Rethinking urban governance in China's urban regeneration - case of art space development in Chengdu

Zhu, Mengran

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RETHINKING URBAN GOVERNANCE IN CHINA'S URBAN REGENERATION: CASE OF ART SPACE DEVELOPMENT IN CHENGDU

by

Mengran Zhu

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ABSTRACT

In China, there has been a proliferation of new creative urban spaces in cities in the last two decades. Consequently, the governance of recognised creative spaces like urban art spaces in mega cities has been widely debated in academia. At the local level, government revenues depend heavily on property tax, so the government must boost property investment and attract more such investment. This has resulted in a pro-growth coalition between local governments and property developers in many creative space construction projects, with entrepreneurial urban governors often ignoring the interests of the local communities in the planning process. While many art spaces developed in Chinese cities have been criticised for following the property-oriented development strategy and becoming over-commodified, with the consequence of social eviction, there are also other art spaces developed by local authorities, through a more inclusive engagement with artist communities, notably emerging in more recent experiences. The research aims to address this phenomenon and to diversify the current research body by looking at the case study of the emerging city of Chengdu, whose cultural and creative industry development has been largely ignored in previous research. By studying the case of this second-tier city, where artist communities have been actively engaged in the planning process, this empirical research explores the challenges and opportunities artist communities face amid the place-making of Chinese cities. In doing so, the thesis works at the intersection of theoretical engagement with urban development, collaborative planning and governance, and community participation, exploring the changing nature of China's government-society relationship at the local level.

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GLOSSARY OF CHINESE TERMS

bawu xinchao yundong 八五新潮运动 the 85 New Fine Arts Movement

chuang yi 创意 arts *creativity*

chuang xin 创新 innovative *creativity*

guo ying qi ye 国营企业 State-run enterprise

guo you qi ye 国有企业 State-owned enterprise (SOEs)

jiceng dangzuzhi 基层党组织 Primary-level party organisations

jiceng weiyuanhui 基层委员会 Primary-level party committee

jiedao 街道 Street

jiedaoban 街道办 Street Office

longtou qiye 龙头企业 Dragon head enterprises

minsheng 民生 People's livelihood

qiyehua zhen fu 企业化政府 Entreprised government

wenhua chuanyi chanye 文化创意产业 cultural and creative industry (CCI)

shequ zhongxin 社区中心 Community centre

shequ 社区 Community

shequn 社群 Group of people

shichang jueding, zhengfu tuidong **市场决定，政府推动** Market makes the decision, government facilitates the process

tudi liuzhuan zhidu **土地流转制度** Land Circulation Policy

zhibu weiyuanhui **支部委员会** Branch committee

zongzhibu weiyuanhui **总支部委员会** General branch committee

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I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of research

In the year 1998, the UK Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) published the Creative Industries Mapping Document report with the aim of putting the Creative Industries Task Force (CIFT) into effect. This report indicated that the concept of creative industries had become one of the most important elements of the UK's development policies. According to the report, creative industries are industries that "require creativity and talent, with potential for wealth and job creation through exploitation of their intellectual property", and the aim of promoting the creative industries is to enhance the UK's overall competitiveness in a global economy. This has led to an empirical research fever of culture/creative economy oriented urban development in the 1990s, with cultural industry and urban renewal knowledges adapted selectively in global north countries (McCarthy, 2006, Montgomery, 2003; Kenyon and Black, 2001; Bell and Jayne, 2006), leading to some fundamental discussion of capitalisation and instrumentalisation of culture/creativity as an urban economic development technique.

With a similar timeline to the UK promoting its creative industries at the national policy level, China stands as an early advocator of cultural and creative industry (CCI 文化创意产业 *wenhua chuanyi chanye*) led urbanisation strategy in the 1990s, regarding CCI as an important growth factor of urban development. This can be explained with the state's unceasing deepening of reforms in cultural and

economic systems in the late 1970s, since when China's rapidly changing policy environment, market environment and social environment had jointly called for new development strategies. The general decentralisation in political and cultural systems at that time suggested that the new development strategy was expected to be essentially different from the previous one, mainly based on administrative instructions. The evolving stance of the Chinese government, as it navigated a restructured market and society via comprehensive system development, is crucial to understanding its distinguishing approach to CCI-led urban development.

A creative industry cluster has sprung up in China in the recent two decades, research has already been done on the economic and political motivation behind these creative spaces in Chinese cities starting early 2000s. In the first decade of the 2000s, these creative industry clusters led to many academic discussions, especially on the economic and political motivation behind the cluster construction in China's economic-oriented development (Lv, 2006; Keane, 2007; Jayne, 2010). However, the equivocal understanding of China's creative economy has also called for the distinction of the creative space to be researched, questioning what kind of creativity is being discussed in the space. As a place-making and marketing tool (Kearns & Philo 1993; Daniels, Ho, & Hutton, 2012), creativity is being infused into urban space transformation with its dual nature. In Chinese, the term *creativity* can either be translated into 创意 (*chuangyi*) or 创新 (*chuang xin*). The literal meaning of *chuangyi* emphases imagination, enlightenment and edification in production, thus bearing more cultural and social attributes, while *chuang xin* means newness and innovation in the context of production capability, so *chuangxin* industry refers more to the emerging industries the Chinese government designated in its market-oriented development strategy, considering their strong economic development potentiality for the state.

In urban development, creativity can always generate something new; Charles Landry and Franco Bianchini's essay entitled *The Creative City* (1995) has already explored the connection between creativity and the development of an urban area. In the contemporary urban context, creativity is now translated into a more modern language in urban space studies. In the last twenty years, governance of urban space has emerged as a central discussion in urban development in major post-industrial cities of the developed world (Landry et al., 1996; Frost-Kumpf, 1998; Brooks & Kushner, 2001; Santagata, 2002; Landry, 2003; Douglass, 2005; Rushton, 2015; Warren and Jones, 2018) in the context of CCI development and it is increasingly so in some emerging economies in Asia (Kim, 2011; Raco and Gilliam, 2012). In the case of China, the newness a creative space generates can be either economy-oriented (usually with chuangxin or innovation and technology industry) or social-oriented (with chuangyi or arts and cultural industry). This urban study looks specifically at the role of the artist community in China's art space production.

