establishing more street-level government across the country. With support from upper levels of government, the street-level government developed rapidly in number. Table 5-6 illustrates the change of government numbers in China between 1999 and 2008. While there is a reduction of municipality number from 667 to 655, the Street Office number rose from 5,904 to 6,524. The number of Residents' Committee on the other hand, reduced from 115,000 to 83,413, meaning that the average area of urban She-qu rose approximately 27.5 percent (See table 5-3).

Table 5-3 the urban administration system in China

Administrative institution	Chinese Term	Total number nationwide	
		1999	2008
Municipal government	Shi-zheng-fu	667	655
District government	Qu-zheng-fu	749	856
Street Office	Jie-dao-ban-shi-chu	5,904	6,524
Residents' Committee	Ju-min-wei-yuan-hui	115,000	83,413

Source: Ministry of Civil Affairs, 2009.

Apart from establishing more She-qu system, the central government also worked on expanding the street-level government's function and enhancing its governing capacity. In 2000, the State Council published official instructions to 'enhance She-qu functions, consolidate the organisational and mass base of the Communist Party in urban management and strengthen political power at primary level<sup>23</sup>.' Meanwhile, the Ministry of Civil Affairs

<sup>23</sup> Cited in 'Minzhengbu guanyu zai quanguo tuijin chengshi shequ jianshede yijian'. The ministry of civil affairs' opinions on promoting urban community construction across the country.

also broadened the function of the Street Office from ‘delivering public services’ to many other areas including maintaining the grassroots political stability, conducting community-based cultural events, providing community care to the migrant residents, resolving neighbourhood conflicts and accomplishing other kinds of political assignments designated from the Municipal and district government (ibid).

In summary, China’s street-level administrative institutions –although have been established for over 50 years –did not really take charge of the grassroots governance until the 1980s with the social restructuring and urban grassroots governance reform from socialist Dan-wei system to the current She-qu system. Differing from the Dan-wei system, the She-qu system has less control on residents’ personal lives and focuses more on integrated local development. After two decades’ development the She-qu system has expanded and deepened its functions from a social service provider to a new level of political power and has taken charge of comprehensive community affairs. Besides delivering basic government services such as public goods and welfare, street offices and residents committees have to maintain the grassroots political stability, provide employment chances for unemployed residents, manage rural-to-urban immigrants, resolve neighbourhood conflicts and accomplish many other political assignments. It is an inevitable trend that she-qu system will substitute Dan-wei system and is eventually going to be the basic social unit in China’s society.

#### 5.4.3 The politicisation of the Residents’ Committees

The last section discussed how the She-qu system replaced the Dan-wei in China’s urban administration system. This section will further look into the She-qu system and introduces the organisation of ‘Residents’ Committee’ (RC) which works between the street-level government and residents with an ambivalent status.

As introduced in Chapter 2, the Residents Committee has an ambivalent identity between the state and society: in law it is defined as a self-governing organisation which represents public interest, however in reality it is in many circumstances controlled by the Street Office in finance and personnel. Since 2000 the Chinese central government began to intensively enlarge the scale and functions of the Residents' Committees in cities. By the end of 2009, there were 84,689 Residents' Committees with 431,000 members throughout China (Wang, 2011). The scale of the Residents' Committees varies between cities. In large cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, a Residents' Committee usually has between 5,000 and 10,000 residents within its jurisdiction (Beijing and Shanghai statistical year book 2010). In Beijing each Street Office supervises 18 Residents' Committees and governs around 106,000 residents on average (Beijing Statistic Year Book 2009). The RC members approximately work 25-30 hours per week (Ibis). The work schedule can be flexible occasionally and the practical intensity varies with the assignments handed down from the government.

### *Election*

The process of RC election varies between cities but in most circumstances the election processes are highly political. RC members can be appointed, indirectly selected, or directly elected (Derleth, 2002). Indirect election is currently the most common method of selecting RC members. Usually, the indirect RC election is organised in the following process:

1. The Street Office issues an announcement regarding the RC election. To be eligible, some Street Offices require the applicants to meet certain criteria (age, education, experience).

2. Interested candidates take a competency test conducted by the Street Office.
  
3. Candidates with the highest test scores are then interviewed by the Street Office. Sometimes there are more candidates nominated than needed, e.g. Eight people for five positions. However, on many occasions the number of nominated candidates is the same as vacant positions, meaning that the candidates do not have any competition.
  
4. The existing RC members (usually there are 7-9 RC members in an urban Residents' Committee on average) then vote. The candidates with the most votes become the members of the Residents' Committee. Notably, candidates must receive over 50 percent of the RC members' votes.

In some other cities like Beijing, the election of RC members is more political. Only a part of the RC members are elected by residents as representatives, the others—especially the key positions—are appointed by the government and are classified as 'cadres'. Both the designated cadres and elected members are paid by the Street Office although the cadres usually earned more. The head of the Residents' Committee however, is paid by the district government and has much more salary than the others. (Zhu, 1999; Zhang, 2009) In 2000, 95 percent of the RC candidates in Beijing had no competitor when applying for a position in the RC. In 2006 this number reduced to 57.2 percent but the process can still be easily manipulated by the government as long as the key members of the Residents' Committee is designated by the government. The scope of participation in RC elections is sharply limited. Between 2000 and 2006, less than 1 percent of residents participated in the RC elections. Over 90 percent of the voters were representatives of the residents' group who worked frequently with the Residents' Committee (See table 5-4).

Table 5-4 RC election in Beijing, 2000-2006

Information of RC election		2000	2003	2006
Total number of RC elections held		3552	1684	1622
Method of nomination	Nominated by 10 or more electors	NR	NR	0.6percent
	Nominated by 5 or more household representatives	NR	NR	2.8percent
	Nominated by residents' group	NR	NR	96.5percent
Competitiveness	At least one seat was contested	5percent	NR	42.8percent
	No competition at all	95percent	NR	57.2percent
Scope of participation	All residents	0.2percent	0.7percent	0.4percent
	Household representatives	0.5percent	8.7percent	6.6percent
	Residents group	99.3percent	90.7percent	93percent
Results	Candidates who lost	1.5percent	9.5percent	6.9percent
	Incumbents who were reelected	43.9percent	47.1percent	56.2percent

Read, B. L. (2003). State, social networks and citizens in China's urban neighbourhoods. Harvard University Press. California.

### *RC members*

The RC members are usually middle-aged or elderly people with close relationship with the Chinese Communist Party. A survey carried out in 2001 in Beijing indicates that about half



of the RC members and 90 percent of the RC directors were Communist Party members, which makes the Residents Committee highly political. The average age of the RC member is 46 and over 70 percent of them are female (Read, 2003). The capacity of the RC members to conduct community affairs is usually not highly expected by the government due to their pure education background: 47 percent of them have a high-school degree and 34 percent of them have a technical college school diploma. Only 22 percent of them hold a certificate for neighbourhood work which is issued by the city government. 65 percent of them are retired or laid off workers (see table 5-5).

Table 5-5 The personal information of RC directors and RC members in Beijing

Personal Information		RC directors	RC members
Average age		45	46
Sex	Male	30percent	22percent
	Female	70percent	78percent
Communist party membership		84percent CCP	49percent CCP
Education	Postgraduate	1percent	0percent
	Collage	20percent	9percent
	Technical College	48percent	34percent
	High school or technical high school	27percent	47percent
	Middle school or less	4percent	9percent
Occupation	Certificate holder	57percent	22percent
	Retired	25percent	45percent
	Still employed	10percent	9percent
	Laid off	6percent	3percent
	Other	2percent	3percent

Read, B. L. (2003). State, social networks and citizens in China's urban neighbourhoods. Harvard University Press. California.

A main daily work of RC members is to pass down the policies and government orders and mobilise the residents to participate into all kinds of policy practices and government programmes. When the RC members worked as mediators between the government and residents in community, the formal power of the state was practiced by these mediators according to informal ways including private relationship (Ren-qing 人情), honor and dignity (Mian-zi 面子) and Social tie (Guan-xi 关系) (Read, 2003; Gui, 2007). Gui (2007) described the RC members' role as an 'adhesive' between the state and society which avoided direct conflicts between government and residents. With the mediation of RC, most interactions between residents and the governments were not based on challenge, opposition and repression but were carried out within the personal contacts between RC members and residents in peaceful ways: the RC members intended to mobilise residents in persuasive rather than mandatory manner and make use of their personal relationships with residents to accomplish political assignments. Meanwhile residents would express their opinions and emotions to RC in peaceful ways out of private respect to RC members. The state power was therefore 'privatized' and 'localized' by RC members in personal ways (Sun, 2000).

In most government documents, the RC members are usually referred to as the 'residents' representatives,' which means that for the government, the RC members are the main source to collect public opinions. However, in reality the RC members' close relationship to the party and their identities as party members can weaken their representativeness. Firstly, the conversations between RC members and the Street Office are unequal. When RC members collect the residents' opinions and reflect their problems to the Street Office, they can hardly bargain with the Street Office as its subordinate. Moreover, the RC members themselves would barely challenge the party and the government as party members. Therefore whether their voice in the government meetings can present the residents' honest opinions is doubtful.

Budget

The lack of financial independence is the main cause of the Residents' Committee's bureaucratic nature. In the 1954 *Urban Street Office Organisation Regulation* it was clarified that 'the funding of Residents' Committees should be appropriated by the People's Council (or government) of province and municipality'. In 1955 the Department of the Interior and Finance published more detailed regulations on the funding standard appropriated to the Residents' Committee in official documents.

In most cities the Street Office takes charge of the community fiscal system. To consolidate its administrative control, the Street Office usually manipulates the Residents' Committee's budget. The RC members receive salaries from the Street Office. The vast majority of the Residents' Committee's budget is directly allocated by the Street Office, which is in turn funded by the district government. In recent years the funding source of Residents' Committees has been broadened to four approaches: the first was the regular appropriation from local government; the second was the fees collected from residents in the name of community services, house rental, medical expenses, sanitation and security expenses; the third was the charity fund raised from local enterprises and the last one was the donation from individuals and enterprises (Li, 2009). However, even the Residents' Committee can collect money, in many cases the collected fees must be handed in to the Street Office and reallocated to the Residents' Committee after audit. In the other words, whilst many Street Offices gained increasing financial independence in the community construction movement, the Residents' Committees' finances continue to be controlled by the Street Office. The Residents' Committees were restricted without funding and policy support from the Street Office.

In summary, to extend the government power into neighbourhood, an important measure of the street-level government was to politicise the so-called 'self-governing organisation' of Residents' Committee and make use of the 'residents' representatives' to accomplish political assignments. The election of RC members is usually highly political and lacking in

public participation. The RC members, who were elected by residents (or appointed by the government) but paid by the government, had limited financial autonomy to organise residents' self-governance without the Street Office's policy and financial support.

#### 5.4.4 Dislocations of the She-qu system

As discussed in the previous sections, the street-level government rapidly expanded its functions during the last two decades and grew into a powerful regime. However, the She-qu system is not working perfectly. The state control is still deeply embedded in the institution and it causes many dislocations of the She-qu system.

- Overloaded street-level government

In the current She-qu system, the Street office has very comprehensive functions. Addition to delivering basic public services such as public security, welfare, sanitation and environment control, it also has to work on maintaining grassroots political stability, providing job opportunities for unemployed residents, providing assistance to the rural-to-urban immigrants, mediating neighbourhood disputes and accomplishing all kinds of political assignments designated from 'above'. When political orders are cascaded down through the hierarchical government chain, different government departments ultimately passed these orders to the community government. Consequently, the Street Offices have to work with various district-level government departments who are their superiors, and take over various assignments from them. The situation was described as 'thousands of threads above, one needle at the primary level'<sup>24</sup> and recognised as a huge dislocation of the current hierarchical government system (Zhu, 1999; Zhang, 2009).

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<sup>24</sup> Shang mian qian tiao xian, xia mian yi gen zhen. This sentence describes how Chinese grassroots governments are overloaded by all kinds of political assignments deployed by upper levels government.

Within the community, the political assignments are further passed down to the Residents' Committees and may fall to dead ends. As most of the RC members are less-educated retired seniors, the Residents Committees often find themselves trapped in a dilemma with 'no rights, no funding and lacking technicians but with too many responsibilities'. Research on a community in Xuan-wu District of Beijing reveals that for a Residents' Committee with only 6 members who have to take charge of 6597 residents, the RC members have 139 kinds of routine working items deployed by the Street Office. Meanwhile, they have to accomplish all kinds of temporary political assignments such as 'yan-da' (anti-gang movement), 'Chuang-wei' (community-level sanitation promotion) and 'Bao-xian' (promotion of CCP knowledge and spirit among party members) (Li, 2009). For RC members most of their working time and energy is occupied by accomplishing political assignments and attending various government meetings. There is a limited amount of time to conduct self-governing work, which means that their practical efficiency is low. Meanwhile, increasing rural-to-urban migrants and accompanying social problems such as segregation, crime, housing shortage and pollution throw up more challenges for the street-level governments. In a large Chinese city the average resident population in the jurisdiction of a Street Office is about 100,000, which is almost the population of a mid-sized city in UK. With limited resources, experience and staff, the She-qu could hardly work without help from economic and social sectors.

- Lack of public participation

In the current She-qu system, ordinary residents do not have an open channel to know the Street Office's daily work. The bureaucratic nature of the Residents Committee further reduced residents' desire and opportunities to participate in community affairs. Although the Residents' Committee elections are gradually open to the public, it does not change the fact that the Residents' Committees are basically controlled by the Street Office. Furthermore, the director of the Residents' Committee is usually designated by the government so the decisions are still made by the 'leadership' rather than by democratic voting. Ordinary residents usually have quite limited motivation to participate in RC elections. For most ordinary residents, the sense of belongingness to current She-qu system is less than to the former Dan-wei compound unit and therefore the consciousness and aspiration to become involved in community affairs is low. In a

municipal census carried out in a Shanghai in 2006, only 25 percent of citizens would like to participate in community affairs and over 70 percent of these were retired senior people (Li, 2009). In most circumstances residents only participate in sport and cultural events. Political and religious events have been strictly prohibited since the religious organisation of 'Fa-long-gong' stirred up a nationwide political riot in 1999.

## 5.5 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed China's grassroots administration system from feudal dynasties to the P. R. China and explored state control in the grassroots Chinese society from a Foucauldian perspective. It concludes that with the long-lasting government rationality of centralisation and population mobility control, the Chinese government developed three different kinds of technologies at the street level. Generally speaking the government technologies have been changing with time, with less direct control on individual mobility and intervention in personal lives, but more indirect intervention in individual conduct and values. Firstly, in Feudal Dynasties, urban neighbourhood is officially included in the centralised 'Zhou-li' planning system as a basic administrative unit. The state implemented control on citizens according to curfews, gated neighbourhoods and other strict policies to directly restrain population mobility. Secondly, in Maoist China, urban neighbourhood was included as a part of the state-owned enterprises (Dan-wei) in both public administration system and in spatial planning. The state can still exert direct control on citizens' welfares, housing, education and even private lives according to the state-owned sectors. Lastly, in the post-maoist China, the central government's strategy was to establish a street-level regime –She-qu- to implement more comprehensive, but indirect public administration on urban neighbourhoods.

This historical review of the general approaches towards governing society in China has provided an in-depth understanding on the important role of the neighbourhood in China's

urban governance. As the urban neighbourhood was originally invented in the Zhou-li system as a political unit and has always been included in the urban administration system, it means two things. Firstly, we should understand the Chinese urban neighbourhood as a traditional arena for governmentality. The political sphere has spread in all aspects of neighbourhood life during the last two thousand years and somehow it has become a part of the nature of Chinese urban neighbourhood. This is proved by the existence of various street-level bureaucratic institutions in China's history. Secondly, although the governing bodies and governing approaches changes with time and statehood, we can always see various policies implemented at the neighbourhood level and active interactions between the governing bodies and public. This fact makes the urban neighbourhood an ideal place to research statehood change and social transition.

Meanwhile, the review of Chinese traditional urban administration helps expand the understanding about how governmentality is exercised in authoritarian regimes. From a Foucauldian perspective, the traditional 'Zhou-li' planning method illustrates a deeply ingrained and internalized government rationality of 'centralisation' that informs Chinese public administration. Together with curfews and restricted mobility as governing technologies, the whole governmentality is seen in action. This centralised government rationality in 'Zhou-li' planning system still influences current urban public administration. The technology of 'Fang', which divided the urban area into administrative units and governed urban residents according to those geographical divisions, was continually used by the Chinese Communist Party in both Maoist Dan-wei and the current She-qu system to implement administrative control on urban neighbourhoods. In the current She-qu system, the street-level government's governing technology was to politicise the so-called 'neighbourhood-based mass organisation' of Residents' Committees through financed and personnel and use them to extend the governmental power into the neighbourhood. More specifically, the RC members were used by the street-level government to pass down political orders and to facilitate social mobilisation. With the mediation of RC, most interactions between residents and the governments were not based on challenge, opposition and repression but were carried out within the personal contacts between RC

members and residents in peaceful ways: the RC members intended to mobilise residents in a persuasive rather than a mandatory manner and make use of their personal relationships with residents to accomplish political assignments. Meanwhile residents would express their opinions and emotions to RC in peaceful ways out of private respect to RC members. The state power was therefore 'privatised' and 'localised' by RC members in personal ways (Sun, 2000). This technology echoed with the Chinese central government's strategy to retain the social order in 'harmonious' ways and to target individuals as a new arena of policy intervention.

The centralised governing rationality caused many dislocations of the She-qu system including the overloaded street-level government and lack of public participation. These dislocations to a large extent impeded the street-level government's 'community construction' practices. The next chapter will move on to look at the increasing engagement of non-governmental actors in community governance in the last two decades and to explore how street-level governments actively changed their practices to develop a more collaborative governing mode.



## Chapter 6 Growing Number of Social Actors at Community Level

### 6.1 Introduction

The last chapter reviewed the top-down state control in China's grassroots society and explored how urban the neighbourhood was used by the government to exercise state power. As summarised before, the central government's governing strategy in the post-Maoist era was to develop a new administrative pattern which involved more non-governmental power and reduced local governments' burden on delivering social services and welfare. The central government's 'building a harmonious society' strategy (2005) once again emphasised the importance of widening participation from the 'social groups' and 'citizens'. Most relevant literature supported the rising role of social groups in community governance and some regarded their involvement as 'the foundation of grassroots democracy' in China (Liu 2005; Wang 2009). However, these discussions overlooked the complicated relationship between these social groups and local governments therefore many questions about the development of these social groups remain unclear, including: Why and how are these social groups invited by the government to participate into community affairs in China's context? What types of community-based organisation are there and what are the identities of their members? How do different local governments promote participation of the social groups in their own ways? Only by answering these questions can we understand the 'real' interactions between the state and society in China's context.

By reviewing the development of the social groups in the community construction movement since the 1990s, this chapter aims to explore the details of the interactions between street-level governments and social groups. It consists of two sections. The first section introduces how the private sector was invited by the government in the areas of community service and the how all kinds of community-based organisations were 'cultivated' by the government in the last two decades. The second section reviews how local governments around China development

different modes of governance in their daily practices to widen participation from these private and social sector in the community construction movement.

## 6.2 Increasing diversity of actors at community level

The social fragmentation coming along out of China's social transition gave birth to an increasing number of social groups from the economic and social sector in the society. As the central government actively promoted community construction across China, the private and social sector began to participate into more areas of community governance and their roles were recognised by the central government. In the central government's 2000 document, one of the main objectives of the community construction movement was set as 'to promote the participation of private and social sectors and emphasis the collaboration between the public and private sector' ( 'Minzhengbu guanyu zai quanguo tuijin chengshi shequ jianshede yijian' (The ministry of civil affairs' opinions on promoting urban community construction across the country). This section will review the emerging of private and social sector in China's community governance.

### 6.2.1 Private sector in community service delivery

In China, private enterprises began to participate in local public service delivery with the privatisation of the urban public administration system in the 1990s. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the housing reform in the 1990s commercialised the Chinese housing market and brought about the booming of real estate industry. Since urban land usage right could be transferred by local governments and individuals were allowed to purchase property, the Dan-wei was no longer the sole housing provider and the private sector began to invest into urban housing market. To satisfy the huge housing need in the fast urbanisation process, a large tide of real estate

exploitation was launched in most cities. As there was still a considerable amount of traditional ‘unit compounds’ in cities, commercial housing became a widespread community type.

The boom in commercial housing caused a huge demand for basic infrastructure coverage and public service provision and brought about the burgeoning of a supporting industry – property management (wu-ye-guan-li) – in urban communities. The ‘property management company’ referred to the service enterprise which provided professional services and management for a specific community and charge corresponding fees from the residents. In the new property management system professional property management companies replaced the Dan-wei in delivering a variety of community services and they were responsible to all community members. Differing from the Dan-wei system, the property management companies were employed by residents rather than providing free community services as part of an employees’ welfare. As a matter of fact, all community members (rather than urban householders only) could enjoy the service as long as they paid the management fees. Meanwhile, the industry was competitive and the residents could choose from many property companies.

Property management first emerged in major cities as an affiliated service of real estate projects. Later, it developed as an independent industry and was promoted around the state. In 1993 the National Ministry of Construction’s Alliance Real Estate Division convened the first national property management conference and declared the independent role of property management in real estate development. In the late 1990s property management rapidly developed with central government’s policy support as an important element of community construction. The role of private sectors in community construction was fully affirmed and the community services delivered by private companies expanded into many areas including infrastructure coverage and maintenance, public security, sanitation, greening, minority care and letting agencies. So far, most of China’s urban communities have adopted a property management system and outsourced increasing types of community service to private companies. By 2007 there were over 300,000 property management companies with more than 3.5million employees around China and 23 percent of service industry workers were working in property management companies (Xu,

2007). At present, the property management system is not only adopted in commercial communities but is also promoted in traditional communities and unit compounds. As new stakeholders, the property management companies have frequent interactions with Residents' Committees (or Property Owner Committees in some cases) and play an active role in public good delivery, neighbourhood landscaping, public security, sanitation and environment maintenance.

### 6.2.2 Community-based organisations (CBO)

Apart from the for-profit enterprises there were an increasing number of newly-emerged non-profit organisations involved with community administration in recent years. Relevant literature used different names to describe such community-based organisations: some referred to the profit-oriented property management companies and non-profit organisations collectively as 'community intermediary organisations' (she-qu-zhong-jie-zu-zhi) and focused on their service functions (Chen, 2004; Ren 2004; Zheng 2005; Wang 2009 ); some categorised them as a kind of 'quasi-NGO' and emphasised their ability to deliver welfare and community care (Yang and Ming, 2008; Xing, 2012). Other research focused on the self-governing function of those community-based organisations and named them 'residents' self-governing organisation' (ju-min-zi-zhi-zu-zhi), 'community civil organisation' (she-qu-min-jian-zu-zhi) or 'community charity organisation' (she-qu-ci-shan-zu-zhi) (Chen, 2004, Li, 2005; Song, 2009; Chen, 2011; Zhu, 2011).

There is a lack of detailed research on the categorisation, constitution and functions of the community-based organisations in China so far. A narrow definition was that community-based organisations referred to the organisations, associations and groups spontaneously organised and formed by community members by law conducting self-management, self-education, self-service and self-entertainment activities within one specific community

(Wang & Yang, 2003). Those organisations usually were founded by local elites and community ‘activists’ and funded by the Street Office or the Residents’ Committee. Most members were retired seniors or experienced community ‘leaders’. Wang (2004) categorised these community-based organisations according to their functions and classified them as cultural-education-sports organisations, welfare organisations; rights protecting organisations, voluntary organisations and public service organisations. They concluded that there are three main characteristics of community-based organisations included being geographically bounded, spontaneous and mass-based (Wang and Liu, 2004). In reality, many of those organisations still have a close relationship with the street-level government due to their lack of financial independence and the government’s policy control on NGO. The broad definition of community-based organisation included both the organisations formed by community members (residents’ civil organisation) and the professional social organisations which provided services and technical assistance for different communities (intermediary social organisation) (Song, 2009). In recent years both the residents’ civil organisations and the intermediary social organisations took on some responsibilities in community governance.