1.2 Artistic Urbanisation in China: problems and gaps

In 2011, China's art economic development reached a new peak when its art-related product trade became the largest portion at the international level, according to the report of the leading French online art market database Artprice (2012). There is no doubt that the development situation of urban art districts has changed under this context, and local governments show more respect to the urban creative space centred on the art industry. Arts, as in the context of Chinese CCI-oriented urbanisation, are no longer exclusively viewed as a tool for political ideology; they have now become a much-wanted source for boosting urban economic growth while building a creative city image. Scholars have noted that

contemporary art has become one of the fastest-growing cultural exports (O'Connor and Xin, 2006) simultaneously. In other words, the expanding market, as well as the promulgation of CCI promotion policy, has simultaneously redefined arts and changed the way the Chinese government deals with and administrates arts. To Chinese urban governors, a contemporary art scene resembles the openness and modernness of a city's quality; a city with a contemporary art scene is regarded as "modern and cosmopolitan" (O'Connor and Xin, 2006: 278). With all the image-building benefits, the once marginalised fine art is receiving greater official tolerance and even support under CCI oriented development campaign. In art academia, scholars have described this shift in art governance of China as a "normalisation of contemporary art" (Wu, 2014), while in urban studies, some scholars call the institutionalisation process of organic art villages and artist clusters in cities an "artistic urbanisation" (Ren and Sun, 2012).

In Chinese cities, the inclusion of the art industry in development is important for achieving creative city building. The changing socio-political and economic conditions and the ongoing reform of the cultural system in the country have provided the perfect development environment for the Chinese art industry. As has been summarised by some art scholars, with the rising international attention being paid to the Chinese art market and its market value being recognised in urban development, in the recent decade, China's art industry communities have obtained a higher social status thus leading to a rapid growth of artist community clusters in China's urban spaces (Ren and Sun 2012; Zhang 2017). Naturally, the emergence of art-intensive urban space in Chinese cities provides a revealing backdrop for the study of China's *chuangyi* oriented creative space, this leads to the question: what happens when China's entrepreneurial urban governance incorporates arts and artist communities into the large scale CCI-oriented urban development? This would need to be studied at the micro level, with a careful

review of the role artist communities and government play in urban development; more specifically, it is of significance to understand and study the relationship between the Chinese government and artist communities.

With the establishment of a market economy and the deepening of tax reforms in China, a property-led development strategy took the lead in China's early 2000s urbanisation with an "economy-first" obsession, and mediation between market-oriented development and local community interests was required. Amidst the debates and critiques of an entrepreneurial development model, the government-community relation comes at the forefront of urban governance research. Very few researchers have specifically looked at the case in art space development, although some have pointed out artist communities would sometimes act as a pro-coalition in planning (Chen, 2009a; *Yung et al*., 2014). Discussions based on empirical research of creative regeneration projects in the early 2000s seem to have oversimplified the development of art spaces in Chinese cities as sharing similar characteristics, while the government-market nexus in the entrepreneurial model was overemphasised.

1.3 Aims, objectives, research questions and themes

Research Aim:

This research aims to investigate the evolving dynamics of urban governance in China, focusing on the role of social capital in shaping art-oriented creative spaces. The study intends to contribute to understanding Chinese creative space governance by examining the collaborative interactions between government, social organizations, and local communities.

Research Objectives:

1. **Examine the role of social capital** in the development and management of urban spaces dedicated to the art oriented creative industries in China.
2. **Analyse the collaborative governance model** to assess the power dynamics between local communities, social organisations, and the government in the decision-making process.
3. **Differentiate between art-oriented creative spaces and industry clusters**, highlighting the unique governance challenges and opportunities in the former.
4. **Evaluate the government's influence and control** over social organisations and its impact on collaborative governance at the micro level.
5. **Contribute to broader Chinese governance studies** by exploring new cases and providing insights into the restructuring of the urban governing network.

Research Questions:

1. What are the motivations and aims of the Chinese local government in engaging creative communities in urban development in the context of China's CCI-oriented development?
2. In governing art creative space, what governing agendas have been adopted by the Chinese local government to broaden creative community participation?
3. How do these governing agendas influence the creative communities' incentives and activities of participating in the development process?
4. How do we understand and conceptualise the government-society relationship in Chinese urban governance and Chinese creative communities' role in CCI-oriented urbanisation?

Research Themes:

The analysis of these questions is structured around three central themes: the production of creative spaces, government-society relationships, and collaborative governance. Each theme addresses specific academic gaps, offering new insights into these critical areas. The first theme investigates the transformation of urban spaces into centres of creativity and cultural expression. While there is substantial research on the economic impact of creative industries in China's urban development, there is less focus on how social capital—encompassing networks, norms, and trust—facilitates the development of these spaces. This thesis addresses this gap by exploring the informal networks and community engagements that contribute to the vibrancy of urban art spaces. Additionally, it examines the socio-cultural significance of these spaces, highlighting their role in fostering cultural identity and social cohesion within urban communities. The second theme explores the evolving dynamics between government bodies and societal actors in China's unique political and social landscape. Existing literature often overlooks the complexity of these interactions, particularly in the context of urban art spaces where civil society plays a crucial role. This thesis fills this gap by analysing how government policies have evolved to incorporate public participation and how various societal actors, including non-governmental organisations and local communities, engage with these policies. Addressing the two themes, the third theme focuses on collaborative governance, where public, private, and civil society actors collectively engage in decision-making processes. Although collaborative governance is widely studied in Western contexts, its application and effectiveness in China, especially regarding urban art spaces, are less understood. This thesis explores the frameworks and mechanisms that facilitate collaboration in China's creative spaces, such as public-private partnerships and multi-stakeholder dialogues. By addressing these issues, the

thesis contributes to a deeper understanding of the potential and limitations of a collaborative model.

A critical issue addressed in this thesis is the application of Western theoretical frameworks, such as neoliberalism and entrepreneurialism, to Chinese urban contexts. These concepts often emphasise market-driven approaches and entrepreneurial governance, which may not fully capture the unique socio-political and economic realities of China's urban space production. For example, in many Chinese cities, the development of urban art spaces involves significant investment from state-owned enterprises and a high degree of governmental oversight, which contrasts sharply with the more privatised and market-oriented models typical in Western contexts. Additionally, the involvement of local government in promoting cultural industries often includes subsidies and regulatory support that are less prevalent in Western models.

Another example is the differing roles of community organisations and non-profits. In the West, these entities often operate independently of the government, whereas in China, they may work closely with or even be integrated into governmental structures, influencing how social capital is mobilized. This thesis examines these differences in detail, emphasising the need to adapt and contextualise Western theories to better reflect the realities of Chinese urban governance. It underscores that while concepts like neoliberalism and entrepreneurialism offer valuable insights, they must be applied with an understanding of the local context to avoid misinterpretations. By addressing gaps between these academic themes with a careful review of the literature and investigation of urban narratives, the thesis also aims to enhance the understanding of urban governance in China, with an argument that the creative community is reshaping the production and reproduction of China’s urban space.

By answering proposed research questions, I argue that the Chinese local government engages creative communities as part of its strategy to drive economic growth, build social networks, and create unique urban identities to achieve better urban governance. The local government uses a mix of policies and approaches that include offering incentives, setting up regulatory frameworks, and creating special zones to involve these communities in urban development while enhancing the effectiveness and inclusiveness of urban governance. While these efforts appear to support greater community participation, they are also designed to ensure the government maintains strong oversight and control. As a result, these strategies shape how creative communities choose to engage by providing resources, recognition, and opportunities for collaboration, which not only encourages their involvement but also aligns their activities with the government's long-term objectives for urban planning and social stability. I see the relationship between the government and creative communities as a form of guided partnership, where communities contribute to cultural and creative projects, playing a crucial role in improving urban governance yet still operating within state-defined boundaries. This means that creative communities are both active partners in urban development and instruments for achieving the state's broader vision for creative industry growth and more effective urban management.

1.4 Key concepts of the research

Urban governance, public participation, and agency in collaborative governance are closely intertwined concepts that collectively shape how cities are managed, how policies are formulated, and how diverse actors contribute to the development of more inclusive and effective urban environments.

Urban governance refers to the systems, processes, and institutional arrangements that oversee the regulation, management, and development of urban spaces. It

extends beyond traditional government functions to encompass a wider range of stakeholders such as private companies, non-profit organisations, and community groups. As Healey notes, urban governance operates through networked relationships that link state, market, and civil society actors, making collaborative planning and multi-stakeholder engagement crucial for addressing complex urban challenges. Governance, in this sense, is both formal and informal, combining top-down authority with horizontal partnerships (Healey, 1997; Stoker, 1998). Abramson (2011) suggests that effective governance must integrate diverse actors to navigate fragmented urban development processes and mediate tensions between state control and local autonomy, Chinese scholars such as Wu (2002) and Zhang (2016) highlight that in China, urban governance is heavily shaped by top-down state control, with local governments often tasked with managing urban growth within centrally defined frameworks. Brenner (2004) and Jessop (2002) emphasise that urban governance is increasingly shaped by global neoliberalism, which can skew power dynamics towards elite interests, complicating efforts to achieve genuine collaboration. This study will apply these diverse perspectives to examine how urban governance functions within China's distinct political and institutional context, focusing on how state power and local agency are negotiated within Chinese urban planning practices.

Public participation, as a cornerstone of good urban governance, aiming to involve citizens and community groups directly in shaping policies and decision-making processes. Arnstein's (1969) "Ladder of Citizen Participation" offers a seminal typology for understanding different levels of engagement in urban governance, ranging from superficial forms of consultation to genuine empowerment and shared control. However, the risk of co-option is a central concern, as highlighted by Cornwall (2008), who argues that participatory processes are often used to legitimise pre-determined decisions, thereby neutralising dissent rather than

producing meaningful dialogue, cautioning that in authoritarian or highly centralised political systems, participation can be a means of incorporating citizens into governance without altering power dynamics. In the context of China, some scholars argue that public participation remains limited and often takes place within tightly controlled structures (He & Warren, 2011), with local governance reforms aiming to allow some input but largely within state-defined boundaries (Zhang, 2016). This study will explore whether current participatory mechanisms in Chinese urban planning genuinely empower local communities or function as symbolic gestures that reinforce state control. I argue that when effectively integrated, public participation builds social capital, strengthens trust between communities and institutions, and fosters a sense of shared ownership over urban development, resisting co-optive tendencies that undermine democratic accountability (Gaventa, 2004).

Agency in collaborative urban governance refers to the capacity of individuals and groups to shape governance processes and outcomes, particularly in multi-stakeholder settings characterised by shared power and joint decision-making (Ansell & Gash, 2008). In genuinely collaborative governance, actors exercise their agency by influencing decisions, negotiating shared goals, and developing mutually beneficial policies. However, agency is not guaranteed; it can be constrained by power asymmetries or co-opted to serve dominant interests. Co-option can occur when collaborative practices are manipulated to create the illusion of inclusion, while decision-making power remains concentrated in the hands of a few (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). This dynamic undermines genuine collaboration, reducing agency to a procedural formality rather than a vehicle for community empowerment.