#### (1) Residents’ Civil Organisation (Ju-min-zi-wo-zu-zhi) (RCO)

The ‘Residents’ Civil Organisations’ (RCO) refer to the clubs, associations, groups and organisations founded by the residents and representatives of a specific community and conducting all manner of self-governing activities. Some discourses treated the Residents Committee as a kind of residents’ civil organisation (Lin, 2003; Xu, 2006; Yu, 2009) but this study views the Street Office and the Residents’ Committee as a whole administration system so does not count the Residents’ Committee as a residents’ civil organisation. Song (2009) identified three types of RCO including:

- The self-entertaining organisations, or leisure organisations such as art and sports

clubs;

- The self-service organisations which deal with public environmental administration such as sanitation groups, dispute-mediating groups and public security groups.
- The social service organisations which work with charity, community care, career employment and community education.

The burgeoning of RCOs has been intertwined with the increase of social problems. In the social transition there was an increasing number of laid-off workers, unemployed and retired citizens outside the reformed welfare system and the local governments could not cover all of their needs. Meanwhile, as the community type became diverse, local governments could not arrange the same community services for the different community groups in the traditional way. The emerging problems brought about a huge demand for self-governance by the residents which led to the central government subsequently loosening the control on the founding of civil societies. By 2004, there were 71,375 registered RCOs and many more unregistered ones around the state; by 2009, there had been 2593 registered RCOs solely in Beijing (Song, 2009).

Meanwhile, the RCO is believed to be a new approach to deal with the social segregation, alienation and loneliness and enhance the communication between local residents and immigrants. The self-entertaining RCO is the most developed type so far. Most urban communities now have some arts or sports associations, teams and groups which organise all kinds of community events and they attract increasing senior citizen participation. At the same time, the self-governing functions of service RCOs and voluntary RCOs are increasingly valued by the government. Street-level governments in many cities begin to 'cultivate' professional RCOs to hand over more responsibilities to them. For example, Ningbo's street-level governments developed RCOs into non-profit enterprises which were organised by the Street Office and provided comprehensive services including property

management, housing agency and public service to the community members. In this way unemployed community members were hired by the RCOs to work for their own communities and so the interactions between neighbours were enhanced (Ministry of Civil Affairs of Ningbo, 2009). Now, RCOs are playing a more important role in welfare provision, community care and helping the poor, laid-off, unemployed, minority groups and rural-to-urban migrants with their employment. In Beijing over 3 million residents were enrolled as part-time paid community volunteers for the 2008 Olympics and after the Olympics most voluntary teams continued working as RCOs and provided many jobs for the elderly and unemployed residents. By 2010 there were 15,400 community voluntary organisations with more than 3.6 million volunteers (Ministry of Civil Affairs 2012).

## (2) Intermediary Social Organisation

Alongside the residents' civil organisations, there are some professional intermediary social organisations (ISO) and groups involved with community governance in wider areas such as rights protection, neighbourhood planning, public participation promotion, self-governing capacity building and welfare coverage. These social organisations acted as technical providers' roles in the neighbourhood-based projects. In most circumstances the community governments were still the main body to cultivate RCOs. However, the fast growth of RCOs in recent years required more professional technical support and local governments actively sought more efficient ways to integrate community resources. The ISO was believed to be playing a more important role in the community governance system (Song, 2009).

In conclusion, the social fragmentation coming along out of China's social transition gave birth to an increasing number of interest groups at community level from the economic and social sector. The interactions between these groups have been increasing with the deepening of community construction during the past decade. The community-based

organisation was targeted as an important part of the future community governance system and local governments were keen to ‘cultivate’ CBOs in their own ways. Although the functions of CBOs were immature and the operation of them was still affected by community governments, there was increasing civil power growing at community level.

### 6.3 Experiences across the country to develop a more collaborative community governing mode

The last section introduced the emerging of private sector and community-based organisation in community service delivery. These actors provided a driving force to push the government to develop a more collaborative governing mode. In 2000, the central government began to intensively promote the community construction movement across the country. Municipalities were encouraged to explore their innovative governing modes and ‘adjust measures to local conditions’ (The ministry of civil affairs’ opinions on promoting urban community construction across the country, 2000). It was emphasised by the central government that ‘we should insist on being practical and realistic. We should respect the local context and carry out the community construction practices according to practical needs and start from meeting the most urgent needs’ (ibid). Following this instruction, local governments began to explore their own ways of community construction in the early 2000s. Based on the experiences of involved cities, scholars summarized three ‘modes’ of community construction, in all of which the local governments aimed at developing a more collaborative governing approach.

#### 6.3.1 Government-led model: Shanghai’s experiences

The first example of community construction is that of Shanghai. This model advocated empowering Street Offices and emphasising the function of the Street Office. The Street



Office was nominated as the main administrative entity to lead community construction and became a new political power at the grassroots level.

Since 1999 Shanghai began to reform its public administration system and adopted a ‘two-tier government, three-tier administration system, in which the Street Office was officially listed as a level of administrative entity. The boundary of community was redefined as the jurisdiction of Street Office and the administration system at community level was reorganised in three levels to empower the Street Office. Firstly, at the decision-making level, the Street Office was empowered to lead and coordinate other local government departments including local police, housing, health, industrial and commercial bureau and the vertical administration system was substituted by a regional administration system in which the Street Office was the main decision maker. Secondly, at the operation level, four committees were formed by the Street Office to take charge of civil affairs, community service, public security and community fiscal system. Thirdly, at the public level, local enterprises, local associations and clubs, self-governing organisations and residents formed a ‘supporting system’ to assist the implementation of policies.

Within this system, the Street Office was directly in charge of most community affairs and consolidated its power at the grassroots level. Private enterprises, social organisations and local associations were encouraged to become involved in community affairs ‘under the leadership of Street Office’. Meanwhile, the Residents’ Committee was trapped in a dilemma since its administrative functions were replaced by the newly established committees. The RC members, were either employed by the newly established community service center and officially became government workers or found themselves marginalised in the community administration system accomplishing the tasks assigned by other institutions. A new trend was that the Residents Committees were granted new functions of ‘promoting public participation and maintaining social stability’ and gradually changed its work focus to collaborating with the community-based organisations. For the 2010 Shanghai EXPO, the citywide Residents’ Committees took full charge of mobilising,

enrolling and training over 2 million volunteers and played an important role in maintaining public security. This transforming function was supported by some scholars and regarded as a new direction of development (Lamberti, 2009).

Shanghai's community reform was described as a 'strong state – strong society' model by some scholars (Zhu, 1997; Xu, 2001; Wang, 2009; Zhang, 2009). In this model the state's power was described as penetrating into society and in this process the government gained more control on society by enforcing street-level political power. Meanwhile, as the only administrative entity, the Street Office had to release some administrative right to attract more civil organisations and citizens into community governance and the civil power developed in this process as well. Shanghai's model gained approval for its enhancement of street-level administrative capacity (He, 2005). Due to the community government's promotion, the infrastructure coverage, public service delivery and community culture made great progress in the 2000s. Beijing, Tianjin, Shijiazhuang, Nanjing and Hangzhou followed Shanghai's experience and enhanced government functions in community governance. However, the government-led governance model was also criticised for its high cost and strong government control (Xu, 2001; Lu, 2004; Zhang, 2009). Xu (2001) claimed that the success of Shanghai's community reform was based on the strong street-level economic strength which was supported by the proliferating of urban land value and local revenue. By 1999 the street-level income in Shanghai had been over 10 billion Chinese Yuan. Street Offices could broaden their functions and enhance their administrative capacities in quick time owing to strong financial support. However, in most other cities—especially mid and small scale cities – Street Offices had very limited resources at hand and could not finance the cost of broadening their scale and function: Shanghai's approach was too ambitious for them. Zhang (2009) claimed that the government-led community governance was applicable at the present stage because local governments were inclined to enhance their control on primary society and were likely to invest for their own institutional reform. However, Zhang continued that in the long term this model is not likely to be the orientation of community development since as the free market economy developed, more and more resources would be controlled by the non-

government sectors and local governments would eventually lose their control of the different interest groups.

### 6.3.2 Self-governing model: Shenyang's experiences

In contrast to Shanghai's strategy to enhance street-level government functions, Shenyang's approach tried to weaken the role of government and emphasise the function of community representatives in community governance. This paradigm was named 'self-governing governance'. In 1998, Shenyang began a municipal-level reform in She-qu system in which the size of the She-qu was redefined at 'below the street level and above the Residents' Committee's level'. New She-qs were independent from the Street Office and classified into four categories according to their historic development. The first was defined according to a natural geographic boundary, called 'plate She-qu'. The second was the newly-developed commercial 'gated She-qu'. The third was based on the original boundary of unit compound and was called 'Dan-wei She-qu' and the last kind was a 'functional She-qu' which was nominated specific functions such as service and commerce. In all categories the She-qu administration system was reformed in three aspects. Firstly, the decision making process was no longer controlled by the street-level governments but by the Community Members' Congress. Representatives of residents and local enterprises voted for proposals at the Congress and the process could not be intervened by the government. Secondly, the Residents Committee was replaced by the Community Administrative Committee (CAC) which took charge of community education, public service and civil affairs. The members of the CAC included former RC members, local police and property management company staff. Differing from the Residents' Committee, the CAC was not subsidiary to the Street Office but responsible to the Community Members' Congress. In other words, the CAC was the executor of daily community affairs. Thirdly, local National People's Congress members, local elites and representatives of local enterprises formed a 'Community Affairs Discussion Committee' and took charge of the

consultation process and discussion of community affairs at the adjournment of Community Members' Congress.

Shenyang's reform abandoned the S-R system and constructed an administration system at a more grassroots level in which residents were granted more chances to make decisions for their own public affairs. The role of the Street Office was weakened and the Residents' Committee was replaced by a more comprehensive and community-based organisation in the reformed system. Representatives of local residents played a major role in the committee. This model was widely praised for its self-governing tendency (Xu, 2001; Lu, 2004; Bray, 2006; He, 2007; Zhang, 2009). The model was applied in Wuhan, Haikou, Xi'an, Harbin, Hefei and many other mid and small scale cities. Xu (2001) claimed that Shenyang's practices were applicable to most mid and small scale cities in China due to its low reform cost and fully mobilising of community resources. Lu (2004) and Zhang (2009) considered that the self-governance was the direction for China's community development in the future and that the greatest contribution of Shenyang's practices was that 'it broadened the view of community construction from government institutional reform to the delegation of power and responsibilities to community'.

Meanwhile, many scholars emphasised that in China promoting self-governance did not mean denying and weakening the function of governments (He, 2005; Gui, 2007; Zhang, 2009; Xu, 2011). On the contrary, in China's context local governments still had to play an important role in cultivating community-based organisations, delivering community services, promoting public participation and conducting community planning. As discussed in Chapter 3, the 'self-governing' in China should be understood as the 'self-governing with government control'. The Shenyang Model was doubted in many circumstances owing to the residents' lack of experience and capacity at the current stage. He (2005) pointed out that self-governing required a mature institutional environment and strong community capacity, which China lacks at the current stage, therefore the government's attempts on promoting self-governance may fail and cause inefficiency in community administration.

### 6.3.3 Collaborative model: Wuhan's experiences

The Shenyang model created a profound impact on the direction of community construction. Self-governing became a new tendency of community governance. The Shenyang model restrained grassroots government's functions which had required a high capacity of community members in the discussion, planning and decision making process. However, in most circumstances street-level governments were loathed to give up power in hand and the community-based self-governing organisations were unlikely to develop without government's support.

Based on Shenyang's experiences, Wuhan actively involved both local government and community members in community governance and explored a more collaborative governance system. The Wuhan model aimed at community self-governance but put the emphasis on both the cultivation of community-based self-governing organisations and the shift of government functions in the new administrative pattern. The scale of community was redefined as below the Street Office and above the Residents' Committee. The community self-governing organisations including Community Members' Congress and Community Affairs Discussion Committee were founded by election to take charge of the daily administration of community affairs. Rather than weaken the functions of former S-R system, both the Street Office and the Residents' Committee were granted new functions. The Street Office was reformed to work directly with the the Residents' Committee: the staff members of the Sreet Office were no longer divided by divisions but allocated to each Residents' Committee and directly took charge of the implementation of policies, service delivery and appropriation. The Street Office and the Residents' Committee were not in the relationship of administrative subordination: the Residents' Committee was granted more right to make their own voice and could refuse any unreasonable task apportioned by the Street Office. When the Street Office needed the Residents' Committee and other community-based organisations to assist its work, it had to hand over obliged power and

funds to corresponding organisations. Once the community-based organisations took over certain project from the government, the responsibilities and promises were transferred to them and the government only had the right to supervise the implementation but could not intervene into it. In this new mechanism, power, funds and responsibilities were clearly allocated to a specific department or individual and the evasiveness of responsibility could be suppressed. Community-based self-governing organisations developed according to the collaborations with the governments.

Wuhan's practice was somewhere between the Shanghai model and the Shenyang model. Local governments were still an important actor in community governance and took charge of administrative affairs but the functions of Street Office and Residents' Committee were changed in their respective roles: the Street Office represented the interest of government and worked directly with the community; the Residents' Committee represented the interest of community members and worked as a partner, rather than subordinate of the Street Office. Meanwhile, with local governments' financial and policy support, the community self-governing system worked 'with' rather than 'against' local government, which seemed more practical in China's current context. Xu pointed out that at the early stage of community construction, the government was necessarily the main power to conduct community affairs and cultivate community-based organisations and 'in the up-down promotion of community construction, the civil power firstly burgeoned at the grassroots level with a certain degree of government support and later became influential for the government' (2004). In this process the mode of interaction between the government and the community-based organisations changed from 'administering' to 'collaborating' and had a clearer division of work.

The Wuhan model is the most widely applied approach throughout the state. In most cities community construction is stepping from a government-led phase to collaborative governance (Wei, 2003). Beijing used to be a representative of the government-led community governance approach, but in recent years as social and economic actors were

increasingly attracted to community affairs by market forces, there was an obvious diversification of stakeholders and collaboration amongst them. Local governments were actively changing their strategy to develop a more collaborative approach for future community governance. Many scholars pointed out that more concerns should be given to the community governments' practices to widen collaborations with private and social actors. Zhang (2009) concluded that the collaborative model is likely to be more widely promoted throughout China as the pattern of community administration changes from unitary to plural. Ma (2006) claimed that with the further promotion of community construction, the community would eventually become a basic network in the society in which the governments, residents, NGO, civil societies and various other organisations launched face-to-face interactions with each other and efficiently made use of community-based resources

#### 6.4 Conclusion

This chapter explored the increase in the number and variety of social actors and the emergence of new governance models at community level during the last two decades. In the first section it reviewed the involvement of economic and social actors at community level and indicated that pushed by market forces, street-level governments launched increasing collaborations with private and social sectors in order to make them take over community services and decrease their administrative burden. In the second section it reviewed the Chinese local governments' experiences of community construction and concluded that in the community construction movement, many Chinese local governments were actively changing their strategies to develop a more collaborative governing mode.

The local governments' community construction practices during the last two decades well demonstrated the growing importance of both the street-level government and the social/private sector in China's urban governance. On the one hand, the municipal government devolved comprehensive functions to the street-level government and authorised it to design the whole She-qu administration system. It meant for many aspects,

the decision making rights fell to the street-level government, which was a good sign for wider participation. On the other hand, the pressure on governing an increasingly fragmented neighbourhood with ensuing social conflicts has quickly pushed the government to promote the involvement of non-governmental organisations in various public issues. The interactions between these groups have been increasing with the deepening of community construction during the past decade. The private sector and community-based organisations have been listed as important actors in the future community governance system and local governments were keen to ‘cultivate’ Community-Based Organisations to decrease its burdens.

Overall, the ‘community construction’ practices illustrated the tendency of more active state-society interaction in China during the last two decades. Basically the state control in the She-qu system is still obvious and strong. In many ‘community construction’ practices, the government exerts financial control on the community-based organisations and still holds the overall decision making right on critical issues. However, the local governments’ various attempts at institutional reform reflect a new tendency of state-society relations in which the government makes more effort on attracting increasing actors into the scene of government. Furthermore, details of the community construction practices pictured many complicated and ‘Chinese-style’ power exercises by local governments. Firstly, in China, government control in the grassroots society – although reducing with the economic reforms— is much stronger than in western liberal democracies. As introduced in Chapter 5, the traditional centralised administrative ideology is deeply embedded in the current institutional structure. Therefore in China the ‘community construction’ practices are implemented by local governments with a comparatively high degree of control, although participated by an increasing variety of social actors. Secondly, as China does not have a mature grassroots democratic system and developed civil society, the interactions between the governments and the private sector/NGOs are not based on ‘challenge’ and ‘supervision’. Rather, both governments and social actors put their focus on ‘collaboration’ and ‘mutual benefit’. The collaborations between governments and social actors are mainly conducted by governments and the decision making process is not transparent for the public.



Thirdly, due to policy control, the NGO system is still weak in China. Local governments usually have to ‘cultivate’ the community-based organisations as their ‘partners’ in their governance practices. Therefore and on many occasions, the government would provide technical, personnel and financial support for the community-based organisations or directly fund the community-based organisations. The relationship between the government and the community-based organisation is more delicate and complicated in China than in liberal countries.

As the Chinese government actively changes its governing approach to launch more collaboration with the social/private sector, there will be more active interactions between the state and society. The power relations between the street-level government and the participated non-governmental actors will become more dynamic and complex. The next Chapter will move on to explore details of these dynamic and complex power relations according to an in-depth case study in a Beijing’s city-centre neighbourhood.

## **Chapter 7 Governmentalities in the ‘building harmonious communities’ practices: the story of Nanluogu Alley**

### 7.1 Introduction

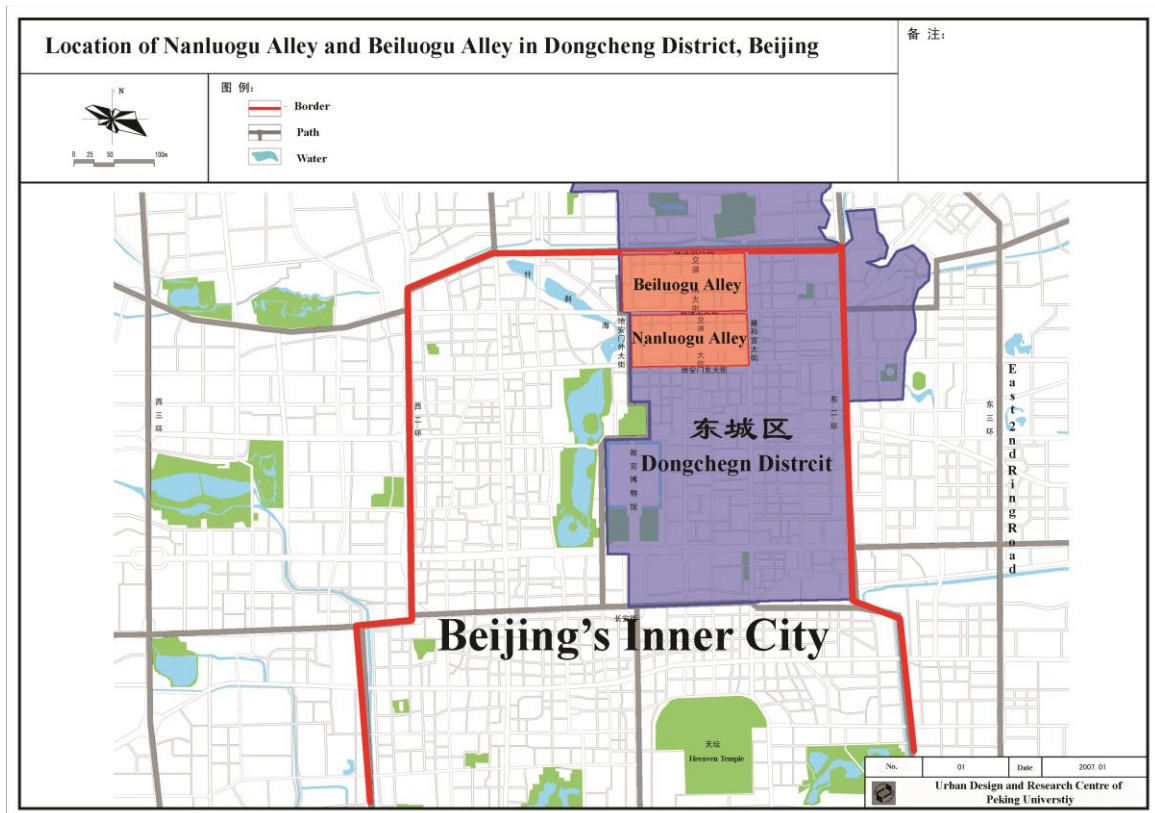
The last two chapters explored the Chinese government’s deeply-embedded rationality of control in the She-qu system and its changing governing value to involve more social actors in community governance. Then how are these seemingly contradictory rationalities reflected by the government’s everyday practices? The objective of this Chapter is to explore how the street-level government attempts to develop a more widely-participated governing mode meanwhile retain control on the community in real life. Nanluogu Alley is selected as an in-depth case study to examine the street-level government’s rationalities and technologies in the community construction practices.

This chapter consists of four sections. The first section provides an introduction to the case study area and the following three sections examine the street-level government’s governmentalities from three aspects. Firstly, section 7.2 looks into the street-level government’s collaborations with the private and social sector and explores the government’s technologies of making use of ‘expertise’ to accomplish its objectives without harming its ability to control. Secondly, section 7.3 gives concern to the everyday community life and attempts to explore the disciplinary power that is exercised on residents in real life. Lastly, section 7.4 explores the ambivalent subjectification of different residents which is shaped by the government discourses and technologies.

## 7.2 An introduction to Nanluogu Alley, Beijing

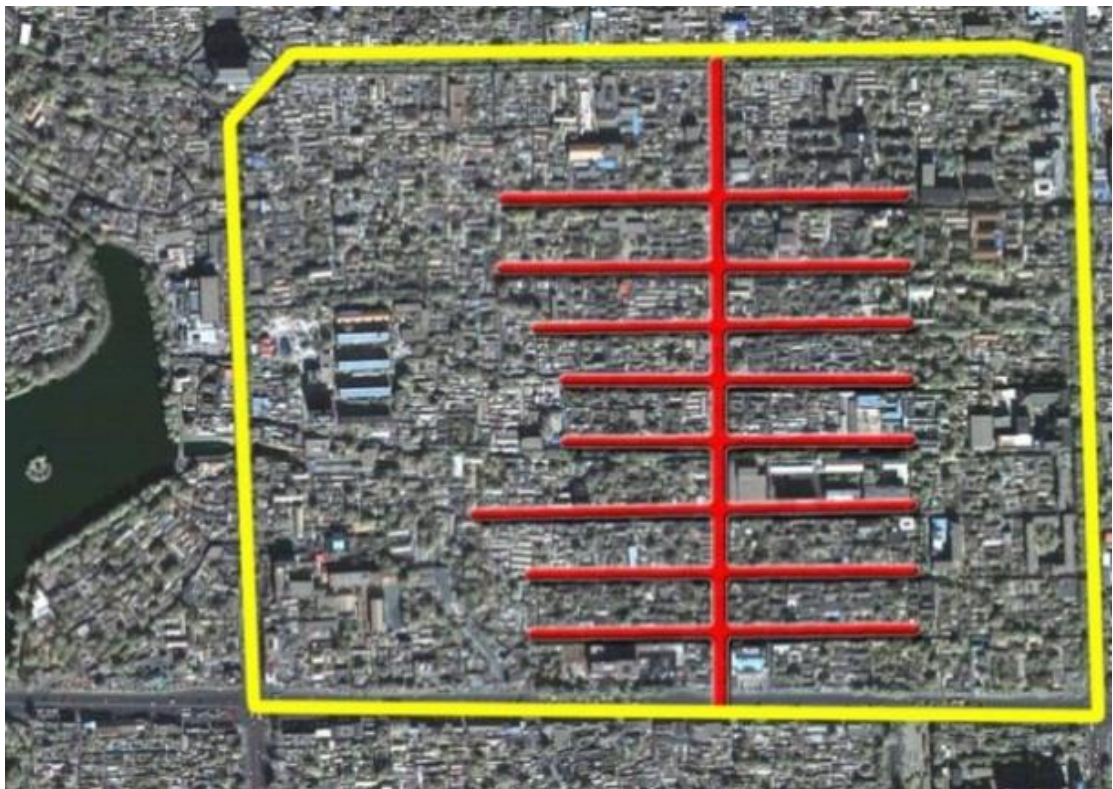
Nanluogu Alley (南锣鼓巷) is a traditional neighbourhood in the Dongcheng district (see figure 7-1) of Beijing. Located in the inner city of Beijing, Dongcheng district has an area of 41.8 sq.km and an approximate population of 919,000 (The Sixth national census of China, 2010) and has jurisdiction over 17 Street Offices. Often described as the ‘district of culture’, Dongcheng district is well known for its abundant historic sites and heritages. Nanluogu Alley is located in the north of Dongcheng district within the jurisdiction of the Jiao-dao-kou Street Office.

Figure 7-1: Location of Jiadaokou District



Nanluogu Alley emerged in Yuan Dynasty and has a history of approximate 800 years. Historically this neighbourhood was dwelt in by nobles and prestigious government officials and today the traditional Chinese neighbourhood layout is still well preserved in this area. The main alley runs from north to south as a commercial street with eight symmetrical small lanes on both sides extending from east to west into the residential areas (see figure 7-2). Owing to its complete ancient planning form, abundant built heritage and rich living culture, Nanluogu Alley listed as one of Beijing's 25 historical protection areas in the Beijing City Master Plan (1991-2010)

Figure 7-2 The centipede-shaped street fabric in Nanluogu Alley Area

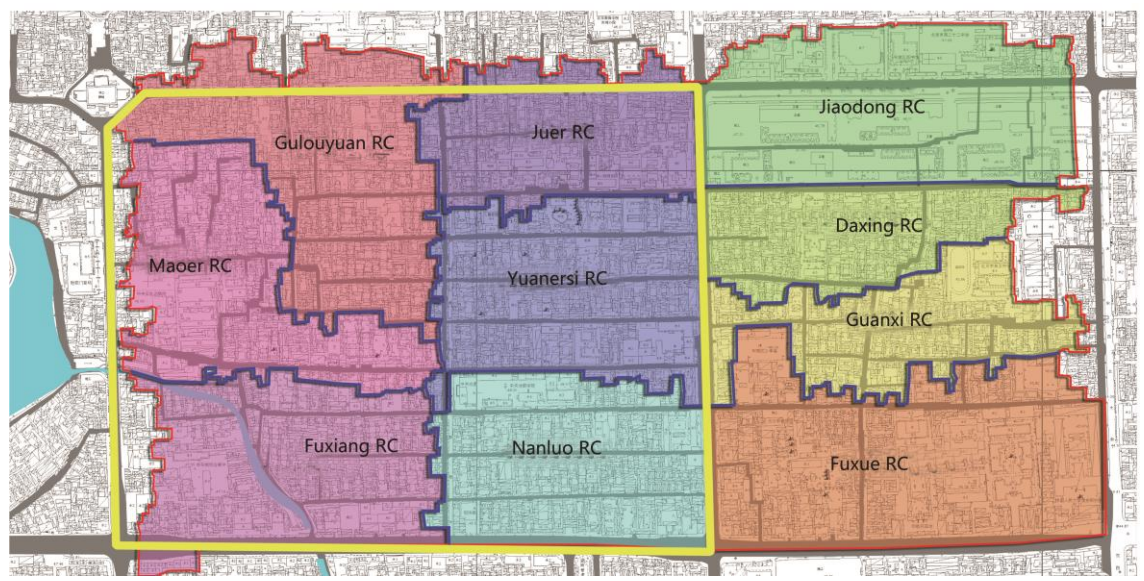


*Source: Urban Design and Research Centre of Peking University, 2007*

This research takes the jurisdiction of the Jiao-dao-kou Street Office as the research area, which is 1.47 sq.km. The population in the research area was approximately 57,000 by

2006, comprising 53,000 householders and 7,500 migrant residents. The Jiao-dao-kou Street Office’s jurisdiction (see figure 7-3) and is made up of 10 different Residents’ Communities (She-qu). These are Gulouyuan she-qu, Nanluo she-qu, Ju’er she-qu, Maoer she-qu, Yuanensi she-qu and Fuxiang she-qu. This study considers the whole jurisdiction of Jiaodaokou Street Office as the research area, she-qu, Daxing she-qu, Guanxi she-qu and Fuxue she-qu. Each She-qu has an elected Residents’ Committee with 7-9 people to represent approximately 10,000 residents (The Community Development Plan of Jiaodaokou, 2006).

Figure 7-3 The She-qu in Jiao-dao-kou Street Office’s jurisdiction



Source: unpublished material of the Jiaodaokou Street Office

7.2.1 Opportunities and impediments to development

In the late 1990s, tourism began to prosper in Beijing’s city centre. Nanluogu Alley enjoyed an upgrade in infrastructure when nearby historical sites such as Shi-cha-hai, Drum Tower and Bell Tower were included in the Municipal government’s historical district



regeneration program. In the early 2000s, bar and restaurants clustered sporadically along the main alley of Nanluogu, following by tourist-related industries, bringing the neighbourhood sign of development. The Street Office noticed this tendency and was eager to develop Nanluogu Alley into the next tourist hotspot.

Since 2005, the higher levels of the government began to intensively support Nanluogu Alley's tourist exploitation. In Beijing's *Eleventh Five-year Development Plan* (2006-2010) the Municipal Government officially clarified that 'we should revitalise the city centre by endowing its new functions including tourism and creative cultural industry' (ibid). Following this plan, the District Government listed Nanluogu Alley as one of the 'key areas' to develop tourism and creative cultural industry' (The eleventh five-year Plan of Dongcheng District 2006-2010). In 2007 13 million RMB was appropriated from the Municipal and District government (the Municipal Government allocated 6.2 million RMB and the District Government allocated 6.8 million RMB) to the Street office as a special fund (zhun-xiang-zi-jin) to upgrade tourist infrastructure in Nanluogu Alley. In addition, the Street Office allocated another 12 million RMB to replace the 'mall-scale, scattered and messy' businesses with 'high-grade, related and distinctive' cultural creative businesses (source: Measures for the use of business format adjustment funds of Nanluogu Alley, The Jiadaokou Street Office, 2007).

As soon as the Street Office took steps to regenerate Nanluogu Alley, they realised there was a serious scarcity of spare land. Nanluogu Alley was a residential area with high population density. By 2006 the community population density was as high as 36,100 p/sq. km and the site coverage reached 47.1%. Residential land (R) took a big proportion of 59.28% in its land use structure, and 44.79% of this was second-class land<sup>25</sup>. Commercial and financial land (C2) only took 4.27% of the area. There was a lack of green space and leisure land. Roads in the

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<sup>25</sup> According to China's urban land classification, the first-class residential land refers to the land with well-equipped Municipal public facilities, complete layout, good environment and low-rise residences. The second class residential land refers to the land with well-equipped Municipal public facilities, complete layout, good environment and mid-rise/high-rise residences. The third-class residential land refers to the land with relatively equipped Municipal public facilities, incomplete layout and mixed with industrial land.

neighbourhood were narrow and the traffic capacity was poor. It seemed impractical to build a massive new shopping area and develop large-scale tourist infrastructure in the neighbourhood.

Table 7-1 Land Use Structure in Jiaodaokou area

Code		Type	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Proportion (%)
R		Residential land	889463.17	59.28%
	R1	First-class	155984.33	10.40%
	R2	Second-class	671947.4	44.79%
	R22 school	Public service	61531.44	4.10%
C		Infrastructure	274349.38	18.29%
	C1	Administrative Office	87969.27	5.86%
	C2	Commercial& financial	64101.56	4.27%
	C3	Cultural& entertainment	12145.48	0.81%
	C5	Medical and heath	14610.02	0.97%
	C6	Education and research	93457.88	6.23%
	C7national relic	Cultural relics	1385.62	0.09%
	C9	Other	679.55	0.05%
M		Industry	10906.9	0.73%
	M1	First-class	10906.9	0.73%
S		Path and square	278201.53	18.54%
	S1	Path	278201.53	18.54%
D		Special use	47420.87	3.16%
Planning area			1500341.85	100.00%

Source: Community Development Plan of Jiaodaokou, 2006.

The complicated property ownership was another impediment to regeneration. Similar to many traditional urban neighbourhoods, Nanluogu Alley used to be administrated by some state-

owned enterprises and thus the Dan-wei were the real owners of many properties. In the 1990s, many Dan-wei became bankrupt and moved out of the neighbourhood. A small part of properties were privatised but most still belonged to the Dan-wei. By 2005, 48.21 percent of the properties in Nanluogu Alley belonged to Dan-wei. The housing authority owns 26.03 percent and individuals own just 15.89 percent of the properties. The remaining 9.87 percent belongs to military authorities or are listed as ‘historical relics’ and managed by national or municipal conservation bureaus (see table 7-2). It meant that large-scale demolition and reconstruction would be costly and demanding.

Table 7-2 The property rights distribution in Naluogu Alley area

Property rights	Area (m2)	Proportion (%)
Military Authorities	19351.48	2.79%
Private Owner	110058	15.89%
Dan-wei	333845.15	48.21%
Housing Authority	180236.4	26.03%
Other	49052.88	7.08%
Total	692543.91	100.00%

Source: Community Development Plan of Jiadaokou, 2006.

Apart from land use and property ownership, the business structure in Nanluogu Alley was not fit to develop tourism either. By 2005 service industry already took 48.3% of local legal entities and was the main industrial type in Nanluogu (see table 7-3). However, most of the local business were community-level and were classified as ‘at the lower value-added part of the chain’ (Jiadaokou Community Development Plan, 2006). There was an urgent need to bring in creative culture-related enterprises and businesses with high degree of mutual relation.



Table 7-3 the types and number of legal entities in Nanluogu Alley (2005)

Number	Industrial type	Number	Proportion
1	Scientific/educational/cultural/health industry	108	12.3%
2	Real estate	24	2.7%
3	Construction	21	2.4%
4	Transportation and storage	10	1.1%
5	Finance	3	0.3%
6	Other	35	4.0%
7	Service	423	48.3%
8	Commerce	251	28.7%
Total		875	100.0%

Source: Community Development Plan of Jiadaokou, 2006.

### 7.2.2 Actors in Nanluogu Alley's story

- Street Office (SO)

Jiao-dao-kou Street Office is the main administrative institution of Nanluogu Alley area. It has more than 60 staff working in 19 branches which take charge of comprehensive community affairs (see appendix 3). The key staff members are designated by district government as government officers, while others are employed by the Street Office as public institutional officers (in China these two kinds of officers have quite different welfare benefits and social status). During the last decade the district government has empowered the Street Office with increasing functions and responsibilities. The Street Office now establishes an overall plan for local development and other government divisions, which previously had greater power in their respective areas. These include public security organs, trade and industry bureau, revenue department, sanitation and green bureau, and the housing authority now should 'obey the command' of the Street Office. The

designated functions of the street office are quite comprehensive now and require co-ordination between different public sectors.

- Residents' Committees (RC)

Whilst the Jiaodaokou Street Office kept enlarging its size and functions in local governance, the subordinate Residents Committees' roles were marginalized and blurred. Before 2006 the key members of RC in Jiao-dao-kou area were all designated by street office, most of whose identity are 'retired cadres' (those who previously worked in street office before). Their main work is to accomplish assignments deployed by street office and to coordinate with their work. Most of the RC staffs are local residents and are therefore called 'resident representatives' on many public occasions. In 2006 the Street Office founded a 'Community Service Centre' (CSC), and most community services which used to be provided by the Residents' Committee including public health, welfare, social security, pension, and minority groups assistance were handed over to the SCS. In the past few years RCs were granted new functions in resident self-governing projects. As the 'representative of government' RC members played increasingly important roles in promoting neighbourhood-based self-governance projects.

- Planning Institutions

In 2005 Peking University Urban Planning Centre (PUPC) launched its collaboration with Jiao-dao-kou Street Office in Nanluogu Alley neighbourhood planning programme. The planning team, composed by staff and students of Peking University, took charge of the formulation of the 2006 Community Development Plan of Jiaodaokou (CDPJ), the Nanluogu Alley Conservation Plan (NCP), and the 2011 Planning Mid-stage Assessment programs. Besides the two programs, Jiaodaokou Street Office and Peking University established comparatively stable and long-term partnerships in community research over the past five years. The PUPC provided technical suggestions and solutions to community

problems. The planning students also launched various community-based research in this area and provided relevant suggestions for community government.

- Local Entrepreneurs

In 2005, the Street Office took the lead to establish the Nanluogu Chamber of Commerce. Although the Chamber of Commerce was defined as a ‘self-governing organisation’, it was partially under the leadership of the Street Office and kept in close contact with the community government. There were 45 members in the Chamber of Commerce by 2010, all of whom were local entrepreneurs. The board of directors included 11 local entrepreneurs whose business was located in Nanluogu Alley for a comparatively long time and had a good understanding of the local economic situation. The members were representatives of local merchants who ran various kinds of business.

- Specialists

To incorporate more expertise in decision making, the Street Office organised an annual *Nanluogu Alley Development and Conservation Forum*. Beginning in 2009, government officials, researchers and scholars from different sectors have been invited to give suggestions on Nanluogu Alley’s development. Specialists from the Housing Authority, universities, Chinese Academic of Scientists and Beijing Urban Development Research Institute were invited to discuss the latest development trend in the Nanluogu Alley area and propose suggestions for the development policy making in the coming year. For the last few years, the forum has been given media publicity.

- Non-government Organisations (NGO)

NGOs (in China they are usually referred to as social organisations) were involved in Nanluogu Alley’s self-governance projects as ‘technical assistant providers’, or sometimes, organisers. The NGO members described themselves as having a ‘bridging’ function

between different stakeholders. They built a platform for the dialogue between different social groups to resolve conflicts or to launch collaboration. Furthermore, as an important partner to the community government, they worked on promoting resident participation in all kinds of neighbourhood-based projects, cultivating community-based organisations, associations and working groups and the self-governance capacity building. Shining Stone Community Action Centre (SCAC) is the Jiao-dao-kou Street Office's main partner.

- Local Residents

By 2010 there were about 57,000 registered residents living in Nanluogu Alley, comprising of 49,500 local household holders and 7,500 migrant residents. The residents of Nanluogu Alley were reported to be 'active in all kinds of neighbourhood self-governing projects and cultural festivals' in media<sup>26</sup>. But a public opinion poll carried out in 2010 demonstrated that few people were really interested in participating: 43.3 percent participants expressed that they never heard about any plan about the community's development, only 8.5 percent of participants knew there was a development plan for the community and less than 3 percent were really involved in making it (resource: 2010 Mid-stage Planning Assessment Program Report 5.1.3.1).

### 7.3 Public Participation as a government technology

As discussed in Chapter 6, during the last twenty years, experiences across the country demonstrated that street-level governments were actively exploring new governing modes in which non-government stakeholders played a more active role in community governance. This shift reflected a new government rationality in which the 'expertise' of non-government organisations was used as a technology to monitor and intervene into individual conduct. The process that the social organisations take over increasing functions

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.5iucn.com/news.asp?key=228&tem=2>

of community service from the unskilled government officials according to their experiences and professional knowledge claim is also the process that ‘expertise’ begins to replace ‘authority’ to monitor many areas of community issues.

Nanluogu Alley is a good example in which the community government actively changes its vocabulary and strategies to involve non-government organisations in the community construction. Since 2006, the Jiaodaokou Street Office began to adopt the vocabulary of ‘multi-stakeholders participation’ (duo-yuan-can-yu) and actively launch collaborations with planning institutions, NGOs and specialists in all kinds of community-based projects in a search for ‘technical assistance’. This section will look into these projects and explore how the government makes use of the expertise of the involved social actors to accomplish its objectives meanwhile still insists on retaining overall control on the collaborations.

### 7.3.1 Participation of Planners

In Nanluogu Alley’s regeneration programme, the Street Office realised that they lacked experience and knowledge to conduct such a whole programme and professional help was needed to make a strategic and long-term plan for Nanluogu Alley’s overall development. In 2006, the Street Office launched a joint program with the Peking University Urban Planning Centre (PUPC), aiming to compose a twenty-year strategic plan for Nanluogu Alley. The project started at the end of 2005 and took around six months. The planner team, made up of 16 staff members and students from the Urban and Regional Planning department of Peking University, took charge of data collection, public consultation and the formulation of the community strategic development plans.

At the beginning of the collaboration, the government was insistent in retaining control of the ‘overall direction’ and it cautiously controlled the area that the planner could participate

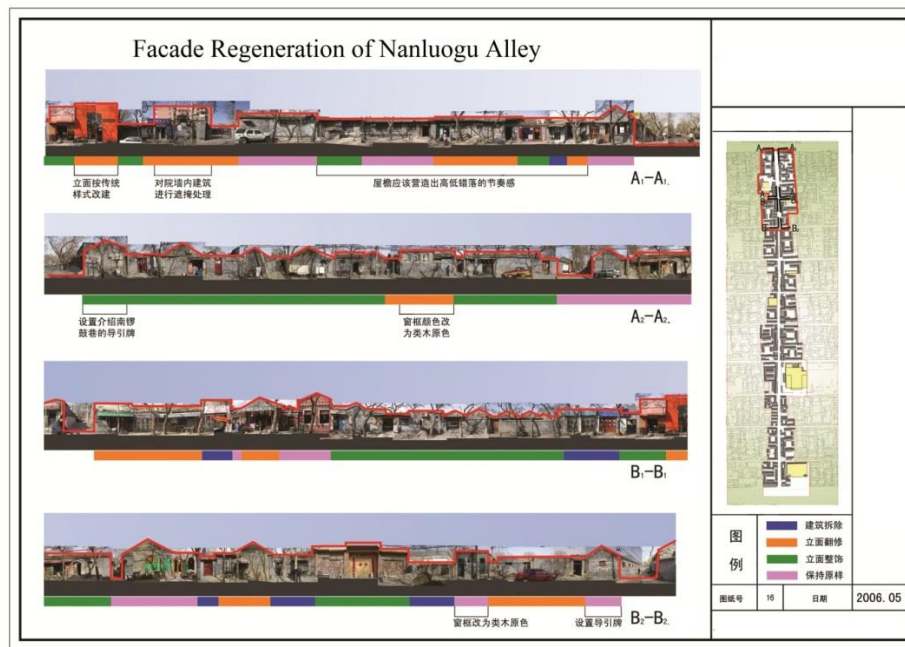
in. The director of the planning team reflected the start of collaboration with the Street Office and expressed that they were clear about the fact that the planners' expertise was only respected at the technical realms: 'When the directors of the Jiaodaokou Street Office came to us for collaboration, he actually was quite clear of what the Street Office should do in response to upper-level governments' instruments. What they needed are just our professional vocabularies to translate their opinions into an official strategic plan and provide detailed technical suggestions. The government's determination to control the overall direction was obvious and main development direction of Nanluogu Alley had already been decided' (Interview No.44).

In the formulation of the community strategic plan, the expertise of planners was used by the government to justify its intent and rationalise its objectives. One example was land use restructuring. The Street Office hoped to replace the residences along the main alley with business in order to increase its revenue. But by law it did not have right to change local land use and the residents would not be willing to move away if the government directly told them that they had to move because the government wanted to make money from their residences. In order to solve this problem, the Street Office's approach was to change a way to describe their intention: in the strategic plan, land restructuring was defined as 'a necessity for the overall scene protection of Nanluogu Alley' and changing residential land into commercial use was described as 'an innovative way to preserve heritage building.' In addition, the strategic plan added a professional name to the land restructuring plan – the 'positive conservation strategy', to shift public's attention from potential conflict of relocation to the promising future of this neighbourhood.

With an official strategic plan and the planners' 'professional suggestions', the Street Office was backed up to launch the regeneration practices in a more desired way. Rather than 'improving the residents' living environment' as promised in the plan, the focus of the regeneration was on renovating the business area. To make the overall scene of Nanluogu Alley 'harmonious', the planners created a guide line for the main alley's façade renovation.

The guideline required ‘comparatively coherent’ roof outline, wall texture, door and window style, signboard size and architecture structure long the main alley. To reduce the property owners’ aversion, the Street Office gave unconditional financial support for the renovation of the buildings along the main alley and gained the support from business owners. Inappropriate signboards, added floors, rooftops and canopies were demolished with extra compensation (see figure 7-4). By 2007, the Street Office had painted over 60000 sq.m of wall, funded façade renovation for 95 buildings, regulated 112 advertising signs, demolished 126 illegal constructions and demolished 29 illegal advertising boardings. By 2010, the government installed awnings for 2000 sq.m., outdoor advertising plaques for 2500 sq.m and painted over 50000 sq.m of wall.

Figure 7-4 guideline for façade renovation in Nanluogu Alley Conservation Plan



Source: Nanluogu Alley Conservation Plan, 2006.

In terms of land replacement, the planners introduced Taiwan’s experience of ‘shop-house’ (wu-dian) in the planning scheme as evidence of the advantages of mixed land use. The

principle of land use restructuring was set as to ‘strictly control the plot ratio and site coverage while encourage appropriate land use mixture’. The Street Office granted extra allowance to property owners who would like to change their properties and provided technical support for the inner structural change, in order to expand business space. Figure 7-5 illustrates the residential land which was replaced by commercial and other tourist relevant land along the main alley of Nanluogu between 2006 and 2010. By 2009, over 50% of the buildings along the main alley had been changed into commercial usage including restaurants, cafés, bars, souvenir shops and other tourist-related industries<sup>27</sup>. The business area of Nanluogu Alley reached 18,600 sq.m, which was twice that in 2006. Interviews with the Street Officials unveiled the government’s satisfaction with their ‘soft measures’ to restructure the land use of Nanluogu Alley. The director of the Street Office kept emphasising that he was ‘proud of the land replacement along the main alley because with planning experts’ professional suggestions we found it so much easier to communicate with the residents and business owners there was not even a single violent protest... (Interview, No.45). Apparantly rather than adopting the traditional dominating and imperative measures to announce its goals, the government was more interested in bringing in some ‘professional’ elements to their vocabularies to make their arguments more convincing and legitimate and to help them accomplish their goals in more ‘harmonious’ ways.

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<sup>27</sup> The red line shows the planning boundary, which lies in the center of Nanluogu Area. The colored lumps represent different land types. Light yellow represents second class residential land; dark yellow represents mixed commercial and residential land; light purple represents administrative office land; dark purple represents commercial service land; light green represents cultural and entertainment land; orange represents education and scientific research land; rhodo represents historic relic land; blue represents public facilities land and dark green represents special use land. The right picture is a comparison of planning objective and actual land use structure of in October 2010. Very limited difference can be traced between them.



Figure 7-5 The residential land replaced for other use along the main alley of Nanluogu between 2006 and 2010



Source: Nanluogu Alley conservation planning 2006 and middle-stage assessment 2011

During the whole planning formulation process, the government had a clear attitude of treating the ‘expertise’ of planners more as a tool to justify the government’s strategies than as a new mechanism to better solve problems. Despite the government officials’ argument that they totally respected the planners’ opinions when formulating the strategic plan, they had the right to deny any proposal they did not like as they controlled the finance of the whole project. Moreover, when implementing the planners’s suggestions, the government usually gave priority to the proposals that facilitate economic development over those concerning local residents’ interest. An example is the infrastructure regeneration project in Nanluogu Alley. In the *2006 Community Development Plan of Jiaodaokou*, the planners listed six suggestions on infrastructure regeneration regarding the drainage system, electric wiring, heating system, pavement, social amenities and disaster prevention system. Emphasis was given to improving the service facilities in residential courtyards. However when the Street Office implemented the plan, priority was given to improving the tourist infrastructure. Table 7-4 below lists the government’s financial investment in Nanluogu Alley area’s infrastructure regeneration between 2006 and 2010. Funds were firstly, and mainly, allocated to regenerate the tourist infrastructure in the commercial area. While the government invested 10 million RMB in the main alley’s pavement and landscaping, the other 27 residential lanes receiving only 6.6 million RMB in total for overall renovation. Meanwhile, to facilitate tourist development, the first launched programme was upgrading the pavement and pipeline system along the main alley but it was not until 2009 when the residential lanes began to have special funding for landscaping. Another example was the construction of public toilets. In 2006 the average number of toilets for a family was only 0.21 in Nanluogu Alley (Source: The sampling survey carried out by the Jiaodaokou Street Office in 2006) and there was an urgent need for public toilets. The planners designed a specific scheme to distribute public toilets evenly and ensure residents could access them easily. However, in operation the government constructed most public toilets along the main alley to facilitate the tourists, rather than the local residents.