In China's governance context, where the state authority and local autonomy are in constant negotiation, understanding the nuances of various and emerging

agency in collaborative arrangements is crucial. Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh (2012) argue that agency in collaborative settings is shaped by institutional contexts and power dynamics, which can either enable or limit the capacity of actors to engage effectively. Abramson (2011) observes that in hierarchical governance structures, collaborative processes can mask the continuation of top-down control, with agency becoming a façade for legitimising state-led initiatives. In China, the state's dual role as both regulator and provider in urban development complicates agency in a urban governance model, as local actors often find themselves navigating between state authority and market-driven goals (Wu, 2016). This research will critically analyse whether China's emerging collaborative governance models truly empower local stakeholders and I doubt they serve to reinforce state dominance under the guise of collaboration. By examining specific case studies, this study aims to distinguish between collaboration and co-option in China's urban planning and governance practices since the 2000s, shedding light on the conditions under which genuine agency can function.

1.5 Thesis structure

This Introduction chapter provides the background to the research topic and presents the significance of the research in current urban development. It also presents previous discussions of China's so-called artistic urbanisation concerning the role of arts and the artist community in Chinese society.

Chapter 2 provides the literature review of the theoretical discussion and existing literature on the governance of urban art spaces and their economic purposes and social impacts. this chapter will present a review of theories on urban governance

and stakeholder partnerships affecting urban space redevelopment. The argument of this chapter is that identifying relationships between different stakeholders, or the governance network dynamics, is the key to understanding China's contemporary planning context. The mainstream debates on the characteristics of an entrepreneurialism mode are reviewed, and the general tendency of such mode is explained under its Western originality as well as in the pre-reform Chinese context. Following the introductory discussion on entrepreneurialism governance, this chapter will present how various planning actors have participated in China's urban space-making since the late 1990s, how these actors manage to nexus and influence the planning process, and how their interactions shape the Chinese planning system. This chapter suggests the importance of recognising network dynamics in contemporary urban study. It discusses how entrepreneurialism governance mode is being challenged in post-reform China.

Chapter 3 is the methodology chapter. This chapter introduces the information required to answer the research questions and how information is collected. The chapter starts with the philosophy that has guided the research methodology. Then, the case study approach is introduced along with the selection criteria and introduction to the case city and place. It continues with data collection methods and data analysis methods. Data is collected through mixed qualitative methods, including document analysis and interviews. Finally, this chapter presents methodological challenges and discusses ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 is a background chapter. It provides an in-depth exploration of the urban planning and governance context in Chengdu over the past two decades. It covers the city's historical and economic background, tracing significant policy changes and administrative innovations that have influenced its urban development from the 2000s to the 2020s. By providing a comprehensive case study of Chengdu, the

chapter sets the stage for the subsequent analysis, offering readers a clear understanding of the city's uniqueness.

Chapter 5 is a discussion chapter and focuses on the case study of the Blue Roof Art District developed in the 2000s under Chengdu's urban-rural integration. It highlights the informal partnership that emerged between local government authorities and the creative community, exploring how this collaboration has shaped the district's evolution. The chapter delves into the institutionalisation process of the Blue Roof Community, situating it within the broader narrative of Chengdu's urban-rural integration. By analysing this case study, the chapter sheds light on the role of creative communities in urban development and the potential for informal governance arrangements to influence urban planning processes.

Chapter 6 is another discussion chapter. This chapter explores the art-led community micro-regeneration efforts in Chengdu during the 2010s, taking the music-led regeneration of the Yulin area for example. It examines the complex interplay between various stakeholders in driving the regeneration process. The chapter investigates the formation of collaborative and partnership relations, highlighting the role of the creative community in mobilising community engagement and cultural initiatives in realising urban revitalisation. Through the Yulin case study, the chapter illustrates the potential of art and culture to catalyse community development and reshape urban governance structure.

Chapter 7 concludes with the research findings, recounting how the research questions are addressed in the thesis. It summarises the key contributions of the study to the understanding of China's neoliberal transition, particularly in the context of urban governance and the role of creative communities. The chapter reflects on the broader implications of the research for urban studies, offering insights into the potential for art and culture to play a transformative role in urban

development. Additionally, it suggests areas for future research, highlighting the ongoing challenges and opportunities in urban governance and artistic urbanisation in China.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The proliferation of CCI-led urban development strategies has now directed the narrow realm of art districts towards broader multidisciplinary urban studies, and there is a maturing body of literature addressing the governance dimensions of urban art space and touching upon institutionalisation of art districts, the economic purposes and social impacts. This literature review explores the evolving governance structures in urban spaces, with a particular focus on the role of Creative and Cultural Industries (CCI) in urban spaces. The chapter argues that the integration of CCI-led strategies has transformed traditional art districts into hubs of multidisciplinary urban studies, linking government, market, and societal influences. This transformation highlights a shift from managerialism to entrepreneurialism in urban governance, where cities use cultural and social assets to enhance their competitiveness in a globalised economy. Additionally, the chapter explores the concept of collaborative governance, emphasising the need for partnerships between government entities and social organisations to address complex urban challenges. Overall, this literature review chapter sets the stage for further exploration into the governance models that shape urban spaces, particularly under CCI-led strategies. The arguments presented highlight the need for a more nuanced understanding of the power dynamics and stakeholder relationships that influence urban development.

2.2 Entrepreneurial governance in urban development

2.2.1 Urban governance: from managerialism to entrepreneurialism

Since the 1990s, urban authorities in various countries have endeavoured to package local cultural resources to increase a city's competitiveness in the cultural industry. These strategies reflect the essence of adopting CCI in urban planning with a primary aim of helping cities effectively handle the economic transition from manufacturing to service-oriented sectors. This promotion of CCI in urban development is understood as urban entrepreneurialism, that is, the pursuit of innovative economic and political strategies intended to 'maintain or enhance economic competitiveness vis-a`-vis other cities and economic spaces' (Jessop and Sum, 2000: 2289).

Developing the CCI is an effective urban development strategy to help cities in territorial competition and economic restructuring. This policy has become a worldwide strategy for creative city making and local economic development in a global context. These efforts in selling cultures reflect and reinforce the ubiquitous presence of global capitalism in contemporary cities. To city authorities, the promotion of urban cultures (in the case of the 1970s and 1980s, which are mostly urban heritages) can secure 'place specific locational advantages' in relation to other cities (Brenner, 1999: 440).

In early urbanisation research in the Chinese context, researchers were focused mainly on land and housing in Chinese cities; they have generated a rich theoretical resource for analysing Chinese urban entrepreneurialism with discussions on the commodification in China's space commercialisation in urban development; however, as in today's CCI-oriented urban development, the culture and creative force has been extensively adopted in the development strategy in the past ten

years, and there is a noticeable hiatus in the research on the concept adopted in culture-led urban regeneration in some of China's new urban landscapes.

2.2.2 Power nexus in Chinese urban governance: a comparative view of the western and Chinese practice

In Western societies, the production of an urban cultural (creative) space in cities involves different bodies including the government (central and local), the developers (enterprises and property developers), and the local community. The essence of the production of an urban space is that different stakeholders in the cultural space are fighting for their own interests and benefits. In an economy-driven development, a government-capital nexus is commonly established in urban transformation and usually materialises through a public-private coalition in a property-led urban regeneration. This kind of urban renewal strategy was developed in the context of the UK in the 1980s, when its urban policy relied increasingly on property development as the driving force (Turok, 1992). With the aim of attracting private investment, public support is extensively provided in the regeneration process by means of land assembly and subsidy offers; the public sector creates an exclusive market for property development to improve local businesses and employment; thus, a public-private growth coalition is formed. In reality, such a government-capital nexus was commonly found in the UK's city centre or waterfront development projects and has been criticised for the prioritisation on short-term property industry development (Imrie and Thomas, 1993; Jones and Watkins, 1996) and the lack of long-term integrated economic/social revitalisation (Harding, 1992; Loftman and Nevill, 1995). In the Asian context, the government-capital relationship has been defined with the power of government-backed conglomerates in radical social change (Yusuf, 2001;

Grange and Jung, 2004) with an extreme case in South Korea's Chaebol urbanisation (Douglass, 2015). The production of urban spaces oriented by different stakeholders will lead to distinguishing characteristics in the space, and a government-led urban space transformation in China's context can be particularly policy-oriented and highly regulated. Compared with the role of government in European urban development experiences, Chinese central and regional governments have more influence on the production of urban space. In the research of relationships between cultural activities/investments and urban transformation in the Western context, governments wished to eliminate the internal imbalance in urban development and reluctant social cohesion during the reconstruction of urban space and function in the context of deindustrialisation and cultural investments/activities were regarded as an efficient tool to sustain a constant collective cognition (Sacco and Blessi, 2009). In China, culture has its political side; the production of a cultural space (and in this research, the creative space) can create a financial income by the centralisation of regional cultural and economic resources, thus achieving local economic growth and enhancing the image of the local government itself, especially in the context of state-led urban development (La Grange and Pretorius, 2016).

Looking at the economic side, the creative industries, especially those emerging industries biased by national policies, can effectively break through the bottleneck of traditional industry development in the transformation of China's urban economy and upgrading period, and cities have become the focus of developmental programmes formulated by political leaders at different levels. As the Chinese central government grants more regulatory power to local states, provincial and city governments have assumed greater responsibility for local development, leading to a growing sense of competition in the creative place making among Chinese cities (Xu and Yeh 2009). In China's early CCI-led urban

development stories in the first decade of the 2000s, the attention was always on large cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen; these economically mature cities witnessed the first batch of new urban spaces, and the majority have emerging industry-oriented creative clusters.

Since the 1990s, constructing creative clusters in cities has been welcomed as an efficient development strategy for various reasons under certain cultural and economic realities. A top-down perspective stresses the role of global factors and external actors, and in practice, it is usually the national government leading urban economic development plans to improve the competitiveness of the city and promote the state image at an international/regional level (Chang, 2000); a bottom-up perspective is more often found in European cases, focusing on local influences on creative space production (van Heur, 2009). Such a culture-led urban redevelopment strategy was carried out in a period when local social and economic development had slowed down, and the aim was to integrate local resources and regenerate the local culture and/or economy (Chang et al., 1996). Currently, the two perspectives have converged, and they apply to the production of cultural/creative spaces in cities in different contexts.

In the European context, since the 1970s, the economic recession caused many industrial city centres to decay, resulting in various social problems; hence, the situation called for urban redevelopment with a new economic growth driver. Governments were "passively" going into the urban redevelopment process through a culture-led regeneration approach against the background of deindustrialisation. Meanwhile, in China in the 1990s, the state was faced with domestic institutional transformation, with the Chinese market economy consolidating and the CCI simultaneously introduced as a strategic development industry at a national level. Hence, a large number of industries also moved out from city centre, the urban industrial space was restructured, and the whole of

Chinese society changed from a production society to a more consumerised society under the economic reform. Additionally, the financial hit to the government in the 1990s' global economic crisis had urged public sectors globally to provide opportunities for private sectors to be involved in the urban place-making process (Rota and Salone, 2014), the growing demands in creative production/consumerisation had provided a perfect opportunity for government to involve capital into China's urban transformation. In the post-industrial urban development era, culture has become a monopoly power in space production; a cultural resource gradually has become a resource that can be used by capitals in the space-transformation process and a resource that is "invented" by the will of capital (Harvey, 2001). The economic motivation behind China's state-led CCIoriented urbanisation is similar to what is in the culture-led regeneration strategy adapted in 1980s Europe, but it is noteworthy that the capital involved in the production process, which is usually a key market-driven element in European cases, has a very different meaning in China's context.

In European economic society, capitals can include different kinds of bodies, like property companies, entertainment companies and development fund, among which many of them are powerful public companies; in China, capital bodies are relatively simple, and most of them are property development companies. Among different capital types, state-owned capital is a particular capital type in China's economic society; it is a dominant type of capital extensively found in the property, finance, media, and tourism industries and has always been regarded as the essential for the government to manage market intervention and development regulation (Zhang, 1999). State-owned capital has allowed an open channel for the Chinese government to get involved in the building and management of a to-bedeveloped space in a more practical way, thus further consolidating it leading status. From the growth machine point of view, the government-market

partnership in China's land-centred urban development (Zhang, 2014) is built upon various coalitions including an economic coalition between developers and regional government and a political coalition between central and regional government.