Table 7-4 the government investment on infrastructure regeneration between 2006 and 2010

Year	Government investment
2006	Invested 10 million RMB on the main alley's pavement and landscaping Installed the underground pipeline system along the main alley
2007	Invested 6.6 million RMB on renovation of 27 residential lanes Installed electric heating system for 8000 families
2008	Established <i>Nanluogu Alley Landscaping Design Scheme</i> Installed the underground pipeline system along the nearby lanes Traffic control on the main alley
2009	Accomplished the landscaping of Jiaodong Street and Beijijianzi Lane
2010	Accomplished the landscaping of Xiang'er lane

Source: The Comprehensive Urban development Office of the Jiadaokou Street Office, July 2010

### 7.3.2 Participation of local entrepreneurs

The local Chamber of Commerce, founded in 2005, played an increasingly active role in Nanluogu Alley's local economy. In the past few years the Chamber of Commerce organised conversations with the Street Office to discuss strategies for local industrial restructuring, enhancing business activity and economic plans. Their suggestions were gradually adopted by the government. Some business owners actively became involved in the organisation of local cultural events and generously contributed to the publicity of local culture and creative cultural industry. Overall the Chamber of Commerce had a quite good

relationship with the Street Office due to common interests of developing the street-level economy. The Street Office established various policies to strengthen its collaborations with the local Chamber of Commerce.

An example is the operation of the annual ‘Nanluogu Alley Hu-tong cultural festival’. In 2006 a merchant went to the Street Office and proposed his idea of conducting a cultural festival which highlights the local cultural of this historic district in order to attract more tourists to Nanluogu Alley. The Street Office expressed interest in expanding the tourist market and after rounds of discussion, the director of the Street Office agreed to authorise him to organise this event. This merchant reflected on the process of organising the cultural festival and said:

*‘It was the first time I spoke with Chinese government officials. At first they thought it was fun that an ordinary merchant would talk to them about their work. But I was serious. My business and my family were here and my future was here. I wanted to do something for this community... I went to the street office many times until finally the Director agreed to have serious conversation with me. The Director of Street Office and some officials of the District Government were interested in my idea and promised to provide necessary help. Then other merchants became involved and we had some meetings with the Street Office and representatives of Residents’ Committees to talk about the details of the collaboration. The Street Office appropriated some funding for the festival and allocated sites for performance. The Residents’ Committee took charge of mobilising those residents with local handicraft skills to become involved in the festival to perform in public and sell their works to tourists. Students from the community art college were also encouraged to exhibit and sell their works in the festival. I invited artists, bands and musicians to perform.... I did not expect the government officials to be so supportive. I do not like every one of them but most are friendly to me’ (Interview No.3-3).*

The festival was welcomed by the participants. A RC member who took charge of mobilising local residents said: 'I think it was a good platform to involve local residents in the development of Nanluogu Alley. Local residents are the ones who own traditional skills and know the real indigenous culture. The tourists are coming for their performance' (Interview No.16). In 2007 the Nanluogu Hu-tong Cultural Festival was registered as a commercial brand. The Chamber of Commerce officially began to take charge of its organisation and began to play a main role in conducting the neighbourhood-based cultural and tourist events. Every year the Chamber of Commerce would prepare a proposal for the cultural festival and discuss details of its implementation with the Street Office. The Street Office only 'coordinated with the Chamber of Commerce' and took care of the funding, sites and mobilising local residents to participate.

In 2010, many merchants reflected to the Street Office that the Nanluogu alley was becoming over-commercialized. Some old brands left the market because of the soaring rent. The number of counterfeits began to increase and so harm the original brands. The original orientation of 'creative cultural industry cluster' was blurred by the influx of newer souvenir shops and many local entrepreneurs claimed a gradual loss of custom. The Chamber of Commerce presented a commercial development report and tried to claim policy support from the Street Office. In the 2011 Planning Assessment programme, the representatives of the Chamber of Commerce were invited to propose suggestions to the government. Most representatives expressed their concern regarding the poor commercial atmosphere, the confusion about the developing direction of Nanluogu Alley and the hope for rent control. The President of the Chamber of Commerce expressed his experience and feelings:

*'We are confused about where Nanluogu Alley is going. The planning specialists say it should be an 'organic carrier of culture and commerce' and 'a street with vitality and wisdom'. But this is not an accurate definition for us. We conducted in-depth interviews with business owners last year and most merchants outlined their concerns regarding the*

*blurred market positioning. Nanluogu Alley is losing its uniqueness as the nearby neighbourhoods began to develop in the same way in recent years. We need quality brands to keep our clients but unfortunately many of them are planning to move away because of the increasing rent. Meanwhile our customers are changing over recent years. Before 2008 we had a lot of regular customers. Once the street became famous, the one-off consumers increased and our old customers left. It is quite dangerous for us. Once Nanluogu Alley is unfashionable we will lose most of our customers. Therefore, we want to discuss with the government and specialists about how we can stop the vicious circle and make Nanluogu Alley a high-quality and special district' (Interview No.07, October 2011 ).*

It is clear that the Street Office attached more importance to the Chamber of Commerce's opinions and treated them as partners, rather than 'subordinates'. In a meeting between the Street Office and the planning team, the government officials emphasized that the local merchants' opinions were important and should be included in the assessment report as 'they are more experienced and alerted to the market than we are' (Interview No. 46. September 2011). An official who took charge of local industry introduced the well-known brands in Nanluogu Alley to the planners and expressed the Street Office's will to support them and to keep in Nanluogu Alley: 'there are many merchants waiting to start business in Nanluogu Alley but we intend to be cautious. There are already some time-honored brands that are leaving these years... It's quite a pity. We know the rent has been increasing in the last few years and that it is difficult to control as it's the rule of market. So we plan to appropriate more funding to support the high-quality brands. We also plan to arrange a meeting between the merchants and their landlords to see if they can agree to control the rent and share the profit. If the landlords became a shareholder they would be more far-sighted and cautious when picking their tenants.' (Interview No. 46) In the final report of the Planning Assessment programme, the Chamber of Commerce's opinions were included in a specific section and the Street Office planned to take actions to solve their problems. Those actions included strengthening rent control, expanding financial subsidies on original and high-quality brands and mediating conflicts between merchants and their landlords.

### 7.3.3 Participation of specialist

Since 2009 the Jiaodaokou Street Office began to organise an annual *Nanluogu Alley Development and Conservation Forums*. Specialists from housing authorities, universities and the National Academy of Scientists and Municipal Urban Development Research Institute were invited to discuss the latest development of the Nanluogu Alley. The specialists were also invited to propose suggestions for the government's development policy making in the coming year. In the forums, the government showed great passion in increasing cooperation with all kinds of professional institutions. The Director of the Street Office described the government as 'students of governing' who are willing to listen to more 'professional opinions' (interview No. 45). In 2011, 'specialist consulting' was adopted as a compulsory procedure of the Street Office's policy making. However, whether to take these specialist suggestions was still decided by the government itself. In the Planning Assessment programme, the opinions and suggestions from the planners, scholars and specialists were collected from the public hearings, symposiums and forums but very few of them were adopted in the final report. By the end of the project a Street Official summarises the government's attitude towards the 'specialist consulting' as flowing (interview No.17):

*'We welcome the specialist opinions: of course, the more the better. We invited different interest groups to express their opinions from which we can make comprehensive and balanced decisions. Some specialists were very professional within their areas of expertise but we know Nanluogu Alley better than them. From our standpoint we need to balance the interests of different groups... We must insist on our decisions.'*

For the 'specialists', their power relations with the government was internalised from the beginning of their contact with the government as they tacitly accepted that the government had the right to control the overall collaboration. According to my interviews with the

participants of the Nanluogu Alley *Development and Conservation* forums, the ‘specialists’ clearly knew that the government adopted the vocabulary of ‘specialist suggestion’ for its own benefit but none of them criticised the government for using them to accomplish its own objectives. Rather, they usually expressed this process with a very neutral attitude and took it for granted that their role was to express the government’s opinions. The leader of the assessment program summarised their roles as ‘specialists’ in the following way (interview No.28):

*‘The government insist to include the part of ‘specialist’s suggestions’ in the final assessment report but they are quite clear about which suggestions to emphasise and which to ignore. In the expert consulting we collected many ideas and we discussed with government about them afterwards. The government thought they knew which suggestions are practical for them and which are not. In more circumstances, the government already had some vague ideas. We all know that they just screened the suggestions and picked out the ones which developed their ideas.’*

It is obvious that the ‘specialists’ not only ‘all knew’, but also all accepted the fact that their role was to help the government express its opinions. Challenging the government was never a choice because the planners knew that their expertise would only be acknowledged by the government when they stood on the government’s side and only when they were ‘working in the right direction’ could they really get some independence in their professional areas. Living in the internalised power relationship, the social actors focused on building collaboration with the government, rather than challenge it. It is believed that only through collaborations can the social actors introduce their values, vocabularies and technologies to the government and the government officials would begin to reflect on their work in new perspectives. Also only through collaborations can the social actors know the government better about its rationality, its practical work and its obstructions and then they can explore better ways to attain more decision making rights from the government. As an NGO worker explicitly expressed her attitude towards the government control that: ‘In



China we can never do things in western ways. We do not challenge the government but try to make the government believe that we are useful and unharmed to them. Only then can we strive for what we want from the government... At this stage, our target is to build a channel to talk with the government, not to complain about their control' (Interview No. 02).

In conclusion, although the grassroots government was more open to the participation of social institutions in community governance and actively launched collaboration with them, it still insisted on retaining overall control on the community issues. In many circumstances the government treated 'expertise' of the social organisations as a tool to legitimise their practices rather than as an approach to acquire better solutions for problems. In the areas where the government can find interest in common with their partners—such as the case of collaboration with the local Chamber of Commerce – the government actively provided policy and financial support and devolved autonomy to their partners. But when it came to issues such as making overall objectives and development plans, the government still intended to make decisions by its own. The power relations between the government and the social actors was internalised as the social actors tacitly accepted that the government had the right and the power to control the overall collaboration. Based on the internalised power relations, the social actors put the focus of their work in building collaboration with the government rather than challenging them. It was believed by the social actors that collaborating with the government was the best way to strive for better development in the future.

#### 7.4 Disciplinary technology

Disciplinary power is described by Foucault as the main way in which the authorities exercise power on agents in modern society. As Lemke (2007:15) stated 'in addition to management by the state or administration, government also addressed problems of self-control, guidance for family and for children, management for the household, directing the soul and other questions.'

In China's context, the disciplinary power has replaced the socialist administrative control to govern citizens by focusing on shaping individual conduct. In its community construction practices, the Street Office of Nanluogu Alley put increasing focus on constructing self-regulated citizens according to all kinds of neighbourhood-based projects. According to the self-governing projects, the government tried to construct a hierarchical self-governing system and cultivate residents to organise themselves. We could see the Chinese government continue the Maoist art of mobilisation and meanwhile reintroduce Confucian doctrines to induce activists and residents to behave in a disciplined manner. On the one hand the government tried to mobilise citizens according to Maoist art of governing which listed 'activism' and 'progressiveness' as high-ranking virtues. On the other hand it made use of the traditional Confucian doctrines to internalize citizens' moral standards and social responsibilities. Activists were convinced that individual dedication was morally glorious and ordinary residents were cultivated to respect the traditional ethical order and obey the activists' persuasion and instruction.

#### 7.4.1 A Hierarchical Activist System

It is described in Chapter 5 that the Chinese party state could hardly exercise power by command in the post Dan-wei society any more. Local government attempted to build a new neighbourhood-based social order and individuals were targeted as a new tool to help the government implement their policies. China's traditional social value viewed neighbours more importantly than distant relatives<sup>28</sup> and contributed to an intrinsic internal social order among neighbourhoods in which neighbours have comparatively frequent contact and public affairs were taken care of by some local leaders. Those local leaders, who were usually referred to as 'activists', were usually regarded and trusted by the residents. Their experience and knowledge gained them a hearing on local affairs and local

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<sup>28</sup> 远亲不如近邻

residents tended to respect and follow their opinions. These activists (ji-ji-fen-zi) further played an important connecting role between the ordinary residents and the Street Office.

The culture of cultivating and encouraging ‘activists’ among citizens started in Mao’s leadership. In feudal dynasties local leaderships were not valued by feudal bureaucracies since the local government officials intended to restrain public political participation and keep citizens away from government system. Mao on the contrary, successfully made use of those local leaders to mobilise revolution and actively built interactions between local party organisations and these activists to promote the Communist Party at the grassroots level. This strategy was continually adopted after the foundation of P. R. China. The ‘activism’ (ji-ji-xing) was attributed a high-rank virtue of citizen and activists were regarded as key operational figures in the government’s political control to link the state and people (Solomon, 1969).

In the current community administration system, activists are still taking charge of many civil affairs and are valued by community government as an important tool to conduct community work. The activists’ daily work included conflict mediation, public security, delivering community care and some political publicity. The activists formed a loose network at the most primary level and according to frequent private contact with their neighbours, they expressed political orders to most of the residents.

Read’s (2003) research on Beijing’s neighbourhoods classified three kinds of community activists: (1) the RC members who were officially elected as resident representatives, (2) the community elites who were informally elected as ‘wardens’ and took charge of community activities and (3) the people who participated in community activities as volunteers. In my field work in Nanluogu Alley I further identified that there was a hierarchy within the activist group: namely, the RC members were located at the top of the activist group. They directly received assignments from the Street Office and deployed

further work among other activists. In Nanluogu Alley there were 7 Residents' Committees working directly under the leadership of the Street Office. Each RC had 7-9 members who took charge of around 10,000 ordinary residents (Source: Unpublished government document, 2005). The Residents' Committees were usually regarded as a quasi-government institution because of its close relationship with the Street Office and some RC members still worked as 'full-time cadres'. In each community, residents were further divided into smaller groups according to the location of their dwellings. People living on the same lane, within the same building or the same courtyard were classified as a small group and a 'warden' was elected by the residents as their representative. These wardens were usually regarded as informal leaders by residents and local residents tended to respect their opinions. Their functions included dispute mediation, public security, delivering community care and some political publicity. Between these wardens and ordinary residents there were residents who voluntarily participated in neighbourhood projects or activities and were responsible for operational detail and grassroots mobilisation. They were often referred to as 'model residents' by the government (see figure 7-6).

Figure 7-6 A hierarchical self-governing system

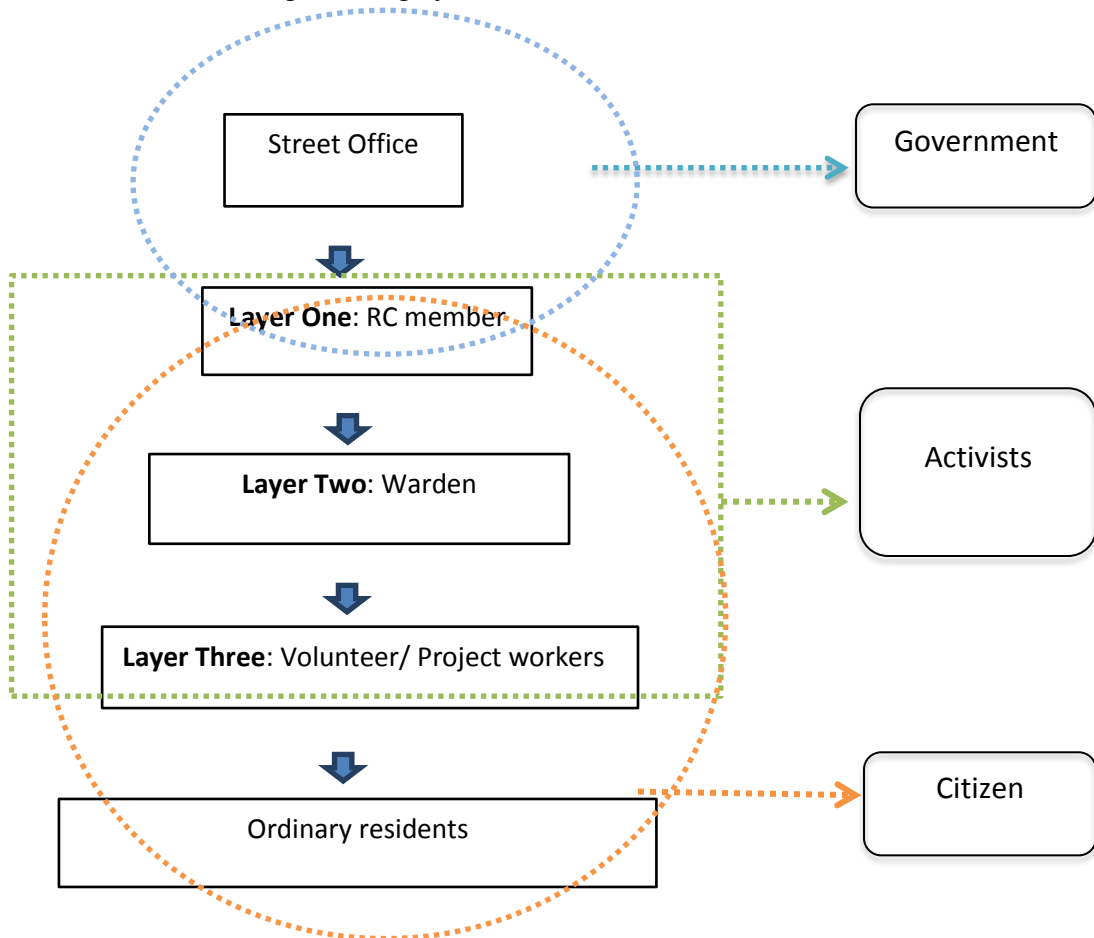


Table 7-5 illustrates the approximate number and ratio of activists in Nanluogu Alley. By 2010 the statistical population in Jiao-dao-kou Street Office’s jurisdiction was around 64,000. There were 7 Residents’ Committees, each with 7-9 people, most of whom worked as full-time cadres. For each RC there were 20-30 wardens taking charge of their courtyard and 80-90 residents working as volunteers. With this system, each RC member and warden are only responsible for 3-4 subordinate staff.

Table 7-5 The number and ratio of activist in Nanluogu Alley

Activist Group	Number of staff	Ratio
Residents Committee	50	1
Warden	150	3
Volunteer	600	12
Ordinary residents	64000	1280

Source: Jiadaokou Street Office unpublished information.

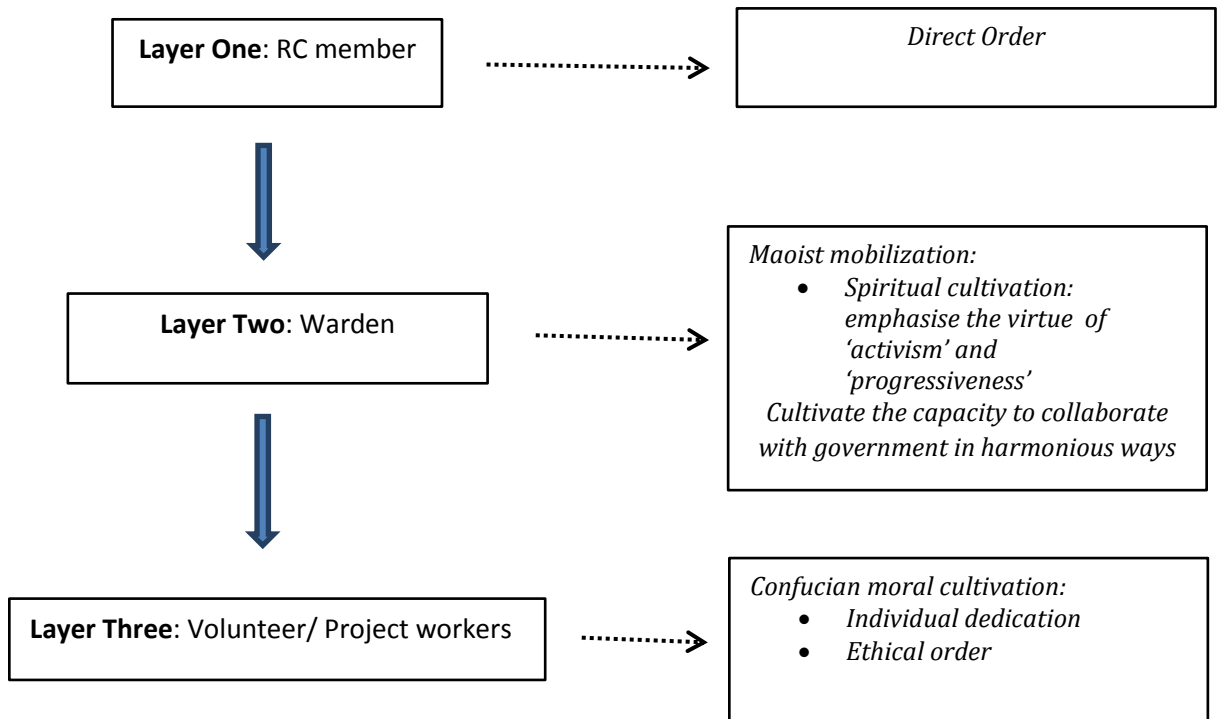
For the government, it is much easier to pass down instructions and organise the ‘self-governing’ projects according to the hierarchical activists system:

- For RC members: as most of RC members in Nanluogu Alley were full-time cadres, the Street Office could directly issue orders to them and did not need to implement mobilisation.
- For wardens: wardens were targeted as the pivotal role to control since they were the leaders of practical projects and would be granted the authority to organise a whole project. For this group the government embraced the Maoist art of mobilisation which emphasised the ‘spiritual cultivation’ of activists (see Figure 7-6). ‘Activism’ and ‘progressiveness’ were attributed to them as high-ranking virtues

and they had to conform to the image of ‘model citizens’ to strengthen their emotional connection with their ‘jobs’. Meanwhile, throughout the following capacity training the government repeatedly emphasised the leading role of government and taught the wardens how to collaborate with the government in a particular way.

- For volunteers: the government extended less control on the volunteers since the ability to mobilise them lay with the warden. For the volunteers the government brought back the Confucian ideology which advocates ‘individual dedication’ and ‘ethical order’ in order to encourage activists to voluntarily work without government scrutiny and cultivate residents to live in disciplined ways under the leadership of, often elderly wardens.

Figure 7-7 Government technologies to mobilise different activists



When the activists worked as mediators between the government and residents in the community, the contact of state and society was shifted in a soft and personal way. The formal power of the state was practiced by these mediators according to informal ways including private relationship (Ren-qing), honor and dignity (Mian-zi) and social tie. Gui (2007) described the RC members' informal practices of formal power as an 'adhesive' between the state and society which avoided direct conflicts between government and residents. With the mediation of RC, most interactions between residents and community governments were not based on challenge, opposition and repression but were carried out within the personal contacts between RC members and residents in peaceful ways: the RC members intended to mobilise residents in persuasive rather than a mandatory manner and make use of their personal relationships with residents to accomplish political assignments. Meanwhile residents would express their opinions and emotions to the RC in peaceful ways out of private respect to RC members. The state power was therefore 'privatised' and 'localized' by RC members in personal ways (Sun, 2000).

#### 7.4.2 Maoist Mobilisation

Ju'er community's common room regeneration project illustrated how the government mobilised and cultivated activists in this self-governing project. The common room of Ju'er community was rarely used by the residents due to poor ventilation (it is a basement) and an impractical indoor layout. In 2007, the Street Office allocated a 5,000 RMB special fund for its renovation and selected it as a pilot project to promote self-governance among residents. The Shining Stone Community Action Centre was authorised to provide capacity training to involved residents. As it was the first self-governing project, the Street Office designated an official to oversee the project but 'try not to intervene in the practical implementation' (Interview No. 17).

To mobilise residents' enthusiasm for participation, Ju'er Residents Committee launched a large-scale publicity campaign about this project within the neighbourhood. Leaflets were distributed beforehand to encourage residents to support the public hearings. In addition, RC members implemented iterative oral mobilisation and persuasion to the wardens and volunteers according to their personal relationship with them. The vocabularies of 'activism' and 'progressiveness' were repeatedly mentioned to remind the community elites of their sense of responsibility. A warden from Shou-bi Hu-tong reflected how he was mobilised into the regeneration project:

*'I didn't want to participate at the beginning... but it (renovating the common room) is a good thing for our community in any sense, isn't it? Therefore, we had little reason to refuse. If we as wardens do not participate, the other residents would be less likely to participate and how would they think about me....We should take the leading role.'*  
(Interview No. 32)

This warden's narrative reflected most community activists' understanding about their roles as informal leaders: being a community leader does not mean having an explicitly stipulated duty at a specific time. Rather, it means inhabiting a spiritual and behaviour model in any area at any time. The Chinese government's cultivation of consciousness within their 'representativeness' apparently echoes the Maoist request for Chinese Communist Party members to be self-regulated and 'set yourself as example for others at any time' (shi-ke-yi-shen-zuo-zes 时刻以身作则). Cohen (1991: 117) classified this approach as a 'technology of shame and humility' and explained that: 'The central government had at its disposal the ability to 'guide' certain practices...by publishing and disseminating correct practice and by setting a proper example. At a popular level the familial network provided a convenient backdrop to expose the practices of individuals to the gaze of others. Techniques of shame and humility meant that individuals conditioned the self in terms of how their behaviour would reflect on others within their immediate



familial or community network.’ In this warden’s case, avoiding shame and humility was just a part of motivation. Another important driving force was the sense of pride as ‘progressive’ citizens. In his narrative, this warden firstly made a judgement that the project ‘is a good thing for the community’, then, he thought as a warden he ‘should’ (not have to) take the leading role to initiate action. In his decision making process both the wish to ‘do good things for the community’ and the worry about ‘how other people would judge him’ pushed him to participate in the government project.

In late 2007 the renovation project was officially launched. About 60 residents including wardens, volunteers and some frequent common room users participated. The Shining Stone Community Action Centre was entrusted to give the participants initial capacity training: all participants were gathered together for a two-day public discussion with the topic of ‘redesigning a pleasant and efficient common room’. On the first day participants were divided into groups of 4-5 people to discuss their opinions about the current activity room and make suggestions. On the second day each group was required to design an integrated scheme detailing the arrangement and decoration of the new activity room. To satisfy the government’s needs to cultivate harmoniously participant residents, the Shining Stone Community Action Centre integrated instruction with character-development (jiao-xun-he-yi 教训合一) in the public discussion. Emphasis was put on cultivating participating to ‘collaborating’, ‘consensus’ and avoiding complaint. Project conductors from the Shining Stone Community Action Centre induced participants to think in ‘positive ways’ and organise the discussions around the key words of ‘contribution’, ‘suggestion’ and ‘effort’. Vocabularies such as ‘problem’ and ‘conflict’ were to be avoided in the discussions. The director of capacity training summarised the participants as following:

*‘Chinese residents are actually quite easy to mobilise and cultivate. On the one hand most of them have experienced the Dan-wei society and were quite used to obeying instruction from ‘above’. On the other hand they have a lot of enthusiasm for public affairs and were*

*would like to dedicate... However, they are also easy to be instigated and led to 'wrong ways'. Therefore, when working with them we need to especially emphasise 'harmony' and avoid 'conflict'. (Interview No.01)*

Whilst participants were led to think and behave in 'positive' ways, they did not realise that challenging or bargaining with government was never offered to them as an option to solve their problems. The capacity trainer tacitly accepted the government's self-evident requirement to maintain harmony and worked on 'changing the negative into the positive':

*'At the beginning of the discussion most participants just kept complaining about the government. We let them talk to make them feel comfortable to speaking in public but we didn't give any comment. Then when they finished complaining we began to guide them to think in positive ways and to look for solutions. It's an easy transfer. They can soon understand that complaining does not make any sense and started to think about what they can do to change the situation.'* (Interview No.01)

By the end of the second discussion five schemes were drawn. In the second phase the Shining Stone Community Action Centre invited planning specialists from Dongcheng District to evaluate the schemes and integrated them into the final scheme. The specialists also provided some operative suggestions for the decoration and construction. About four weeks later the final scheme was drawn up and the program stepped into the construction phase. The participants were divided into five working groups, each of which took charge of a specific construction issue such as, liaising with the construction team, construction supervision, mediating conflicts and pollution control. Each working group had a 'leader' elected by group members. The leaders had the responsibility to maintain the operation of the group and organise regular meetings and discussions with the members.

During the construction phase, the Shining Stone Community Action Centre organised a second round of capacity building which put the focus on cultivating the working group members' ability to mediate conflicts in their practical work. As the common room was located in an intensive residential area, some residents were affected by the noise and air pollution and complained to the Street Office. To ease the residents' aversion to the project, the Shining Stone Community Action Centre established a new mediating group to resolve emerging conflicts. Group members were encouraged to use their personal relationships with affected residents and their prestige to 'persuade sentimentally and rationally' (Interview No.02). In the public discussions the mediating group continually emphasised the 'public interests' and the affected residents soon found themselves confronting invisible oppression. They worried that arguing with the activists would hurt their 'face' and ruin their personal relationships with them. Furthermore, they feared that if they persisted with their individual interests they would suffer moral criticism for their 'selfishness' and 'individualism'. An affected resident reflected the psychological pressure he confronted within the discussion:

*'From the beginning I knew it's hard because I was talking to my neighbours, not the government. The warden of my courtyard was in the mediating group and I needed to give him face or else my life in the neighbourhood would be hard. In addition, the project was launched for the community not for some individual, so I felt embarrassed to be the 'spoiled one'...in the end we reached an agreement that both sides compromised a little: the construction can only be done in the daytime but we had to put up with the air pollution for about 2 months.'* (Interview No. 36)

When the construction was accomplished, the working groups were not dismissed. Rather, the Street Office decided to provide sponsorship to the participants and encourage them to create a permanent self-governing organisation to take charge of similar small-scale neighbourhood regeneration projects. Between 2007 and 2010 SCAC delivered capacity training for more than 400 activists in the Nanluogu Alley area and established over 50

‘working groups’ across 20 small-scale self-governing projects. The content of self-governing projects expanded from neighbourhood regeneration to public security, cultural protection and community care for elderly people, migrant workers and minority groups. Over 10 project-based working groups became permanent community-based organisations past project and secured government support (see table 7-6). Thus the Street office is determined to mobilise wider civil participation into self-governing projects in more areas.

Table 7-6 The self-governing programs in Nanluogu Alley area between 2006 and 2011

Year	Self-governing projects	Established community-based organisations	Work content
2006	Nanluo community ‘Nanluo culture promotion’ project	‘Yue-yuan-gu-xiang voluntary film projection team’	Organise free outdoor cinema projection in community every week
2007	Gulouyuan community Fire control project	Community fire control committee	Promote fire control knowledge to community member and maintain community fire control facilities
2008	Migrant residents care project	‘Good mother floating population association’	Help migrant residents get involved into local culture and take care of migrant workers’ offspring
2008	‘Caring for the old’ project	Fu-xue neighbourhood care centre ‘Old neighbor mutual aid association’ ‘silver Bell’ mutual aid team	Organise leisure activities, medicine lecture and free physical test for old people. Provide cheap lunch for the old people who lack care.
2008	‘Neighbourhood design’ project	Ju’er community public activity room renovation working group	Design the public activity room, take charge of the construction and

			maintenance.
2009	Gulou East Street 68 courtyard renovation project	Renovation and self-management committee	Renovate the courtyard and take charge of the environment maintenance
2009	Nanluo community 'handicraft workshop' project	Handicraft association	Sell handicrafts to travellers and donate 25% of the profit to help the community minority groups

Source: unpublished data from Jiaodaokou Street Office

### 7.4.3 Confucian Moral Cultivation

Even within a radically transitional society, the interpersonal daily contacts between Chinese individuals are still deeply influenced by a series of traditional doctrines (Sigley, 1966; Watson, 1993; Cook and Powell, 2000; Read, 2003; Gui, 2007). Sigley (1996:468) argued that 'to be Chinese meant to subscribe to a particular mode of living - to engage in certain ritual practices, ranging from the number of times one bathed per day to the position and rank one was accorded in a funeral procession.' Watson (1993:867) described the ubiquitous disciplines in Chinese society as:

*'To be Chinese in this context meant that one played by the rules of the dominant culture and was judged to be a good performer by those who took it upon themselves to make such judgements - neighbours, local leaders or imperial officials. . . . From the perspective of ordinary people, to be Chinese was to understand and accept the view that there was a correct way to perform key rituals...Correct performance of these rites was one clear and unambiguous method of distinguishing the civilized from the uncivilized...Thus, the process of becoming Chinese involved no conversion to a received dogma, no professions of belief in a creed or a set of ideas. One became Chinese, in essence, by acting Chinese, behaving like Chinese; and perhaps the clearest indicator that this cultural transformation had been accomplished was the performance of key rituals in the accepted manner.'* (Watson, 1993: 867)

At community level, the government actively made efforts to strengthen the impact of traditional disciplines on citizens. The Confucian ideologies were brought back to public discourse in order to bind community members together and keep them voluntarily living with an invisible social hierarchy. Investigation into the community-based organisations in Nanluogu Alley manifested that the core value of Confucius including ‘dedication’ and ‘ethical order’ were used by the government to conduct moral cultivation among wardens, volunteers and ordinary residents and to maintain the social and order in neighbourhoods.

- Individual dedication

Confucian doctrine has a humanistic attitude and centered on the essential relationships between human beings (Lemasson, 2010). Confucius views humanity as a product of dynamic interpersonal contact and emphasised that it was morally good to demonstrate concern for others: ‘persons possessed of humanity are like this: they want to develop themselves, they also develop others; wanting to achieve things themselves, they also allow others to achieve what they want. This is the direction humanity takes: to use what is close to oneself as an analogy to be extended to others.’ (Analects of Confucius, 2001) Similar arguments include: ‘take care of others’ juniors like our own juniors and respect others’ seniors like our own seniors’. The consciousness to extend personal feelings to other people is listed as a most important factor of self-cultivation. Therefore, ‘dedication’ is regarded as an honorable moral virtue in Chinese tradition.

The doctrine of ‘self-dedication’ is still practiced in neighbourhood life’s minor details today. Many residents still respect their wardens and volunteers for their ‘spirit of dedication’ rather than treating them as doing their duty. A 55-year-old woman said that because of the warden the courtyard she lived in became a ‘humane’ place again. When she described the warden’s work she began to eulogise him: ‘the neighbourhood relationship used to be so close that we

didn't close our door in the night... after the reforms things changed so fast. The interpersonal relationships become distant and we rarely hang out with neighbours. The warden is the only one who links me and my neighbours. He has been a volunteer for many years and he gave a lot. I am truly grateful.' (Interview No.38)

On the other hand for the warden that she referred to in her conversation, the satisfaction of being a morally good person—rather than receiving practical payment or accomplishing assigned duty—to a large extent drove him to do what he did for decades. When talking about his work, the warden put the emphasis on 'psychological accomplishment': 'I enjoy doing small things for others such as delivering parcels, cleaning the public areas, collecting water bills and mediating disputes. I am not looking for pay back. Giving itself is joy for me' (Interview No.32). This warden's narrative reflected the influence of a blend of Maoism and Confucianism. On the one hand he gave himself some social responsibilities as a progressive and active leader, on the other hand he did not only seek to accomplish specific duties but lifted his work to a moral level and tried to be a morally better person.

For government, it is important to maintain the activists' willingness to give and their dedication in order to make sure they work without the government's scrutiny. The community government actively publicised the good deeds of community activists in the media. On the Nanluogu Alley's government website there were plenty of reports on the deeds of community volunteers. To a large extent these reports satisfied the activists' psychological needs to be praised and respected. The following is a news article regarding a volunteer insisting on working as a patroller in spite of illness:

### ***Overcome ailment, Keep Watching Our Neighbourhood***

*During the Olympic period, a large group of activists voluntarily walked on the streets as neighbourhood patrollers. They worked for no payback but only remaining a safe and harmonious*

*community. Yang Yu-liang from Gu-lou-yuan community is one of them. Yang, 62, is a Chinese Communist Party member who actively participated into public goods.*

*Since 2007 Yang has been troubled by rheumatism and had to stay in bed. However, in Olympic period Yang was strict to herself and insisted working as a voluntary patroller. She overcame ailment and worked as a firm activist. This winter her ailment relapsed because of the cold weather but she insisted working with herbal patch (A kind of Chinese therapy).*

*'Yang's grandson who is just 8 month-old is taken care by her daughter-in-law alone. Even then she didn't quit,' said her colleague Zhao: 'It's usually 11:30am when we finished the morning patrol and she has to rush home to cook for her family.'*

*Speaking of her work, Yang is touched by her family's support: 'last April I was in hospital. When it was my turn to patrol my daughter-in-law worked for me and she is pregnant for 8 months.' Thanks to her family's understanding and support, Yang always lists 'serving the people' as her first code of conduct.*

*'It's what I should do. I am happy to contributing to my neighbourhood's safety. I'm more than happy to practice the 'spirit of Beijing' myself.'*



Figure 7-8 Voluntary patrollers in Nanluogu Alley



Source: <http://www.nanluoguxiang.com/>

This news reflected a commonly used technology of the Chinese government: to emphasise that some people are dedicating their individual interest for the ‘collective interest’ and voluntarily working beyond their duty accepting ‘it’s what they should do’. This approach was widely adopted in Mao’s regime in social mobilisation and nowadays it still works. Yang’s experience of working with an ailment built her a good image of ‘selflessness dedication’. Although people could easily recognize the political rhetoric, it was likely that most readers would still believe that Yang was a real person and she did do those things voluntarily. This reflected some ‘common sense’ entrenched in Chinese people’s subjectivity which made them believe giving up individual interest for public benefit was a moral virtue and even a kind of social responsibility.

In recent years, the community government caught the tide of the 2008 Beijing Olympics and launched more voluntary projects in Nanluogu Alley. As some of the volunteer teams were

well supported, the community government intended to count on them to solve both employment and social problems. Some voluntary teams were retained after the Olympics and became permanent organisations. The patroller team was one of them. After the Olympics, the community government did not dismiss the volunteers but transferred the voluntary work to a part-time job and opened it up to all residents. The participants were paid by the Street Office but they were still referred to as ‘volunteers’. For the government the combination of paid job and volunteer work raised the official employment indicator whilst encouraging more residents –especially retired elderly people – to participate in the activist community and expectantly relieve social problems such as loneliness and estrangement.

In 2011 I interviewed some of the patrollers in Nanluogu Alley and observed them on duty. I found that in many ways the social meaning of the patrolling work could be more far-reaching than its practical security function. Many patrollers were just standing or sitting around and talking to their colleagues. The on-duty time was two hours but most patrollers spent only 10-15 minutes walking. Many respondents mentioned that for them the volunteer work was an important channel to construct their social network. An 83 year-old volunteer in describing her mental attachment to the voluntary work admitted that the ‘form was more than the content’:

*‘Since I retired the only thing to do in my life was looking after my grandson. Now he is going to primary school and has moved out to live with his parents. My husband and I have few chances to catch up with our family and I feel very lonely. I know in our community there are many old people like me but we didn’t have the chance to get to know each other. Then before the 2008 Olympics the Street Office came to mobilise us to work as patrollers. The work sounds easy so many people were interested. I participated because I thought it was a good chance to know more people. Now there are about 80 patrollers in our community. I know most of them and we have become good friends. Of course we are not as professional as the police... We talk while we are on duty. Some people play chess and poker when they are on duty but I do not. I usually choose a good view point and stand there.’ (Interview No.35)*

Therefore, residents' volunteer work was in many senses intertwined with Confucian doctrine on 'self-dedication'. As 'dedicating individual interest for public interest' was regarded as a moral virtue in Chinese traditional culture, the activists usually cared about the psychological gratification caused by their dedication more than practical benefit from their volunteer work. The aspiration to be morally integrated people drove the activists to a large extent to work without the government's scrutiny. Nevertheless, the government attempted to use media and publicity to satisfy the activists' psychological needs to be praised and respected and magnify the influence of the 'traditional virtues' on citizens. Furthermore, the government used volunteer work as a tool to reconstruct the social network among neighbourhood and relieve some social problems such as loneliness and estrangement.

- Ethical Order: *Xiao* and *Jing*

Confucianism is interested in developing a social order based upon the self-cultivation of individuals. It seeks political harmony by trying to achieve a perfect moral harmony in person (Lemasson, 2010). In Confucian doctrine, *xiao* (Filial Piety) and *jing* (reverence for the elderly) are listed as the paramount human virtues. Historically the Chinese government has a long tradition of emphasising the virtue of *Xiao* and *Jing* in order to maintain a harmonious ethical order. In public discourses, the elderly were frequently referred to as a precious social resource<sup>29</sup> for their experience and practical knowledge and elderly people enjoyed high social status in ancient China (Murray, 1998:83). In modern Chinese society 'Respecting the elderly' is still attributed as 'a traditional virtue of Chinese nationality' by the Chinese Communist Party. For Chinese people treating elderly people as senior and not to reverse their instructions is unconsciously accepted as a personal virtue.

Nanluogu Alley is a community with a high proportion of older people. In 2006 the community government conducted a sample survey of 80 percent of the household population. According to the survey, the residents older than 60 years old accounted for

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<sup>29</sup> Elderly people were treated as important resource of knowledge and experience in Chinese traditional society. So we often describe them as a kind of 'social resource' (社会资源)

30.75% of the total population and the proportion of older people in Nanluogu Alley is much higher than Beijing's average (see table 7-7). In the self-governing projects the older people are regarded as important tools by the community government to construct a self-governing network and to maintain the social order. As described in 2.1.2, most community activists were elderly people who had high prestige among the neighbours. In the self-governing projects they had an obvious advantage in mobilising residents and mediating conflicts according to their prestige and personal relationships. When political assignments were passed down through these activists, state orders were interpreted into personal language and request and the interactions between the state and individuals were transferred to interactions between residents and their honorable community leaders.

Tale 7-7 the population age structure in Nanluogu Alley

Community	Population	Age (%)		
		0-18	18-59	Above 60
In total	42581	6256	22208	14117
Percentage	14.69	22.39	46.87	30.75
Jiaodong Community	4370	799	2324	1247
Daxing Community	4370	799	2324	1247
Xiguan Community	4370	620	2277	1473
Fuxue Community	4370	857	2322	1191
Juer Community	4370	510	2291	1569
Yuanensi Community	3512	389	1775	1348
Nanluo Community	4109	448	2124	1537
Gulouyuan Community	4370	645	2295	1430
Maoer Community	4370	390	2152	1828
Fuxiang Community	4370	799	2324	1247

(source: 2006 sample survey by Jiao-dao-kou police station)

As described in previous section, the elderly wardens usually worked on a wide range of community public affairs in their daily work and sometimes even stepped into family and individual affairs. As there was no stipulated duty for these wardens, on many occasions the wardens' duties were integrated with their personal care for their neighbours as a senior. For the residents it was easy to unconsciously obey the wardens' persuasion because this involved 'listening to the elderly' which is regarded as morally good. Interviews with ordinary residents revealed that although the social order in She-qu system is far less organised than that in the Dan-wei system, most residents still agreed that they should abide by basic conventions and believed that it was good to have a warden to maintain social order for them. A retired warden described his daily work as a warden as being 'so inclusive that people call me a president in our alley':

*'Besides some routine public affairs such as delivering parcels and charging water bills, sometimes I work on mediating disputes. There are 17 families living in this small courtyard and once there is any dispute everyone will soon know it. Most of the time these disputes were small things like someone occupied the public path with personal goods. I lived in this courtyard for 30 years and only I can sort out these kinds of things easily because people listen to me. Sometimes I mediate family disputes as well. If a young couple fight with each other and their neighbours couldn't stop them, I would speak to them and they usually would give me face.'* (Interview No.32)

Apart from using older activists as a tool to maintain social order, the government did not stop the attempts to emphasise the virtue of 'filial piety' according to media. In public discourses, the community government made considerable effort to build itself an image of 'respecting ethical order'. Government officials especially top leaders and Chinese Communist Party members personally involved in delivering community care to older people to demonstrate their 'leading role of Filial Piety'. On the Chinese traditional Chongyang Festival (the festival to show respect for older people) the Street Office's workers

were asked to visit families with older people and send them free food. The director of the office visited the community hospital to greet the elderly and was publicised as ‘sending warm greetings to residents on behalf of the party’ (代表党给居民送温暖).

Figure 7-9/10 Activities for older people organised by the Street office of Nanluogu Alley



(Source: <http://www.nanluoguxiang.com/>)

Meanwhile, the family was targeted as an important area of moral cultivation and ‘respecting the family patriarch’ was intensively advertised in public discourses. In 2012 the Street Office organised a public discussion with the theme of ‘filial piety is the Most Important Human Virtue’. Eight families were invited as ‘representatives of harmonious family’ to talk about their experiences of maintaining a good relationship with parents. He, a resident from Fu-xue She-qu, was described as ‘a representative of good offspring’ in the discussion for her good relationship with her mother –in-law and her story was praised in the following public report.

*No difference between daughter and daughter-in-law: He talks about her experience of Filial Piety*

*'Mother, please taste the food' He carefully put a piece of mushroom into Song Ruiling, her mother-in-law's mouth.*

*'Good! It's really delicious!' Song Ruiling couldn't stop smiling with satisfaction.*

*He and Song are well known in Fuxue community for their good family relationship. In the public Filial Piety-themed discussion He cooked mushroom for her mother-in-law and talked about her experience.*

*'Parents are the best teachers to their offspring. My mother-in-law taught me this principle with her practical actions' said He Li. Song is a filial daughter herself. She looked after her mother with great patience and her mother is 102 years old.*

*'Every time I see my mother-in-law taking care of her mother, I feel I should make more efforts taking care of her and make her happy' said He: 'Filial Piety is a traditional virtue of Chinese nationality and is an important part of the Spirit of Beijing. We should work together to pass this virtue to more people and to our offspring.'*

(Source: <http://www.nanluoguxiang.com/>)

In summary, in Nanluogu Alley's self-governing projects the elderly activists were regarded as important tools by the government to construct a self-governing network and to maintain the social order. To facilitate their mobilisation, the government actively publicised the Confucian doctrines of *Xiao* (Filial Piety) and *Jing* (reverence for the elderly) to emphasise the ethical order among the neighbourhood. Respecting the elderly was

embellished as a moral virtue. When political assignments were passed down through these activists, state orders were interpreted as personal requests. The interactions between the state and individuals were transferred to interactions between residents and their honorable elderly leaders. In the daily contact between the activists and ordinary people, pressures arising from moral norms to some extent pushed ordinary residents to listen to the elderly activists' arguments. Meanwhile, in public discourses the government attempted to emphasise the virtue of filial piety on citizens by praising model citizens and advertising the government leaders' leading role of respecting the traditional ethical order.

### 7.5 Living in the government technology of community: the ambivalent resistance and divergent subjectivities of residents

As the grassroots government put increasing focus on the disciplinary technologies to cultivate self-regulated citizens, the question of how citizens live with these disciplinary technologies remains to be answered. This section explores how ordinary residents and the activists developed different subjectivities according to the following three aspects: Firstly, their divergent understanding about their roles in the community, secondly, their contrast interpretation of the government's rhetoric of 'harmony' and thirdly, their different opinions about the meaning of the fast development of their neighbourhoods to their lives.

#### 7.5.1 Divergent Understandings about the social roles: 'We are the host of our community' VS 'It's their thing'

An important aspect of activism was that the attitude of the Residents' Committee members concerning their role in the community changed through the self-governing projects. In my fieldwork of 2005, I noticed that the RC members of Nanluogu Alley were forced to attend to all kinds of government meetings and take assignments from the government. They behaved quite passively when having conversations with the government since they had



little right to refuse. In the interviews there was considerable complaint regarding ‘overload’, ‘spending too much time on accomplishing the government’s assignments and ‘having little time to do practical things for the residents’. Realising that the Residents’ Committees were unable to accomplish political assignments efficiently with limited staff and passion, in 2006 the Street Office established a professional organisation, the Community Service Centre, to take over population management and most community services which used to be delivered by Residents’ Committee. The Residents’ Committees gained more freedom to change their main working orientation to organising neighbourhood self-governing projects. This change was also supported by the Street Office. In government documents this change was described as ‘take on the new role to be the host of your own communities’ (当好自己的家，做好自己的主)<sup>30</sup>. In later regeneration projects, the RC members received capacity training from NGOs and participated in the whole process for most projects including programme design, public discussion and after-project management.