In the European context, whether capital could manage a creative space depends more on its own strength and reputation the market rules; capital in the Chinese land market sees the political or policy resource of the local authority as the most reliable resource if long-term development is expected. In China, in addition to relying on the market rules (such as the bidding), administrative factors are inordinately important. This point has been extensively analysed in innovative Chinese cities, such as Shenzhen and Shanghai, where there are many creative industrial clusters thanks to the innovation-friendly economic environment supported with preferable policies at the national level. In the case of Shenzhen, the establishment of OCT LOFT reflected the political interests on the one hand, through which the politicians expected to transform the old manufacturing economy into a creative economy so as to promote the city of Shenzhen to become a city with richer cultures (Bontje, 2014). On the other hand, the new cultural branding was closely intertwined with the real estate development (Sonn, Chen, Wang and Liu, 2017). In the case of Shanghai, the cultural and creative industry cluster was regarded as a new form of urban marketing, and its formation and development were indispensable for the entrepreneurial policies and entrepreneurial discourse of the government (Zheng, 2011; Gu, 2014). For example, in terms of policies, the Shanghai Creative Industry Centre (SCIC) was established in 2004 with the approval of the Shanghai Economic Committee and

Shanghai Association Bureau, and the policy of "three unchanged and five changed" (the property right, the structure, and the nature of land nature remain unchanged, while the employment structure, management method, type of tenants,

form and organization of enterprises, and enterprise culture change) was issued to ensure the approval of the creative cluster land use/management.

The government usually appointed creative industry-related clusters in Chinese cities in the early 2000s in urban development plans, and large enterprises with state-owned capital tended to be more competitive in getting the project. For developers with state ownership, depending on their various relationships with the government and the banks, these large enterprises have significant advantages in getting beneficial policies and fast permission for loans; hence, early creative cluster construction projects (He and Wu, 2005) were observed to have been assigned to developers with an official background (Chen, 2009a). From the government's point of view, marketisation reform compels them to work with enterprises and developers to intervene in the market more effectively (Mai and Zhang, 2013); the input of market capital brings in political achievement in its post, so the government is willing to build a coalition with enterprises or developers in urban projects production. Because of this, some urban development projects constructed under this partnership can reflect a strong impact of government on the production, although the production itself is market oriented. For example, in 2003, when the Shanghai Xintiandi Project was completed, the project developer

Shui On Land Group labelled it a "gift" of China's revolution and opening up policy and made it the location of the first congress of the Communist Party of China, which had clearly given this project a political meaning (He and Wu, 2005; Wai, 2006). For other city governments, the success of Xintiandi is another motivation to conduct creative space production, as the good outcome of a project will not only bring in investment money to the city but will also give rise to opportunities for officials to promote their political profile (Li, 2015). This also requires developers to take policy change into account, as change in the local

authorities' political situation and adjustment in policy making can mean a change in the government's preferred investment field.

As for the coalition between central government and local government, in China, the central government once was in charge of making urban development plans and had the most cultural policy resources. During the planned economic period, the government decided the production, the resource distribution, and the consumption; in terms of urban development, the central government made direct decisions on the scale and speed of the development plan at a national level, as the investment capital was entirely controlled by the state. The land and housing reforms in the 1980s gave regional government relative freedom to make local urban development; unlike in the planned economy era, the central government and regional government are working together in policy making and in financial input in urban development (Chen, 2009b). Before the implementation of the tax sharing reform in 1994, there were various fiscal institutional arrangements in China that had a common feature: local governments in a good financial state would have to pay more finance revenue to the central government, while those in a weaker financial situation could retain a relatively higher ratio or even received subsidies. The corresponding countermeasures adopted by the local governments were to reduce the tax on the enterprises and then withdraw the money in the name of various "charges" and "fees". As a result, part of the revenue that was originally within the budget was somehow transferred to the extrabudgetary account, which cleverly avoided disclosure to the higher level of government as well as adverse effects on the provision of the next financial arrangement. In this case, local stateowned enterprises (SOEs 国有企业 *guo you qi ye* which are different from the previous 国营企业 *guo ying qi ye* in the planned economy era) became the ideal partners for governments to implement this strategy in the 1980s and early 1990s (Wang, 2011). Based on the incentives of administrative and fiscal system

change, Chinese local government is keen to realise economic growth through promoting and attracting of property investment; this further promoted the realisation of such a government-market nexus, which is usually found in property-led urban creative projects. Through the land use system, local governments promoted the growth of real estate industries and manufacturing industries while realising the formation of new urban spaces, thus, obtaining municipal revenues for future urban development.

In China, there is a superior-subordinate relation between the central and local governments; as the central government restricts the institutional supply, striving for favourable policies became one of the important competition factors among local governments (Zhang, 2004). Numerous studies verify to some degree that Chinese local government is strongly and continuously intervening in the production of new urban space through policy guidance and interdisciplinary investment directions (Chen, 2009b; Ma, 2010; Kong, 2014). This is because officials at the local level are assessed for promotion according to the economic performance of their district of duty. Different local governments have to compete with each other in building a solid investment environment and achieving good governmental efficiency in order to attract more capital, technology, creative labours, and other mobile factors to establish a creative industry friendly environment. The outcome of the competition depends largely on the economic and cultural landscape of the city. Usually, the principal officials of the winning government will be acknowledged as competent by superior departments or the central government.