Interviews with the RC members demonstrated that they developed a good sense of responsibility from the self-governing projects. The RC members voluntarily took on the role of ‘host’ since they believed that it was a ‘practical good thing for the public’ and the ordinary residents could benefit. The director of Juer RC described that her work had ‘changed from working for the government to doing practical things for the public’ (Interview No 16-1) and pointed out that that the government is intentionally retreating from their daily work:

*‘For a long time our RC members were exhausted by all kinds of political assignments deployed by the government. But since the Community Service Centre was established we could focus on promoting the self-governing projects. At the beginning the government tried to lead us to organise the projects. Gradually, they left us to organise the whole*

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<sup>30</sup>李媛 2009 《当好自己的家，做好自己主-开放空间讨论会体会》交道口街道社区参与机制及实践套索报告

*project by ourselves. Now we organise most projects independently and even if we referred obstacles to the government they tried not to intervene' (Interview No 16-1).*

This director intentionally used the term 'we' to emphasise that as a collective (not individuals) they represented the interest of the whole community. Meanwhile, she referred to the government as 'they' to emphasise that the RC members were not working for the government but for the public. For the RC members, working with less government intervention was a pleasant change which made them feel they were doing practical things. Another RC member from Juer community described the satisfaction he gained from his work: 'Now we work on practical projects for the residents and it's like giving us a new life... I think what we are doing is echoing the government's people-centred policy because although we are doing small things, we are doing them for the mass and we are happy' (Interview No.16-2)

Although the RC members started to make their own voice in front of the government, they still knew well that the government was unchallengeable and they needed to remain in a good relationship with the government to 'make things easier'. In their discussions with the government, the RC members developed their own skills to strive for public interest whilst maintaining a subordinate relationship with the government. In the annual government symposium of 2011, 15 RC members who were invited to report their daily work to the government showed an interesting sense of propriety when they mediated with the government for support. Rather than directly introducing the obstacles they confronted, they firstly used polite vocabularies to strengthen the importance of their proposals. A representative of Fu-xiang community started his statement with praising the government's efforts on improving the community infrastructure: 'The fast development of Nanluogu Alley is obvious in all aspects. I often hear residents saying that the neighbourhood environment has improved a lot. Thanks to the government, the roads are wider and the public system is more convenient for us...' (Interview No. 13). Then he referred to relevant government policies in order to lead to the problem he wanted to raise:

*'The district government recently emphasised that we should strengthen the overall scene conservation of the historical city centre. The Street Office is making efforts to regenerate the overall neighbourhood environment as well. We understand that the government's intentions are very good but when we implement relevant policies there are many unexpected problem in our practical work... One example is the illegal constructions. We are always trying to stop residents adding a shed and second floor to their dwellings but some residents are so unscrupulous that they even raise animals in their added sheds. We can't stop them because we do not have practical rights... We really need the government to strengthen law enforcement, otherwise, our legislation system would lose its dignity to the vicious power and it is contrary to the spirit of building harmonious communities... Anyway, I hope the leaders at all levels could go down to the grassroots to understand our practical problems.'* (In terview No.13)

This representative clearly knew that he neither had the authority to stop illegal construction nor should he directly criticise the government for not dealing with this problem. Therefore, he attempted to legitimate his argument by connecting it to the upper-level government's policy instruction of 'conserving the overall scene of the historical city centre' and 'building harmonious communities'. To make the government realise that the problem was important he used many government vocabularies and emphasised that illegal construction was 'contrary to the spirit of building harmonious communities' and if the government allowed this phenomena the legislation system would lose its 'dignity'. This statement was quite different from the statements I heard in the 2005 public hearings in which the RC members kept complaining but expected little feedback from the government. After more collaborations with the Street Office, the RC memebtrs were well known of what the Street Office wanted to do and how they could attract the government's attention by using more specific political vocabularies in order to gained support from the government.

While the RC members actively involved themselves into the role of the host of their communities, the people, who never participated in the neighbourhood self-governing projects, showed a contrary attitude. They barely engaged with the self-governing projects and consciously resisted taking on the roles of politically cooperative and active citizens that the government tried to place on them. The questions I asked them in my interviews include:

- In which circumstances/ How often do you make contact with the Residents' Committee?
- Have you heard about/ participated in any activities/self-governing projects organised by the Residents' Committee? Why do you participate/not participate?
- Do you think the RC members and wardens represent your interest in the self-governing projects?

The feedback was basically consistent: most ordinary residents had very limited contact with the Residents' Committee in their daily lives. Although most of them had heard about the government discourse concerning self-governance, they did not consider that these projects had anything to do with them and they had little interest to participate. Meanwhile, the ordinary residents still regarded the RC members as a leader group rather than real representatives of public interest. A 48 year-old resident from Gu-lou-yuan community talked about his daily contact with RC:

*Q: In what circumstances do you make contact with your RC? How often is it?*

*Wu: I do not have much contact with the Residents' Committee, the only reason I visit it is to ask for certain certificates or proofs and it's very occasional.*

*Q: Do you know the RC members?*

*Wu: Of course we are old neighbours. The old man living next door used to be a cadre in the Residents' Committee. Now he is retired and he is the warden of our courtyard. He is very active.*

*Q: How was he selected as the warden?*

*Wu: We had an election. We all know that he has worked in the RC for many years and he would love to do voluntary things. I wouldn't want to do his job and I do not think other people would like to.*

*Q: Do you think the wardens work for the Residents' Committee?*

*Wu: I'm not quite sure but I think so. There are some elderly people working as public patrollers in our neighbourhood. They have badges on their arm so... I think they are working for the Residents' Committee. I guess they must get some money from the Residents' Committee or else who would like to do voluntary job? It's so cold outside...*

*Q: Is the Residents' Committee organising any activities in the neighbourhood? Do you participate in them?*

*Wu: I know there are many activities. The warden will write them on the public bulletin. I think our Residents' Committee is doing a good job since they often organise free clinic, travel and shopping for retired residents. The other communities do not have so many activities as us...I do not get involved in these activities. It's their (RC member) thing. Some elderly people might be interested in these activities but I do not.'*

*Q: Do you know the self-governing projects in your community?*

*Wu: I know the culture festival. Last year the RC members came to mobilise residents to sell handcrafts on the festival. Many activists signed up for it. It's nothing to do with me.*

*Q: Do you think the RC members and wardens represent your interest?*

*Wu: Not really... I do not know what the RC members are doing in their daily work but I do not get involved. Our warden is a warm hearted man but again, I do not know how he deals with RC members. I do not think I have much to do with what they are doing.*

There were two things worth further exploration in this resident's narrative. The first was that he received government discourse concerning self-governance (he knows there are many

activities and self-governing projects in his community) but he refused to accept them (he repeatedly mentioned that it's nothing to do with his life). He consciously excluded himself from the activities which he believed were conducted by the government (such as cultural festival) even if he thought these activities were actually good for residents. To explain his choice, he used a commonly-adopted reason that 'these activities/projects would attract activists, not me'. As long as he classified himself as a 'non-activist', it meant that he belonged to a mainstream in which people would prefer to stay away from the Chinese government to live a peaceful life (as Wu mentioned that he wouldn't want to be an activist and he does not think other people would want to). A similar opinion appeared in many other interviews with ordinary residents. Although they lived with pervasive government discourses of self-governance, they remained alert to the government's rhetoric and consciously refused to take on the role of cooperative citizens. The sentence they most frequently spoke was 'It's their thing and it has nothing do to with me'.

The second was that there was still a cognitive gap between the RC members/ activists and ordinary residents about the activists' representativeness. As long as W regarded his warden and the RC members as warm-hearted neighbours and appreciated their work, he classified the self-governing projects as 'their (the RC members') thing' and did not think the RC members represented his interest. Meanwhile, Wu treated the volunteers as 'working for the Residents' Committee' and he regarded that their motivation for volunteer work was financial: *'I guess they must get some money from RC or else who would like to do voluntary job? It's so cold outside.'* This understanding was contrary to the activists' narratives in which they emphasised they are 'working for the public'.

In summary, while RC members actively took on the new role of 'the host of community', most ordinary residents didn't see themselves as fitting into the self-governing discourses and consciously resisted to take on the roles of politically cooperative citizens that the government tried to place on them. Interviews with Nanluogu Alley's residents revealed that living in the government's discourse of public participation, most Chinese citizens are

not actively supporting or opposing it but try to peacefully live with it at a distance. They expressed clear apathy or aversion to the self-governing projects and refused to take on the role of collaborative citizens, although in their daily lives they still obey many conventional norms and rules to be a morally integrated and politically safe person. Meanwhile, there was still a cognitive gap between the RC members/ activists and ordinary residents about the activists' representativeness. While the RC members took it for granted that they represented the whole community, the ordinary people didn't necessarily regard them as really representing their interests. Conversely, they still treated them as a leader group which was basically doing good things, but not relevant to their daily lives.

### 7.5.2 'Harmony' in Real lives

As the Chinese central government did not give an accurate definition for 'harmony' in its documents, for the grassroots government the assignment of building harmonious communities was similar to a process of 'crossing the river by feeling the way over the stones'. In Nanluogu Alley's Community Development Plan (2006), the community government introduced the target of building harmonious communities to 'benefit local residents from the economic development' and 'empower people by promoting self-governance'. Yet, it still didn't clarify a standard for the community harmony. In the following community construction practices, the slogan of 'building harmonious communities' appeared in all kinds of public discourses as 'guiding concept' and the term harmony was interpreted in various ways.

For the activists, the abstract concept of 'harmony' was understood as the concrete contributions they made in their daily work and the content of 'harmonious community' was interpreted as multifaceted positive changes to their community. A volunteer patroller understood harmony to be the improvement of public security in his neighbourhood and he expressed that he was 'proud to contribute to the community harmony' (Interview No.36). A RC member related harmony to the self-governing projects they organised and said: 'for me a harmonious community means that the residents can participate in their own projects and

benefit from these projects. We (RC members) as Communist Party members should take the lead to do good things for the mass, do practical things for the mass and set good examples for the mass. Last year we organised a planting competition in our community. We gave free seed to the residents and taught them how to plant and how to decorate their courtyards. This is a practical good thing isn't it? Our community is getting greener and the air is better. When people see these small improvements, they feel that they live in a harmonious community' (Interview No.12).

For local residents, harmony meant something more practical, namely, —to reduce the negative influence of tourist development on their lives and benefit from the economic growth. Since Nanluogu Alley developed into a tourist attraction there were increasing conflicts between local residents and business owners. The residents living close to the main alley were quite averse to the noise in the evening and the environmental pollution. After reporting matters many times and having nothing changed, some radical residents adopted violent methods to express their anger: they threw bricks towards the bar windows and beat the business owners. To retain 'harmony' in development, the community government took some actions such as installing soundproof board in the wall of nearby residences and granting compensation to affected resident. Nevertheless, the residents were not satisfied with the outcome. According to a survey conducted by the Jiadaokou Street Office in January 2010, the main finding was that local residents thought that they did not benefit from the tourist development. Another survey carried out by the author in March 2011 demonstrated that most business owners in Nanluogu Alley were not local residents: among the 189 shop owners, only 11 were local residents; 75 were Beijing's native citizens (born and grow up in Beijing) and the remaining 103 entrepreneurs came from other countries, cities or towns. In the local Chamber of Commerce, only 3 members out of 27 were local residents. The only chances for the local residents to benefit from the tourist industry were to rent their properties or work as cleaners and shopkeepers. Many local residents found it difficult to accept that they were being unfairly left out of the picture. A resident who have lived in this area for 20 years described the cultural industry in Nanluogu Alley as 'fake culture' and complained the lack of participation from the 'real indigenous people': 'I do not understand what they mean by 'local culture of Nanluogu



Alley’. Look at the souvenir shops. I will never buy anything from there. They have nothing to do with the real traditional Culture of Beijing...The business owners are all outsiders...we have plenty of indigenous people who know well about the traditional culture, but they do not have chance to manifest it’ (Interview, No. 34).

In 2009 the community government took action to involve local residents in economic development. The Street Office launched a self-governing project to organise local residents to run a charity souvenir shop and sell their handicrafts. A store was provided for free by the Street Office and no rent was charged. The residents wanting to sell their handicrafts established a committee named ‘community arts co-op’ to take charge of the daily operation. Meanwhile, a proportion of the turnover was taken by the committee as a charity fund to help the vulnerable groups in the community. By 2011 the community arts co-op had approximately 35 members, all of whom were local residents.

Figure 7-11/12 The Community Arts Co-op of Nanluogu Alley



Source: taken by the author in October 2010.

In 2011 the members of the community arts co-op had a symposium with the community government and shared their experiences of running the charity business. The representatives mentioned ‘harmony’ when speaking about the increase of income and the job opportunities. A committee member reflected on the process she participated in and showed appreciation to the government for giving up its economic interests to benefit the residents:

*‘At the beginning the Street Office just asked us to reflect on the problems arising from development. We said a lot, such as traffic jams, noise, pollution and crime...in the end the NGO led us to think in another way: as the outsiders earned money in our community and we suffered, of course we felt unfair. So why didn’t we try to make money as well? We said we couldn’t afford the rent. Then the Street Office promised to take charge of this issue. I didn’t expect it would really give us a free shop. It’s fabulous! The government gave up hundreds of thousand Yuan to benefit us. In the first two months I earned twenty thousand. How harmonious it is!’ (Symposium held on September 2011)*

In response, the government representative referred to his comments and pointed out that bringing practical benefit to residents was the real meaning of harmony for the government:

*‘We understand that since Nanluogu Alley developed our residents have felt a strong sense of loss. We tried to comfort them through this handicraft project by bringing some fun to their lives and also increasing their income to improve their life quality. It is the most harmonious outcome for us.’ (Symposium held on September 2011)*

On the other hand, for the vast majority of residents who didn’t benefit from the development, ‘harmonious community’ was more like a sarcastic phrase that the government used to cover up the increasing social injustice and conflicts. The most frequently mentioned opinions in the

interview were that ‘if the government says harmony, it means our society is quite unharmonious already’ and ‘the government can’t solve the conflict anyway’. It seemed that for citizens there was still a deep-rooted distrust of the government. Their own experiences and the conflict incidents that happened in their neighbourhoods made them distrustful, even averse to the ubiquitous discourses of harmony. On some sensitive issues such as demolition and illegal construction their aversion was especially strong. A 46 year-old man from Gu-lou-yuan community criticised the government’s rhetoric of harmony when talking about the demolition disputes in his community:

*‘Harmony is just the government’s vocabulary to mask their incapability. For ages they (the government) said they would demolish our properties and relocate us into better apartments. We have been waiting to move but it never happened. A few days ago they mentioned this thing again but we do not know whether it’s true...I think they can’t afford relocating us to a good place. The housing price is so high and rising every day. If the compensation is not good we would never move. The residents are in panic now. To get more compensation people are crazy to add a second floor and extra shed. I heard about so many disputes in our community. People fight with their parents and brothers all because of a house!... the government dares not stop these unruly people because the government is worried that they would do some radical things which would ruin the harmonious image... The top leaders Hu and Wen, they talk about ‘harmony’, ‘harmony’ all the time but they did nothing. The society is ruined by these cowards. I would prefer live in Maoist era.’ (Interview No.30)*

In 2011 a demolition dispute between a business owner and his landlord in Nanluogu Alley aroused significant public concern. Wang, a business man refused to move out without good compensation when he knew his shop would be demolished. His landlord prosecuted him and won the case. But when the government tried to conduct forced demolition Wang swore that he would ‘die with the shop’. To demonstrate his determination Wang put a coffin in his shop and put his suicide note on the window. In the note Wang wrote about the injustice he faced and addressed his plight to the leaders of the central government. The government had to stop its

actions due to pressure from the public supporting Wang. Wang's suicide note caught the attention of many residents and tourists and soon became a heated discussion item for citizens. The responses from the internet further demonstrated the public's distrust in the government's executive capacity. An internet user named 'citty' voiced his opinion in a forum 'Red Mama'<sup>31</sup>:

*'I searched relevant news online. Most voices expressed sympathy for the business owner. I am just a spectator and I can't see which side I support without further investigation. But whether it is the business owner or the landlord, the related public department can't suspend it and let the foreigners laughing at us...anyway it is the government's responsibility. The government departments have really poor executive capacity. Actually, I would prefer to believe the suicide note, not because I have sympathy for the weak but because the government lost its credibility with the public owing to its villainies. How can the government have to the front to say harmony?'*

Figure 7-13/14 The Coffin and Suicide Note of the business owner



Source: Taken by the author in February 2011.

<sup>31</sup> <http://bbs.redmama.com.cn/BBS-t1424317.html>

In summary, the government discourse of ‘building harmonious communities’ was interpreted in different ways by different people. The activists understood harmony to be the small contributions they made in their daily work and the multifaceted positive changes to their community. Consequently, the ordinary residents intended to link harmony to their own interests such as increase of income, career chances, housing condition and relocation. Meanwhile, although the government made great efforts to promote the discourse of harmony, it could not stop people feeling that the government lacked the ability to solve the increasing social problems. For citizens there was still a deep-rooted distrust of the government and their own experiences in the daily life made them consciously resist and even become averse to the ubiquitous government discourses.

### 7.5.3 Ambivalent Resistance to the Neighbourhood Development

As the community government spared no effort to develop Nanluogu Alley into a tourist spot, what the fast development meant for local residents was rarely a concern. How local residents made sense of the neighbourhood change and its relationship with their daily lives needed to be explored.

The activists intended to relate the neighbourhood’s development to their personal honour and their narratives referred much to the ‘image building’ of their communities. As Nanluogu Alley developed into a famous tourist spot, its changing image from a deprived area to ‘a historical district which represents Beijing’s traditional culture’ was somehow interpreted as the individual glory of these activists. A RC member of Nanluo community said he was proud to be a member of his community now:

*‘Our community is developing so fast these years and we feel I gain face (means feel dignified). The other day I was talking with a geezer living in Beiluogu Alley (a*

*neighbourhood nearby) and I scoffed at him. I said: 'look at your community, it's so poor! I am different. I live in Nanluogu Alley!' And he just walked away gloomily.'* (Interview No.12)

Apparently 'Living in Nanluogu Alley' was something that this resident could show off even though he did not economically benefit from the tourist development. The improvement to the community image is 'gaining face' for him and apparently, the 'geezer from Beiluogu Alley' shared this opinion since he felt humiliated for living in a poor community and he 'walked away gloomily'. The connection of the community image (or the collective image) with their own 'face' as I described before, reflected a sense of responsibility and collective thought of the activists. Out of the same ideology, they to some extent, regarded keeping a good image of their communities –especially in front of foreigners—as their personal responsibilities. A member of the Community Arts Co-op talked about the extra work she did for her job and said:

*'To better introduce my products I went on to the internet and searched relevant stories about the traditional handicrafts. I do not want to just sell these products but would like the tourists to know more about our community. These products are from our community and they represent Nanluogu Alley. In addition, I especially learned English. I feel proud to introduce foreign guests to our products. When I see that the foreigners like my products I feel I add prestige to Beijing and we Beijingers. The traditional culture of Beijing is great and profound. We Beijingers are quite civilized.'*(Interview No.42)

It was interesting that 'demonstrating to foreigners that we were good' figured crucially in motivating the residents to connect the community image with them. Even for the residents who expressed that they were never interested in the development of Nanluogu Alley, they were still concerned about how foreigners looked at their community. A 68 year-old resident from Da-xing community said:

*'The so-called local culture they advertised to foreigners is all fake. The tour guides are all outsiders and they do not know our culture. I wanted to introduce our real local culture to the foreigners but unfortunately I do not speak English.'* (Interview No.34)

A RC member from Ju'er community further added that they didn't want to 'lose face' in front of foreigners because of the deprived image of their neighbourhood:

*'The Street Office asked us to open our residences to foreign visitors. Look at these courtyards! They are so narrow and messy. Even we do not want to live there so how can we open the door to foreigners? It's disgraceful! If we had a beautiful neighbourhood of course we would love to receive foreign guests!'* (Interview No.45)

For the more ordinary people I interviewed, the development of Nanluogu Alley was more about disruption than benefit. A common opinion was that 'however the neighbourhood develops, it has nothing to do with me'. A woman from Gu-lou-yuan community was indifferent when talking about the development: 'I just feel the development of Nanluogu Alley has nothing to do with me. I do not mind it getting better or worse, as long as it does not affect my life' (Interview No.31). Her 24-year-old son, had the same opinion: 'The development of Nanluogu Alley does not really matter to me. I just feel it's more crowded than before so I do not use the main alley now. I know the people living in the next courtyard are really annoyed because they are close to the main alley. Our courtyard is fine.' (Interview No.30) The government survey carried out in 2010 demonstrated that many residents were not satisfied with their neighbourhood environment, especially in terms of the noise, the reduction of sanitary condition and the shrinking green space caused by the sprawl of the tourist industry (see table 7-8).

Table 7-8 The residents' degree of satisfaction about the neighbourhood

Content		Rating of Evaluation (Sample size: 1000)				
		Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very unsatisfied
Neighbourhood environment	Living space	3.47%	11.11%	42.36%	21.88%	21.18%
	Residence quality	2.81%	10.18%	48.77%	20.00%	18.25%
	Indoor sunlight	3.85%	15.38%	43.01%	18.88%	18.88%
	Ventilation	3.23%	20.79%	40.50%	17.92%	17.56%
	Noise	1.80%	13.31%	42.81%	23.74%	18.35%
	Sanitation	2.15%	13.98%	48.75%	19.00%	16.13%
	Green Space	1.81%	15.16%	47.29%	21.30%	14.44%
Service facility	Shopping	2.53%	36.10%	45.49%	10.11%	5.78%
	Traditional shop	2.86%	28.93%	51.79%	10.00%	6.43%
	Public infrastructure	2.18%	24.36%	49.45%	17.45%	6.55%
	Traffic	5.00%	38.57%	38.57%	10.36%	7.50%
	Culture and Entertainment	3.58%	20.07%	52.33%	15.41%	8.60%
	Sport	1.81%	17.75%	49.64%	19.57%	11.23%
Atmosphere	Open space	2.53%	22.74%	46.93%	19.49%	8.30%
	Public interaction with	3.58%	30.47%	46.59%	12.19%	7.17%



	neighbourhood					
	Community activities	3.96%	36.33%	46.04%	8.27%	5.40%
	Neighbourhood relation	2.86%	37.86%	45.71%	7.50%	6.07%
	Contact with friend	2.53%	37.18%	46.93%	7.58%	5.78%
	Sense of security	4.30%	35.48%	39.43%	12.90%	7.89%
	Family relationship	9.16%	49.45%	29.67%	6.23%	5.49%
Average		3.04%	30.80%	49.05%	10.27%	6.84%

Source: 2010 resident survey conducted by the Jiaodaokou Street Office

Although the residents made many angry voices about suffering from Nanluogu Alley's development, their resistance towards the broad issue of 'development' was quite ambivalent. As Foucault put that, 'subjects are gradually, progressively, really, and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts, etc....' (Foucault, Two Lectures on Power 97-98). Most interviewees still thought that development was good and necessary and what they suffered was the price they paid for the development. A resident from Gu-lou-yuan community talked about the bad influence of tourist development and said:

*'It's totally a mess! The neighbourhood is full of tourists and cars and we can't go anywhere easily. Even riding a bicycle is dangerous these days! The foreigners pee everywhere when they get drunk. They are really uncivilized! There are more and more tenants in our courtyard and they are really annoying. They come back late and disturb everyone! The tourists are annoying as well. They just walk into our courtyards and take*

*photos without asking! What can we do? We have to endure it. The country is developing. The city is developing. We have to pay some price.’ (Interview No. 36)*

For many residents, the opinion of ‘open and reform was good, development was good’ had been deeply embedded by the Deng Xiaoping government since the 1980s. When they confronted increasing social problems, they would criticise the current government’s rhetoric of ‘harmony’ but they could hardly get rid of the self-evident ideas of ‘Development is the absolute principle’ (fa-zhen-cai-shi-ying-dao-li 发展才是硬道理) which were implanted by previous political discourses. Their resistance to some government discourse is mixed with their submission to other government discourse. As Butler described the paradoxical simultaneity of mastery and submission in the process of subjectification and said that: ‘Submission and mastery take place simultaneously, and it is this paradoxical simultaneity that constitutes the ambivalence of subjection. Where one might expect submission to consist in yielding to an externally imposed dominant order, and to be marked by a loss of control and mastery, it is paradoxically marked by mastery itself ... the lived simultaneity of submission as mastery, and mastery as submission, is the condition of possibility for the subject itself’ (1995:45–46). The co-existence of resistance and submission drove the residents to endure matters and make sacrifices for the ‘necessary’ social changes.

Meanwhile, the residents’ mentality to give up private interest for broad development in many circumstances was utilized by the government and social organisations to mediate conflicts. The director of the Shining Stone Community Action Centre described the process of how the NGO induced the residents to give up their personal interest to consider the big picture:

*‘When we asked the residents to reflect their problems we heard so much complaint. They usually described the situation as a complete mess to relieve their anger and then impute it*

*to the government...When we knew their model of thinking we just let them complain as much as possible. Then we helped them to classify their problems and analyse them and in this process they realised that some problems were their own problems. We asked them whether they wanted to develop and they said yes. Then we told them that many problems were caused by development such as parking shortage, traffic jam and pet pollution. Because the neighbourhood developed and the residents had more money, there were more cars and people had money to keep pets. Then they began to accept that since they wanted to develop, they had the responsibilities to resolve the problems brought by development. People began to sit down and talk to each other, trying to resolve the conflicts by themselves.’ (Interview No.01)*

In summary, although the government made a great effort to advertise the positive changes of Nanluogu Alley brought by the tourist development, for residents the story was more complicated. Driven by the sense of responsibility and collectivism, the activists intended to connect the image building of their communities with themselves and view the improvement of the community as their personal glory. Meanwhile, for them, ‘maintaining the community’s image’ was regarded as their personal responsibility and the idea of ‘demonstrating to foreigners that we were good’ motivated them to make contributions towards the community image. For those residents who didn’t see themselves in the picture of development their reaction to development was mainly negative. Although the government tried to ignore, there were angry voices from the disturbed residents. However, the residents’ resistance was mixed with their deeply embedded thoughts of compromising for the social development. Although many of them consciously objected to development, they unconsciously accepted the government discourses that development was necessary and inevitable.

## 7.6 Conclusion

This chapter explored the story of Nanluogu Alley from the perspective of governmentality. It examines the Street Office's practices of 'building harmonious communities' (2006-2011) and explored two of the street-level government's technologies which aimed to strengthen control in implicit ways. Firstly, in response to the Chinese central government's strategy of 'building a harmonious society', the street-level governments were actively employing a rhetoric of public participation in recent years. The story of Nanluogu Alley showed that despite its rhetoric, the street level government was still cautious to embrace public participation. The 'expertise' of social organisation was used as a tool to rationalise the government's objectives, rather than a mechanism to better resolve problems. Secondly, discipline was increasingly used as new government technologies to cultivate self-regulated residents. A hierarchical activist group was promoted by the government to carry out self-governing projects. Both Maoist mobilisation and Confucian moral cultivation were adopted to construct active, progressive, meanwhile morally good citizens. The traditional virtues of 'self-dedication' and 'ethical order' were advertised in government discourses to maintain social order in neighbourhood.

The case study led to the conclusion that behind government's rhetoric of 'building a harmonious society', the ultimate objective of government is to maintain control on the opening and diversifying society with more subtle and covert ways. Urban neighbourhood is an important arena for the street-level government to maintain social order. For people living in pervasive discourses of 'harmony', most of them neither actively take on their new social roles of being 'harmonious citizens nor develop clear attitude against them. Their resistance to the government discourses was usually ambivalent. The activists however, actively involved themselves into new social roles and had an optimistic understanding about the government's rhetoric about 'harmony' and the development of their neighbourhood.

## Chapter 8 Conclusions

### 8.1 Introduction

This study has used a governmentality framework to look into Chinese street-level governments' 'community construction' practices which were carried out in response to the central government's 'building a harmonious society' strategy. The aims of this study are to explore the Chinese government's changing technologies to govern the diversifying and opening urban society and to map the changing dynamic of power relations between the government and social actors in grassroots Chinese society. The research questions are:

- (1) What policy instruments does the Chinese central government use to deal with the fragmentation of Chinese urban society?
- (2) How does the Chinese government implement control according to the community (She-qu) administration system?
- (3) What technologies do Chinese street-level governments adopt to build harmonious communities in their daily work?
- (4) How do the involved social groups and citizens interpret the government discourse of building harmonious communities and position themselves within this discourse?

The last three chapters have explored the growing social actors and the shifting state control in both China's public administrative institutions and the government's everyday practices. The purpose of this chapter is to draw overall conclusions about the whole research and reflect on the wider implications of it. It starts with a summary of the findings from the whole study. Then these findings are related to wider debates on Chinese urban governance

and the state-society interactions in Chinese grassroots society. The theoretical implications of this study are discussed in the following part and the thesis ends with reflections on its limitations and further research areas.

## 8.2 Findings of the Study

This study reviewed China's urban governance from feudal dynasties to the present day. According to the literature review and an empirical case study, the following key findings relate to and help answer the research questions:

**Question One: What policy instruments does the Chinese central government use to retain control on the Chinese urban society?**

For over two thousand years China had been a very hierarchical and static society with strong state control at the grassroots level. From feudal dynasties to the People's Republic of China, there are two kinds of value always deeply embedded in China's administration system: centralisation and population mobility control. In feudal China these values were implemented by the government according to three main approaches. The first approach was the imperial power-centered urban planning which restricted the sphere of citizen's activities in specific urban areas. This approach was used repeatedly by feudal governors to design urban spatial layouts and implement neighbourhood-based administration. The second approach was the household registration system (hu-kou) which classified citizens according to identity and limited the population migration between rural areas and cities. According to the household registration system, population mobility in feudal China had been kept at a very low level and the urbanisation process was restrained. The third approach was the hierarchical government structure. During the last two thousand years the hierarchical government structure developed with the maturity of totalitarian regime and contributed to a local government system which was all-embracing in function, huge in size

but deficient in autonomy. Within this hierarchy, Chinese local governments could barely work without the central government's intervention.

When we move on to reflect on China's urban governance in the regime of the Chinese Communist Party since 1949, we find much governing heritage from the past. Firstly, the government uses the neighbourhood as a basic unit to implement administration at the grassroots level. The Street Office and the Residents' Committee, which were established in 1954, were parts of the Chinese central government's strategy to continue the centralized and hierarchical governing approach in socialist China. Secondly, the household registration system still worked as a tool of government to restrain the population mobility. The Chinese Communist Party adopted an urban-rural dual administration system which classified citizens into different categories according to their birthplaces. While the Urban householders enjoyed a range of low-price social welfare such as medical care, housing and education, the rural householders were excluded from the national welfare system and enjoyed very little social and economic resources (Ji, 2004; Yao 2004). The same as in Feudal dynasties, the peasants were still tacitly classified as the under-class. Finally, the government structure of People's Republic of China was still hierarchical. The grassroots governments still struggled with overloaded responsibilities and very limited autonomy.

At the same time, since the foundation of People's Republic China, the Chinese state party has kept exploring new approaches to control Chinese urban society. In Mao's era (1949-1977), the state-owned enterprises (or Dan-wei) were used to replace the public sector in administrating urban neighbourhoods. The urban society at that time was still static and hierarchical. As introduced in Chapter 5, the socialist Dan-wei system provided all kinds of public services including housing, medical care, education, welfare and pension to citizens and it implemented direct intervention into individual lives. Population mobility was restrained by the household registration system. Urban residents lived in gated neighbourhoods and rural residents were strictly prohibited to move to cities or seek jobs in

urban areas. Within this system, state-owned enterprises developed into comprehensive functions and became powerful at local level. The street-level government on the other hand enjoyed very limited authority and played a marginal role in Chinese urban governance.

In 1978, the central government established a series of policies to reform China's urban structure. The radical change of economic policy direction in 1978 triggered a massive and fast urbanisation process in China. The urban economic and social structure underwent a series of radical changes. The accelerating urbanisation made the urban social structure more diverse and fragmented. Increasing urban population and mobility exerted a huge burden on the original urban welfare system. To deal with the crisis, the central government established a series of policy instruments to reform the urban administration system including employment system, housing system and social security system. According to these reforms, most of the social services which used to be delivered by the government and state-owned enterprises (Dan-wei) and could only be enjoyed by unit workers were handed over to street-level governments. To strengthen the local government's ability to govern and provide public services, the central government devolved increasing fiscal independence and administrative discretion to local governments. At the neighbourhood level, a street-level regime –She-qu was established to replace the Dan-wei system to deliver public administration. The 'community construction movement' in the 1990s demonstrated the central government's determination to empower street-level governments and extend its power into society. Differing from the Dan-wei system, the She-qu system had less direct control on residents' personal lives. The central government's approach of the She-qu system was to implement more indirect control according to soft measures.

**Question Two: How does the Chinese government implement control according to the community (She-qu) administration system?**



It has been stated in Chapter 2 that the politicization of the concept of ‘community’ (She-qu) demonstrates the Chinese government’s determination to retain control at the grassroots level. The two-tier community administration system which has a delicate status between local government and citizens is used as a governing tool to deploy government orders down and mobilise civil participation from the bottom. Within this system, the Street Office as the extension of the lowest level of government is given comprehensive government functions and fiscal independence in the community construction movement. As it has developed rapidly into a powerful regime in recent years, it is likely to play a more active role in future urban governance.

On the other hand, the so-called ‘mass organisation’ of the Residents’ Committee plays a pivotal role to pass down government orders and mobilise participation from citizens. As introduced in chapter 5, the Residents’ Committee has an ambivalent identity: in law it is defined as a self-governing organisation which is democratically elected and represents the public interest, however in reality it is in many circumstances controlled by the Street Office in terms of both finance and selecting personnel. The election process of RC members is usually highly political and the budget of the Residents’ Committee is often controlled by the Street Office. In their daily work, the RC members have to spend a large amount of time to accomplish political assignments from the Street Office. Through the Residents’ Committee, the Chinese government manages to extend its power into the neighbourhood in a subtle way: the RC members intend to mobilise residents in a persuasive rather than mandatory manner and make use of their personal relationships with residents to accomplish political assignments. In addition, residents would express their opinions and emotions to RC in peaceful ways out of private respect to the RC members.

Furthermore, between the Residents’ Committee and residents there is a well-organised activist group working as mediators and mobilisers. The activists include the wardens, volunteers and self-governing project workers who are usually long-term residents or Communist Party members. Their experience and knowledge gained the weight of their speech on local affairs

and local residents intended to respect and follow their opinions. In the current community administration system, the activists take charge of many civil affairs and are valued by the street-level government as an important tool to conduct work in neighbourhood. Their daily work included conflict mediation, public security, delivering community care and some political publicity and they are organised in a loose network with support from the government. The case of Nanluogu Alley further demonstrates that there exists a hierarchy within the activist network: The RC members are located at the top of the activist group. They directly accept assignments from the Street Office and deploy further work among other activists; the wardens work as a subsidiary of the Residents' Committee and they are usually regarded as 'real representatives' of the residents because they take charge of practical projects; between wardens and ordinary residents there are further volunteers who work in all kinds of neighbourhood-based projects and take care of detailed operation and more grassroots mobilisation. When government orders are passed down through the activist hierarchy, the political instructions are transformed into personal requests and the interactions between the government and citizens are transformed into conversations between individuals. The state power is 'privatised' by RC members in peaceful ways (Sun, 2000).

### **Question Three: What technologies do Chinese street-level governments adopt to build harmonious communities in their daily practices?**

The Chinese central government's vision of 'building a harmonious society' (2006) articulated a new working orientation for street-level governments: besides perfecting the grassroots bureaucratic institution, more emphasis was given to moral cultivation and promoting wider participation from NGOs, the private sector and citizens. Since 2000, experiences across China demonstrated that the street-level governments were actively exploring new governing modes in which non-government stakeholders played an increasingly active role. The empirical study of Nanluogu Alley deeply revealed how street-level governments used 'public participation' and 'morality' as technologies to 'build harmonious communities'.

## **Public participation as a government technology**

In response to the Chinese central government's strategy of 'building a harmonious society', the street-level governments have actively employed a rhetoric of public participation in recent years. The story of Nanluogu Alley provides a picture of the government's practices in reality: it shows that despite its rhetoric, the street government still has an ambivalent attitude towards embracing public participation and is carefully seeking a balance between authority and liberalism when dealing with its partners in practice. More specifically, on the one hand, the governments are keen to search for professional help in many realms due to their shortcomings in administrating the fragmenting neighbourhoods. Planners, specialists, NGOs, and business owners are invited to make their voice heard in the realms of neighbourhood regeneration, local economic strategic plan, community charity and other community affairs. The number of collaborative projects between the government and professional organisations increased rapidly in recent years and 'collaborative governance' became a hot issue in public discourse and the mass media. It is obvious that the government's attitude towards the participation of the social organisations is getting more open and positive in recent years. On the other hand, the government treats the 'expertise' of the social organisations more as a tool to rationalise its objectives than as a mechanism to seek for better solution. Although the government repeatedly publicises the importance of specialist opinions, it insists on controlling the finance, overall objectives and final decision making processes of its collaborations with the social organisations. Meanwhile, social actors are only invited to participate in specific projects when their expertise can benefit the government in a way that the government feels comfortable. In their conversations with the involved social actors, the government officials deliberately tried to maintain a lower profile and describe themselves as students of their partners. In interviews they also expressed their will to open their mind and welcome input from multiple stakeholders. However in their practical work, the government officials still cautiously rejected a big dose of public participation in fear of losing control.

Meanwhile, participation is in many cases used as a tool to justify the government's strategies. 'Expert suggestions' and 'public opinions' are often quoted by the street-level government to legitimate their plans and programmes to the public and to strive for policy and financial support from upper levels of government. In reality, these suggestions and opinions are often selectively adopted by the government to maximize its own interest. In the areas where the government needs technical assistance from specialists and professional organisations, the government actively encourages professional suggestions but always gives priority to the ones from which it can benefit most. It is common that in the planning formulation process, the stakeholders are only invited to the public hearings as a required procedure. Although the stakeholders are able state their opinions in the public hearings, the government usually only quote the ones who are in line with their objectives.

The analysis above is not stated to lead to a conclusion that 'there is no real participation in China'. Rather, its point is that as the Chinese government begins to deliberately change its rationality and technology of governance, the attitude and approach that the government uses to deal with the public is changing. Public participation can be critically viewed as a technology of government to facilitate its governance. Within this process, the power relations between the government and its partners change as knowledge is exchanged between the participants. According to the collaborations, the social actors introduce their values, vocabularies and technologies to the government and the government officials begin to reflect on their work in new perspectives. Meanwhile the social actors know more about the government's rationality, practical work and obstructions according to their communication with the government and they can explore better ways to attain more decision making rights from the government.

### **Disciplinary technology**

An important technology that the government uses to control the modernizing Chinese society is what Foucault describes as ‘disciplinary technology’. In China, social norms and morality are pervasively used by the street government to strengthen discipline and cultivate self-regulated residents in the community. As the top Chinese government leaders repeatedly emphasised the importance of citizens’ ‘sense of social responsibility’, individuals became an important arena of policy intervention in recent years. Disciplinary power is intensively exercised on urban residents according to discourses, media publicity, the so-called ‘capacity building’ and all kinds of ‘socialist spiritual civilization’ events.

As introduced in the case of Nanluogu Alley, community activists are targeted by the government as the main group to exert disciplinary technology. To mobilise the activists the government adopted Maoist spiritual cultivation which attributes activism’ and ‘progressiveness’ as high-ranking virtues. The Communist Party members and wardens were required to conform to the image of ‘model citizens’ and take the leading role in their neighbourhood. So for the activists, being a community leader does not mean having an explicitly stipulated duty at a specific time. Rather, it means occupying a spiritual and behavioural model in any area at any time. In the so-called ‘capacity training’ to the activists the government repeatedly emphasised the leading role of government and cultivated the activists to collaborate with, rather than challenge the government. Individuals are implied to give up their personal interest for the public interest in order to avoid moral criticism about ‘selfishness’ and ‘individualism’.

Meanwhile, core values in the Confucian doctrine are also articulated by official discourse to conduct moral cultivation among wardens, volunteers and ordinary residents. Self-dedication was regarded as a moral virtue to encourage the wardens and volunteers to work without the government’s scrutiny. The government on the one hand attempted to use media publicity to praise the dedication of the activists in order to magnify the influence of the ‘traditional virtues’ on citizens. On the other hand, the government used volunteer work as a tool to reconstruct the social network among neighbourhoods and relieve some social problems such as loneliness and

estrangement. For the activists, the psychological satisfaction of being a morally integrated person rather than receiving practical payment is the main motivation of their work. The Confucian doctrines of *Xiao* (filial piety) and *Jing* (reverence for the elderly) are emphasised by the government and respecting the elderly was embellished as an important moral virtue. In the media the government attempted to emphasise the virtue of filial piety by praising model citizens and families and advertising the top government leaders' leading role of respecting the traditional ethical order. All of these efforts are made to implicitly retain social order in the neighbourhood. For residents in their daily contact with the elderly activists, pressure from the private relationship and morality to some extent drives ordinary residents to accept the elderly activists' arguments and mobilisation.

**Question Four: How do the involved social groups and citizens interpret the government discourse of building harmonious communities and position themselves within this discourse?**

Apart from examining government technologies, this study explores a rarely discussed aspect of China's community construction, that of the public's reactions to the new government technologies. Empirical study on the case of Nanluogu Alley demonstrates that living in pervasive discourses of 'public participation' and ensuing self-governing projects, different individuals develop different understandings about their responsibilities to participate. Most residents do not actively support or oppose the government discourse of 'building harmonious communities' but try to peacefully live with them at a distance. While the activists actively take on the new role of 'the host of community', most ordinary residents do not see themselves fitting into the discourse of self-governance. Resistance and submission are intertwined with each other in citizens' subjectivities: while in language citizens express apathy or aversion to the self-governing projects and refuse to take on the role of collaborative citizens, in action they still choose to obey the conventional norms and rules to be morally integrated and politically safe persons. Meanwhile, there is still a cognitive gap between the activists and ordinary residents about the activists'

representativeness: while many activists take it for granted that they represent the whole community and their responsibility is to strive for the public interest in the government, the ordinary people do not necessarily regard them as really representing their interests. Rather, they still treat the activists as their leaders who are basically doing good things, but not so relevant to their own lives.

The government discourse of ‘harmony’ is interpreted in different ways by different people as well. For the activists, the abstract concept of ‘harmony’ is understood as the concrete contributions they make in their daily work and the content of ‘harmonious community’ is interpreted as multifaceted positive changes of their neighbourhoods. For ordinary residents, harmony meant something more practical—to reduce the negative influence of tourist development on their lives and benefit from the economic growth. As the vast majority of residents do not really benefit from the development, ‘harmonious community’ is more like a phrase that the government uses to cover up the increasing social injustice and conflicts to residents. Although the government makes great efforts to promote the discourse of harmony, it can not stop people feeling that the government lacks the ability to solve increasing social problems. For citizens there is still deep-rooted distrust in government. Their own experiences in daily life make them consciously resist, even averse to the ubiquitous government discourses of ‘building a harmonious society’. The resistance is manifested both in radical ways, such as protest on the internet, violence, petitioning and in peaceful and personal ways such as apathy to the government projects, oral criticism and sarcasm about government rhetoric.

Lastly, although in Chinese government’s discourse ‘development’ is always described positively, for residents the story is much more complicated. Driven by the sense of responsibility and collectivism, the activists intended to connect the image building of their communities with themselves and view the development of the community as their personal glory. ‘Demonstrating to foreigners that we are good’ figures crucially in motivating the activists (and even most ordinary residents) connect the community image with themselves. For most ordinary residents the development of their neighbourhoods is more about

disruption than benefit and their reaction to development is mainly negative. However, the residents' resistance to development is quite ambivalent. Although in vocabulary they easily express opposition to the development, in action most of them would compromise because they still believe that development was basically good and necessary for China and what they suffer is the price they have to pay for the development. It seems that the 1980s' government discourse of 'development is the absolute principle' (fa-zhan-jiu-shi-ying-dao-li) is still deeply-embedded in Chinese people's mind.

*Reflection on the validity of the new governing technologies: how long is it going to work?*

In Chinese ancient discourses there are many influential descriptions on the positive impacts of social discipline on individuals. Confucius reinforced the importance of self-regulation for king, government officials, teachers and other social elites<sup>32</sup> and appealed for them to be moral model in the society. Mencius and Xunzi claimed that it was the norms and disciplines that civilized individuals and shaped them from 'innocent' or 'savage' bodies into complicated 'social members'. Their arguments expressed a similar perspective as Foucault that our thoughts, values and behaviours are deeply influenced by social disciplines, but they all focused on the constructive effects of these norms and disciplines on people.

The legacy of traditional philosophy to a large extent shapes Chinese people's moral value and facilitates the government's strategy at this moment. Some traditional values such as patriotism, collectivism, self-dedication and filial piety are still more or less embedded in citizens' minds. But in the opening and diversify society, Chinese people confront the increasing impact of multiple culture and the traditional values are rapidly replaced by various western values. In modern communities the neighbourhood relationship can be more remote than in traditional communities and the activist group may not develop well.

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<sup>32</sup>孔子曰：苟正其身矣，于从政乎何有？不能正其身，如正人何？<论语>



How long can the community government conduct social mobilisation according to the community elites and the ‘traditional virtues’ is uncertain. On the other hand, increasing social conflicts and scandals have seriously decreased citizens’ trust in the government and driven them to be suspicious of government discourses. If the distrust in government continues, the Chinese government will find it more and more difficult to mobilise massive participation from citizens. In the next few decades the Dan-wei system is likely to totally retreat from China’s urban administration. By that time an important legacy of Dan-wei society – a well-development social network in neighbourhoods –is likely to be destroyed by a heterogeneous and mobile society. The community administration system will confront more challenges. As a matter of fact, the development and autonomy of community-based organisations, the social network among community and the continually changing public-private power relations deserve more political and academic concern in the coming decades.

### 8.3 Contribution to wider debates

#### 8.3.1 Urban governance in China

This study contributes to the literature of Chinese urban governance in two aspects. Firstly, it points out that the term ‘governance’ should always be understood in Chinese context together with its specific political institution and state control. Secondly, it illustrates the everyday governing practices of Chinese street-level governments in real life, which are rarely discussed in the current literature.

It has been pointed out in chapter 3 that while much Chinese community literature adopted the term ‘governance’, little gave concern to how we should understand this term in China’s context. When the western scholars (Kenneth Lieberthal, 2004; Tony Saich, 2004; David Bray, 2006) used the term ‘governance’ in their research on Chinese issues they in

many circumstances ignored the non-democratic and non-liberal nature of Chinese society. Similarly, Chinese literature often mixes up the term ‘community governance’ with ‘community administration’ and ‘community construction’ without reflecting the fundamental factors in governance theory, such as democratic process and civil society (Xue, 2002; Li, 2004; Cui, 2006; Pan, 2006; Zhao, 2008; Zhou, 2008; Song, 2012). This omission of the shifting meaning of ‘governance’ from the west to China limits the exploration on Chinese government’s rationalities in its governing practices. This study contributes to that knowledge by pointing out that the term ‘governance’ should be understood in China’s context on the following premises:

- Firstly, in China, government control in the grassroots society – although reducing with the economic reforms— is much stronger than in western liberal democracies. The traditional centralised administrative ideology is deeply embedded in the current institution (as introduced in Chapter 5). Therefore in China the term governance is adopted by the government with a rationality of state control, rather than the western understanding of governance as self-organising, inter-organisational networks with ‘a significant degree of autonomy from state’ (Rhodes, 1997). In China the ‘autonomy’ should always be interpreted as ‘autonomy within control’. For example, as introduced in Chapter 5, despite the rhetoric of ‘self-governing mass-organisation’, Residents’ Committees are still often controlled by the Street Office in many areas.
- Secondly, China does not have a mature grassroots democratic system and developed civil society. The interactions between the governments and the private sector/NGOs are not based on ‘challenge’ and ‘supervision’, rather, both governments and social actors put their focus on ‘collaboration’ and ‘mutual benefit’. As introduced in Chapter 6, collaboration between governments and social actors is mainly conducted by governments and the decision making process is not transparent for the public. Mass public participation has already appeared in governments’ vocabulary but is still far from being really implemented. The case of

Nanluogu Alley in Chapter 7 further demonstrates that ‘seeking for collaboration’ is the main content of dialogues between the government and social actors. Therefore it is important to know that in China, all the government’s ‘governance’ practices are carried out on basis of a series of internalised power relationships in which the involved social actors tacitly accepted the government’s absolute sovereign and their limit right to speak.