At a local level, this reflects the traditional government-market nexus in urban space development. To attract investments, government officials usually build a close relationship with the local private sector (in China's case, this includes SOEs and large developer enterprises) to secure stable economic growth; as a result, the

district they are responsible for is involved with business activities and acts like an industrial firm (Walder, 1995), so it can compete with other districts. Osborne and Gaebler (1993) pointed out the government cannot cope with the increasingly fierce global competition by providing only general public services, but it must be reformed with "entrepreneurship" to become a positive entrepreneurial government and adopt more innovative action to improve the city's competitiveness. In the urban governance literature, in a Chinese context, scholars in the early 2000s proposed the term "entreprised government" (企业化政府 *qiyehua zhen fu*) in empirical cases, as such government takes the city as a state-owned asset and manage it in a business approach. Thus, an entrepreneurial model of development must enhance the city's competitiveness by upgrading the city's image and forming a strong "growth alliance" (Yin et al., 2006) with the private sector. The coalition between local government and local enterprises is the most common partnership in creative space production, and local urban residents will usually work as a balance of power in the partnership relation (McGuirk, 1995; McQuaid, 2000). In this model, China's urban landscape is a strategic site of capital accumulation. The city governments implement commodification as an entrepreneurial strategy to manage urban spaces with the aim to 'foster and encourage local development and employment growth' (Harvey, 1989: 3), while the commodification and marketisation of space has fostered a marketplace for physical development. Some recent papers have claimed there is now no absolute governmental authority in space transformation at local level, considering the increasing interference from the expanding CCI market and the growing social force in Chinese society. The situation is that the political power of a local government becomes only relatively dominant in China's creative space governance; it functions as an entrepreneurial market actor rather than "supervisor" in creative space transformation but remains an influential decision-maker as well as the "largest investor" (McGee et al 2007: 114).

The emergence of urban creative space and the resultant urban restructuring often involve a new round of powerful actors and resources in accordance with the urban contexts. This calls for a contextualised examination of both discursive and material practices in the making of specific "creatives" in urban development. In China's creative economy, arts, culture, and innovation are often interlinked (Keane, 2012) and creative was increasingly associated with technology-based innovations (Daniels et al., 2012); hence, most creative spaces in cities studied under Chinese CCI-led urban development are chuangxin (innovative) industrial clusters. Looking at related policy narratives, although the "creative" element in CCI was conceptually derived from art, when it comes to the economy and development, art is relegated to the sidelines. This has constituted the Chinese urban governance studies in the context of different creative contents in creative space, taking into account that creative values lie not only in economic possibilities but also in social essentialities.

2.2.3 Summary of the section

Section 2.2 explores the concept of entrepreneurial governance in urban development, emphasising the strategic use of Creative and Cultural Industries (CCI) to boost urban competitiveness. This approach, termed urban entrepreneurialism, involves leveraging cultural assets to transition cities from manufacturing-based to market-oriented economies, thereby enhancing their global attractiveness and economic resilience (Jessop and Sum, 2000). The section highlights that this shift from traditional managerialism to entrepreneurialism reflects a broader trend towards commodifying culture for economic gain in urban space production.

In Western context, CCI-led development often involves public-private partnerships aimed at regenerating urban areas. These initiatives have been

criticized for prioritizing immediate economic returns, sometimes neglecting long-term social and cultural benefits (Imrie and Thomas, 1993). In contrast, the Chinese model is characterised by strong state involvement, with government-led initiatives and state-owned enterprises playing pivotal roles in developing creative clusters (Zhang, 1999). While these initiatives have successfully spurred economic growth and urban transformation, they also raise concerns about the sustainability and cultural authenticity of such developments, suggesting a need for more balanced approaches that integrate cultural preservation with economic objectives.

2.3 Conceptualise collaborative governance: participation, social capital and social organisations

2.3.1 Defining collaborative governance

In the 1990s, contemporary urban governance was defined as a process by which urban governments cooperated with civic society to enhance urban development. Pierre (1999) proposed his theory of four governance models by systematically analysing the role urban governments play in urban economic development and the relationship between governments and civic society. In his theory, the urban governance model is a channel through which public power communicates with other powers to collaboratively resolve urban development issues. Based on this theory, urban governance system can be understood as a framework constituted of all stakeholders involved in the development and operation of urban space, through coordinated participation, allocation of powers/responsibilities and establishment of institutional systems among these stakeholders. This framework displays the role of different stakeholders in urban development and operation play, and the mutual interactions between both. From the perspective of the urban researcher,

learning from different forms of partnership will help better understand power (in)balances or changes in the urban governance and offer useful suggestions on resolution of urban problems.

In Chinese academia, He (2015) proposed that contemporary efficient urban governance should include the urban government, urban residents, various social organisations and any other stakeholders making decisions on urban public affairs, through open participation, equal consultation, and appropriate division of services to maximise public interests. These discussions in the second decade of the 2000s have emphasised the importance of community participation in today's urban development, reflecting the concepts of public participation and social capital in governance studies, calling for research into partnership relations between urban governors and society in contemporary time.

Collaborative governance in social science is conceptualised as partnerships responding to public issues that cannot be solved effectively by a single entity, and it involves all government and non-government actors collectively (Trevor L. Brown, Ting Gong & Yijia Jing, 2012). This presents non-conflict interaction between the government and social organisations. What is the connotation of the relationship between the two? Which one takes the dominant position and assumes the dominant role? Existing literature in the Chinese context only emerged in 2010. It focuses on revealing specific forms or characteristics of collaborative governance or describing a certain type of relationship (Zhai and Zhai, 2010), or judging on a certain mode of action (Wang and Du, 2016; Hu and Zhong, 2020), which lacks holistic and framework understanding in specific areas and analysis based on empirical cases (Zhu, 2012). From the perspective of urban studies, the relationship between government and social organisations in urban space is an effective cognitive dimension and it further helps to understand governmentsociety nexus in China's governance system.