- Thirdly, due to policy control, the NGO system is still weak in China. Local governments usually have to ‘cultivate’ the community-based organisations as their ‘partners’ in their governance practices. Therefore and in many occasions, the government would provide technical, personnel and financial support for the community-based organisations or directly fund the community-based organisations. The relationship between the government and the community-based organisation is more delicate and complicated in China than in liberal countries. To fully understand the meaning of governance in China, it is necessary to examine the background of the ‘non-government’ organisations and ask these questions: ‘Who fund them?’ ‘Who are the members of these organisations?’ ‘Is there any other way that the government can control or influence the operation of these organisations?’

Literature on Chinese urban governance usually puts the focus on the government’s institutional reforms (Hua, 1999; Cai& Lu, 2007; Yang, 2008, Hua, 2009, Wang, 2009) and lacks concern with the government’s interactions with the social actors in its everyday practices. This gap impedes further exploration on the changing power relations at the grassroots of Chinese society, which is regarded as the core content of the community construction movement (Ding, 2006; Wang, 2009). This study fills this gap by exploring street-level governments’ everyday practices according to an in-depth case study. It points out that Chinese street-level governments are using ‘public participation’ and ‘morality’ as new technologies to transfer the grand, explicit and radical social conflicts into detailed, implicit and moderate issues which they could find a strategy to resolve.

More specifically, in the scope of community, the government adopts a mixture of regional and hierarchical approaches in its governing practices. To widen collaboration with professional social organisations, the government begins to embrace a regional governing network with the rhetoric of ‘multi-stakeholders’ participation’. Much effort has been made to promote neighbourhood-based public-private collaborations within the rationality of decreasing the government’s administrative pressure and devolving some responsibilities to private and social sectors. This tendency means that ‘expertise’ will get more important for social actors to launch collaboration with the government. As mentioned in Chapter 5, both the Street Office and the Residents’ Committee are overloaded with massive political assignments passed down from the upper levels of government and they find themselves lacking professional skills in many areas. The organisations which can provide technical assistance and professional suggestions to the government in the areas of strategic planning, economic development, public services and self-governance will be more widely invited into community governance.

On the other hand, to maintain the social order in the neighbourhood, the government continued its hierarchical approach to make use of the activists to organise community affairs and to mediate conflicts. As introduced in the case study of Nanluogu Alley, a hierarchy still exists in the community activists group to pass down the government’s political orders and organise public mobilisation. The way that the government make use of the activists to retain control on the ordinary residents is not so different from the Maoist era. The hierarchical administration still exists, although covered by the vocabulary of ‘self-governance’. Differing from the government system, the activists are usually motivated by personal spiritual pursuit and cannot be forcibly ordered. Therefore in order to keep this loose hierarchy the government adopts more subtle technologies of discipline and morality to make the activists work voluntarily and cultivate the residents to conform to the social norms such as self-dedication, filial piety and reverence for the elderly. This governing tendency means that Chinese people will confront more subtle and insidious governmental power which is masked by self-evident vocabularies such as ‘civil participation’ and

‘traditional virtue’. The government power is ubiquitous and dispersed throughout the institution of the modern society, which is more difficult for citizens to escape from.

### 8.3.2 The state-society relations of China

Much relevant literature describes community as on the ‘frontier’ of the state-society interactions in China (Gui, 2007; Wang, 2009; Chen, 2010; Yue, 2010) and regards it as a good arena to reflect the state-society relations in China. Based on this argument, this study opens discussion on the micro-scale interactions between the Chinese state government and social actors in the community. It points out that the experiences of community construction during the last two decades reflect the changing dynamic of state-society relations in China: the governments’ policies on grassroots administration still vary in different cities, but widely increasing collaborations between the street-level governments and economic/social sectors reflect a new tendency of state-society relations in which the government makes more effort on attracting increasing actors into the scene of government. As local governments actively devolve government functions to street-level governments, the community administration system is likely to play a more active role in urban public administration in the future. The state control in the She-qu system is still obvious and strong. As introduced in Chapter 5, in many circumstances the government still exerts financial and personnel control on Residents’ Committees, which limits their autonomy and representativeness. The Residents’ Committee members are usually designated by the government and the election process is usually controlled by the government. Therefore in many cases the Residents’ Committee cannot really represent the residents.

Meanwhile, the street government’s microscopic practices in the story of Nanluogu Alley illustrate a picture of the dynamic state-society interactions in China’s grassroots society. The government is actively exploring professional help from social and private sectors. The social and private actors on the other hand, are also exploring the best way to deal with the

government and are searching for long-term collaborations. According to these collaborations, the state and society interact more frequently around the topic of ‘mutual interest’ but not ‘challenge’. Conflict and divergence are deliberately concealed or avoided in many cases as ‘building collaboration’ is the main objective for both government and other stakeholders at this stage. Increasing state-social interactions do not necessarily mean that the state is withdrawing from the society at the moment. The community government in many circumstances still insists on holding the decision making rights and playing the leader role in the public-private collaborations. However, it is for certain that the social and private actors will be further involved into community governance in many realms. As they launch more interactions with the government, the power relations between the government and them will keep changing. The state-society relations will be more frequently produced and reproduced by the interactions between the government and social actors.

#### 8.4 Theoretical implications

As introduced in Chapter 3, the concept of governmentality provides a promising tool for the analysis of transformation in statehood. However, the current governmentality studies are mainly carried out in western liberal context and almost by default exclude governmentalities in non-liberal countries. As these studies limit the meaning of ‘modern society’ to the ‘english-speaking world’, they failed to consider the possibility of non-liberal forms of governmentality such as ‘socialist art of government’ or ‘Chinese governmentality’ which according to Sigly, is ‘carried out not through familiar tactics of freedom and liberty, but through a distinct planning and administrative rationality, and which is nonetheless a product of the same process that Foucault outlines in the governmentality arguments’ (2006:491).

China is an excellent case for a governmentality-inspired analysis because as the traditional centralised control becomes increasingly difficult with the opening up of the Chinese

society, the state has to transfer to liberal discourse and implicate society-based organisations and citizens in the governance of regions, cities and societal sectors but at the same time, the authoritarian control is still deeply embedded in the institution. In recent years the proliferating literature on China's changing statehood contributes to increasing studies on the government's changing governing practices. Studies of governmentality have emerged in the realms of governance, development, education, the environment, community, religion and sexual health. (Jeffreys and Sigley, 2009; Dutton, 2009; Xu, 2009; Harwood, 2009; Bray, 2006; Hoffman, 2009; Cooke, 2009; Jeffreys and Huang, 2009) However, 'governmentality' has not been systematically used as a conceptual tool to analyse the government rationalities in the landscape of Chinese urban landscape.

This study contributes to research on governmentality in China's context by showing how the non-liberal rationalities were implemented by the Chinese government according to a series of sovereign measures. It has developed a new framework to explore the Chinese government's everyday practices from the governmentality perspective. Firstly, Foucault's discussions on 'government technology' are used to critically analyse the government's planning process, viewing media publicity, citizenship education, self-governing projects and all kinds of political events which are carried out not by compulsory order, but according to public mobilisation as tools to bolster a particular relationship between state and society. All these government practices can be used as a channel to interpret the government's underlying motives and rationalities. On the other hand, Foucault's concept of 'subjectification' provides an insight into government practices from the public's perspective including 'how do the citizens form and change their understanding about who they are as a result of the governmental power?' and 'what kind of citizenship has been formed by the governmentalities?' This framework which looks into both the government technologies and the public's subjectification provides a critical and interactive approach to understand the current Chinese government's governing practices.

## 8.5 Limitations of this study and further research areas

Community construction is a grand topic for China. It involves dynamic and endless interactions between the state party and the civil society. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the community construction movement is carried out in flexible ways by the grassroots government in different cities, different types of neighbourhood with varying institutions. This study only carried out an empirical research on a specific type of community (traditional community) in a specific city (Beijing). It cannot represent the ‘classical’ government practices and public-private power relations in community construction because there is no classical government practices and public private power relations so far yet. For example, in some industrial cities such as Pan-zhi-hua and Da-qing the Dan-wei system is still working and the state-owned enterprises are still the main provider of public services and welfare. The power relations between Dan-wei and street-level government in these cities more or less remain in the socialist era. In some south-east Chinese cities such as Ning-bo and Tong-ling, the She-qu system is comparatively well developed and the local governments are trying to repeal the Street Office and empower the Residents Committee in the last few years. Meanwhile, the stakeholders in each type of community are different: in commercial communities the ‘property owner committee’ (ye-zhu-wei-yuan-hui) sometimes plays an active role in organising community affairs and protecting rights of residents; in some traditional communities the Dan-wei can be an important partner of the community government in terms of delivering public services. Empirical research in all types of communities and in different local contexts is important for us to better understand the community construction. Only according to abundant empirical researches can we get closer to the ever-changing power relations between the Chinese state party and society.

Meanwhile, the uneven development between urban and rural areas and increasing rural social problems aroused the concern from the central government in recent years. In rural areas, the ‘rural community construction’ is just on its way. As many studies (including this one) focus on urban communities, few were carried out to explore the stories in rural



communities. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, the Chinese urbanisation process led to huge shocks for both urban and rural societies. The rural areas in many aspects confronted different social problems from the urban areas and the administrative structure, stakeholders and power relations are different from urban communities. More research should be given to the local government's practices within rural context.

To end this thesis, I want to conclude that this study only opens a small window for us to observe the changing dynamic of power relations between the government and the social actors/citizens in China's grassroots society. It is important to understand that in China's social transition, the government power is exercised in more insidious and complex ways and in many occasions, decorated by liberal discourse. As summarised by Greenhalgh and Winckler: 'The Chinese people remain intensively governed, but the mode of governing is changing. In place of the crude and occasional intervention of the state, China's people now face a much more subtle yet insidious form of power that is continuous and dispersed throughout the institution of modern society and within their own selves, and masked by the language of truth and power' (2005:326). In the future, more research should be carried out to explore this significant change of the Chinese government's governing rationality.

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## Appendix 1

### Government Documents Referred to in the Text.

Year	Government Document
1954	Urban Street Office Organisation Regulation of the People's Republic of China is passed on the 4 <sup>th</sup> conference of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress in 1954.
1957	Chinese National Design Work Conference Document on the National People's Congress.
1958	The People's Republic of China Household Registration Ordinance. Passed on the 91 <sup>st</sup> conference of National People's Congress, implemented in 1958.
1982	The Constitution of People's Republic of China
1989	National People's Congress: Residents' Committee Organic Law of the People's Republic of China
1990	The National Ministry of Construction: Provision Regulation on the Granting and Transferring of Land Rights over State-owned Land in Cities and Towns
1994	Ministry of Civil Affairs of P. R. China: National Community Conference Document.
2000	Ministry of Civil Affairs of P. R. China: 'Minzhengbu guanyu zai quanguo tuijin chengshi shequ jianshede yijian' (The ministry of civil affairs' opinions on promoting urban community construction across the country).
2002	The Municipal planning bureau of Beijing: Beijing Historical City Conservation Plan
2004	The Municipal planning bureau of Beijing: Beijing City Master Plan (2004-2020)
2004	zhonggong zhongyang guanyu jiaqiang dangde zhizhengnengli jianshe de jue ding (The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China's decisions about strengthening the party's ruling ability), passed on the Fourth Plenary Session of the 16th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on 16 <sup>th</sup> September 2004.

2005	Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics: Beijing Statistical Yearbook.
2005	China's Ministry of Labor and social security Document.
2005	Zeng Qinghong's Speech of Community construction in his inspection visit to Tianjin
2006	Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu goujian shehuizhuyi hexieshehui de ruogan zhongda wenti de jue ding (The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China's decisions about several major issues of building a harmonious socialist society), November 2006.
2006	The Municipal government of Beijing: Beijing's Eleventh Five-year Development Plan (2006-2010).
2006	The Dongcheng District planning bureau of Beijing: The Eleventh Five-year Plan of Dongcheng District (2006-2010) .
2006	Jiao-dao-kou Community Development Plan
2006	Nanluogu Alley Conservation plan
2007	The Jiaodaokou Street Office: Measures for the use of business format adjustment funds of Nanluogu Alley.
2009	Ministry of Civil Affairs of Beijing: Development Report of Community Residents' Civil Organisations.
2009	Ministry of Civil Affairs of Ningbo: Shehui zuzhi zai shequ gonggong fuwu zhong de jieru—zhengfu xiang shehui goumai fuwu de jingyan yu duice yanjiu (The role of community self-governance in community public service provision).
2010	The National Bureau of statistics of People's Republic of China: China statistic Yearbook 2010.
2011	Jiao-dao-kou Community Development Plan Mid-stage Assessment Report

## Appendix 2

The Ministry of Civil Affairs created the following 26 ‘*Shequ* Experimental Districts’ In 1999.

PROVINCE	CITY	DISTRICT*
Beijing		Xicheng
Tianjin		Heping and Hexi
Hebei	Shijiazhuang	Chang’an
Liaoning	Shenyang	Shenhe and Heping
Liaoning	Benxi	Xihe
Jilin	Changchun	Chaoyang
Heilongjiang	Harbin	Daoli and Nangang
Shanghai		Louwan
Jiangsu	Nanjing	Xincheng, Gulou, and Xuanwu
Zhejiang	Hangzhou	Xiacheng
Anhui	Hefei	Xishi
Fujian	Xiamen	Kaiyuan
Shandong	Jinan	Lixia
Shandong	Qingdao	Shinan and Sifang
Henan	Luohe	Yuanhui
Guangdong	Foshan	Chengnan
Hainan	Haikou	Zhendong
Chongqing		Jiangbei
Sha’anxi	Xian	Xincheng
Xinjiang	Kelamayi	Kelamayi

\*Some cities have shequs in more than one district.

### Appendix 3

#### Functions of Jiaodaokou Street Office

Street Office's Functions	Branch in Street Office	Other involved public sectors
<p>Implement national and local laws, policies and regulations.</p> <p>Accomplish assignments deployed by municipal and district governments</p>		
<p>Organise and manage street-level economy.</p> <p>Develop source of local revenue.</p> <p>Local revenue levy.</p> <p>Improve regional economic development.</p> <p>Street-level fiscal system management</p> <p>Financial audit</p>	Financial department	Local tax department
<p>Establish and implement community development planning</p> <p>deploy regional, social and mass assignments to local institutions, work units, groups and enterprises and supervise the implementation of assignments</p>	Community Construction Office	Local work units, institutions, groups and enterprises
<p>Coordinate with municipal and district-level government functional departments to implement relevant work and supervise the implementation of their work</p>		public security organs, trade and industry bureau, revenue department, sanitation and green bureau, housing authority and supervising their work
Command urban management work	Urban comprehensive management office	Urban management division group
Regulate local infrastructure construction	Community Construction Office	Local planning and construction bureaus
<p>Evaluate local officer's performance</p> <p>Collect residents' suggestions and opinions and</p>	Discipline Inspection Office	<p>Local residents</p> <p>Local work units</p>

express to district government		District government
<p>Urban administration assignments:</p> <p>(1) Residential area and street sanitation and greening management . Organise local work units and residents to implement the ‘men-qian-san-bao’ policy (be responsible for general sanitation, green covering and keeping good social order in a designated area outside the unit building)</p> <p>(2) Investigate and prosecute illegal construction, unlicensed business activities and environment destruction activities</p> <p>(3) Cooperate with municipal environment department with population abatement</p> <p>(4) Coordinate with construction department to supervise local construction projects and maintain construction order. Prevent disturbance and pollution</p>	<p>Sanitation office</p> <p>Urban comprehensive management office</p>	<p>Local residents</p> <p>Local work units, institutions and private enterprises</p> <p>Municipal environment department and construction department</p>
<p>Social management assignments:</p> <p>(1) Organise local work units and residents to conduct socialist spiritual civilization movements</p> <p>(2) Maintain local public security and social stability</p> <p>(3) Floating population management</p> <p>(4) Birth control, conflicts mediation, population statistics, local employment guarantee and social security</p> <p>(5) Disaster prevention and relief</p> <p>(6) Guarantee the rights of old, female, teenager and disabled.</p>	<p>Publicity Office</p> <p>Public security management office</p> <p>Social security comprehensive management office</p> <p>Civil Affairs Office</p> <p>Statistics Office</p> <p>Judicial Office</p> <p>Social security office</p>	<p>Local police station</p> <p>Local Red Cross Society</p> <p>District Statistics Office</p> <p>District Judicial Office</p>
<p>Community service</p> <p>(1) Make overall plan for community development, improve community infrastructure coverage, allocate community</p>	<p>Community construction office</p> <p>Community Service</p>	



resources  (2) Organise community voluntary organisations and mobilise local work units and residents with community service  (3) Social assistant, social welfare and social security coverage.	centre	
(3) Social assistant, social welfare and social security coverage.		
Residents administration  (1) Conduct resident self-governance, improve residents committee construction, promote community representative conference, reflect residents' opinions and requirements to district governments. Deal with residents' petitions and public inquiries  (2) Conduct public legal and moral education. Organise community commonweal activities.  (3) Conduct cultural and sports events and community education	Community construction office  Community service centre	District Ministry of Civil Affairs
Accomplish other assignments deployed by municipal and district governments.		

Source: <http://www.bjdch.gov.cn/> (government website)

## **Appendix 4**

### Interview Schemes

#### **Interview Questions to the members of the Jidaokou Street Office:**

- 1 How did the Street Office mobilise the participation of RC members/residents in the formulation process of the Jiaodaokou Community Development Plan (2006) and the Nanluogu Alley Conversation Plan (2006)?
- 2 How does the Street Office collaborate with the planners/NOGs/ Chamber of Commerce in the implementation of the the Jiaodaokou Community Development Plan (2006) and the Nanluogu Alley Conversation Plan (2006) and the mid-stage assessment?
- 3 How does the Street Office mobilise the participation from the planners/NOGs/ Chamber of Commerce in its 'building harmonious communities' strategy?
- 4 What chances and challenges does the Street Office confront when promoting self-governing projects in Nanluogu Alley?
- 5 How does the Street Office work with other government departments and higher levels of government in Nanluogu Alley's community construction practices?
- 6 How does the Street Office mediate the conflicts between local residents and business owners?
- 7 How do you evaluate the development of Nanluogu Alley since 2006?

#### **Interview Questions to the planning team:**

- 1 How did the Planning team launch collaboration with the Jiaodaokou Street Office in 2006?
- 2 How did the team members communicate with the Street Office leaders in the formulation of the Jiaodaokou Community Development Plan (2006) and the Nanluogu Alley Conversation Plan (2006)? How did the team members communicate with local residents and other stakeholders?
- 3 How did the planning team participate into the implementation of the 2006 Plans?
- 4 How does the planning team participate into the 2011 mid-stage assessment programme?
- 5 How do the planning team members communicate with local residents and other stakeholders in the 2011 mid-stage programme?
- 6 How do you evaluate the planners, the government and other stakeholders' roles in the formulation and the implementation of the 2006 Plans?

7 How do you evaluate the participation of multiple stakeholders in Nanluogu Alley's community construction since 2006?

8 How do you evaluate Nanluogu Alley's development since 2006?

**Interview Questions to the members of the Chamber of Commerce of Nanluogu Alley:**

1. What are the main reasons that attract you to have your business in Nanluogu Alley?
2. What positive/negative influence does the tourist development of Nanluogu Alley have on your business, your customers and your relationship with the government and local residents?
3. What events have the Chamber of Commerce organised in recent years? How do you think them related to your own business and the overall development of this neighbourhood?
4. What kind of contact/ communication/ conflicts do you have with the government/ local residents/ other business owners in your daily operation?
5. How do you understand the government's 'building harmonious communities' strategy and how do you think them related to your own business and private life?
6. How do you think the Jiaodaokou Community Development Plan (2006) and the Nanluogu Alley Conversation Plan (2006) related to your own business and the overall business development of Nanluogu Alley?
7. Do you feel yourself a member of this community? What are your personal opinions about the fast development of this neighbourhood in recent years?

**Interview Questions to RC members (the top leaders):**

- 1 What are the contents of the Residents' Committee's daily work?
- 2 What is your relationship with the Street Officers in your daily work? What kind of communication do you have with the Street Office?
- 3 How do you understand the identity of the Residents' Committee? It is a subordinate organisation of the Street Office or is it a real mass organisation which work for the public?
- 4 What kind of activities do you organise in the community? How do the local residents participate in?

- 5 How do you communicate with local residents in your daily work? How do you mobilise them into the activities you organise?
- 6 How did the Residents' Committee participate in the formulation and the implementation of the Jiaodaokou Community Development Plan (2006) and the Nanluogu Alley Conversation Plan (2006)?
- 7 How does the Residents' Committee collaborate with the NGOs in the self-governing projects in recent years?
- 8 How does the Residents' Committee resolve conflicts between the Street Office, local business owners and the residents?

**Interview Questions to the representatives of local residents (activists):**

1. How do you think about the fast tourist development of Nanluogu Alley in recent years? How does the tourist development influence this neighbourhood in many aspects and how does it influence your life?
2. How does your neighbourhood change in terms of infrastructure, traffic, living environment, community activities, cultural atmosphere and neighbourhood relationship in recent years?
3. Do you think yourself and local residents participated in Nanluogu Alley's tourist development? How?
4. Which neighbourhood-based self-governing projects have you participated in recent years? What kind of influence do they have on your daily life and your relationship with your neighbours/ the government' local business owners?
5. How do you understand the government's 'building harmonious communities' strategy? How do you think it related to your life and your neighbourhood? Which activities have you attended that was organised under the name of 'building harmonious communities'?
6. Have you heard about the Jiaodaokou Community Development Plan (2006) and the Nanluogu Alley Conversation Plan (2006) ? How do you think them influence your life and this neighbourhood?
7. What kind of contact/communication/ conflicts do you have with the government/ your neighbours/ local business owners/ the tourists in your daily life and how do you resolve them?

8. How do you think about the future of Nanluogu Alley? What kind of suggestion do you have on it?

9. What kind of work do you regularly do as a RC member/warden/ volunteer? How do you mobilise residents?

10. Do you like your work as a RC member/warden/ volunteer? Why do you do this work and how do you understand your identity?

**Interview Questions to ordinary local residents:**

1. How do you think about the fast tourist development of Nanluogu Alley in recent years? How does the tourist development influence this neighbourhood in many aspects and how does it influence your life?

2. How does your neighbourhood change in terms of infrastructure, traffic, living environment, community activities, cultural atmosphere and neighbourhood relationship in recent years?

3. Do you think yourself and local residents participated in Nanluogu Alley's tourist development? How?

4. Which neighbourhood-based self-governing projects have you participated in recent years? What kind of influence do they have on your daily life and your relationship with your neighbours/ the government' local business owners?

5. How do you understand the government's 'building harmonious communities' strategy? How do you think it related to your life and your neighbourhood? Which activities have you attended that was organised under the name of 'building harmonious communities'?

6. Have you heard about the Jiaodaokou Community Development Plan (2006) and the Nanluogu Alley Conversation Plan (2006) ? How do you think them influence your life and this neighbourhood?

7. What kind of contact/communication/ conflicts do you have with the government/ your neighbours/ local business owners/ the tourists in your daily life and how do you resolve them?

8. How do you think about the future of Nanluogu Alley? What kind of suggestion do you have on it?

9 How do you think about the activists, including the RC members, the wardens, the volunteers and the self-governing project participants' work? Do you think they represent your interest? How do you think their work related to your own life?