The following review summarises the roles and relationship patterns of government and social organisations in collaborative governance and presents the structural connotation and operational mechanism within. Taking the dimensions of the role that government and social organisations play, their relationship forms and the governance effectiveness as the analysis framework, it will form a holistic understanding of government-society nexus in urban governance. First, it discusses the respective roles of government and social organisations in the governance system. Secondly, I will discuss the relationship between the subjects of collaborative governance, not only paying attention to the capabilities and functions of government and social organisations, but also explaining their interaction patterns. According to the way social organisations formulate, they can be divided into government-run organisations and non-government organisations (NGOs), with top-down and bottom-up establishment and operation modes respectively.

2.3.2 Role of government in collaborative governance

In social science research, the term "governance" was first proposed by M. Polanyi (1953) who introduced the spontaneous and polycentric order into the discussion of economic development. R. A. Dahl (1973) expanded this concept from the perspective of "polyarchy" and discussed the significance and value of pluralism in democracy studies, in terms of public participation. E. Ostrom (1965) developed the polycentricity governance theory through discussions on governance of “public pool resources”. These fundamental theories of governance are conducive to exploring the role of government in today’s urban research. Scholars believe that the government should decentralise the public power to the locality or society and realise multi-participation in the exercise of public power. Urban politics scholars define it as the decentralisation of governmental power and transfer of power subjects, and it is an adjustment of the relationship between government,

private enterprises and different local communities in the urban context (Stoker, 1998). Another academic strand on public administration emphasises that the leading role of government has been gradually weakened into indirect participant, co-ordinator and supervisor, and that the government should transfer public power and public responsibility to society by providing a wider behaviour space for citizens (McGinnis and Ostrom, 2012). This is also reflected in urban development theories. The transformation of the role government plays in the governance system means that there is a power restructure of the relationships between subjects in the system, especially between government and communities. In order to achieve the cognition of the relationship in urban context, the dynamic role and responsibility of government in urban governance systems need to be discussed.

2.3.2.1 Responsibility and power decentralisation

When analysing the scope of government responsibilities, the governance theory advocates governments rolling back, insisting that a government should make room for society by introducing competition into the governance process. This would help to improve the efficiency of public service supply and public administration by using the independent operation of market mechanism. As has been discussed in an earlier section, in contemporary urban governance system, government is a "investor" (McGee et al 2007) in urban space production, and this is regarded as a coordinator to intervene in governance. However, this doesn't mean that government will not take action in space administration. Instead, the government plays its role when different stakeholders in urban space production cannot reach effective communication, or there are contradictions that cannot be solved by either group (Scharpf, 1994). In this regard, the government will still need to exercise its public duties and make public judgements. Another strand in the Chinese context emphasises the delimitation of the behaviour boundary of each subject in the transfer of public power, in terms of urban community administration

in urban regeneration (Wu and Hao, 2015). Sometimes, when public power is transferred from the government to society, in the process of the government empowering the society, society does not have sufficient capacity to undertake public power and independently carry out efficient local management. In the case of urban art space development, the institutionalised art district, besides falling into a gentrification trap, is often unable to achieve longer-term development because of the lack of industrial development incentive policies in the redevelopment period. Through the “holistic governance” (Leat et al., 2002) by administrative reforms, the integration and unification within the government system can promote the efficiency and effectiveness of governance activities, and improve the effectiveness of governance. This has also been discussed in China’s urban governance practice in recent years. In practice, the realisation of this "holistic governance" involves the use of policy tools, and government improving administrative efficiency through the “network" of policy making and implementation (Li and Ge, 2013).

2.3.2.2 Government as coordinator and supervisor

With the deepening of social participation in governance, questions arise around how government should change its role, how to realise the division of powers and responsibilities among governance subjects, and how to realise the effectiveness of collaborative governance. These have become the focus of academic discussion.

As the institutional agency of public power, in a development context, the government must first design the governance mode as a "coordinator", perform its public duties as a "supervisor", and be committed to improving the effectiveness of relevant policies (Lam, 1996). These discussions can be reflected in the analysis of the government’s responsibility for overall planning, particularly prominent in the analysis of urban redevelopment. This means the government will also need to

promote development stability and governance effectiveness in an orderly manner, engaging social communities as an urban planner. In the context of urban governance at a city level, in the Chinese context, this is discussed via the government's practice of constructing community neighbourhood committees and the relationship between local government and committees. The early research into communality committees has opened up the discussion of government-society relations through micro social organisations in China's urban spaces.

2.3.2.3 Role of social organisations in collaborative governance

Giddens (2013) regards the participation of social organisations in governance as a new means to solve public problems. In the urban development context facing the dilemma of entrepreneurialism governance in urban space, different social organisations can exercise their functions. Based on the three attributes of social organisations - namely, professionalism, sociality and non-profit – the government welcomes social organisations into the governance (planning) process as the professionalism of social organisations can make up for the government's lack of professional knowledge and ability in specific fields, providing professional and high-quality advice services. Additionally, strong sociality of social organisations shows that they can represent social demands and find it easier to get social support and recognition at a local level.

However, what is the role of social organisations in collaborative governance at space level? Is influence of these organisations on urban governance necessarily effective? Although social organisations are professional, social and non-profit in nature, the extent to which social organisations go deep into governance process, the scope of their influence and the delimitation of the boundaries of government powers/responsibilities, will affect the function of social organisations in the system and the effectiveness of collaborative governance. As far as the macro

institutional environment of social organisation management is concerned, the "semi-specialisation" situation of different types of social organisations in development has always been criticised. This requires an in-depth analysis of the characteristics of social organisations in urban spaces.

Characteristic 1: An elite network

In collaborative governance, the epistemic standpoint of specific social organisations is elitist compared with that of other local communities (Briggs, J. et al, 2007). In other words, the community relationship network that social organisations rely on is dominated by local elites. For example, in China's art space, art organisations that can have an influence on the development planning process are often filled with mature artists, and such established artists are often systematically chosen by the government as advisors because of their higher social and cultural status. In practice, art district development projects at the space level involving multiple stakeholders are mostly promoted and guided by local government, assisted by social organisations, and implemented by property developers and neighbourhood committees. As the recipient of policy propaganda and mobilisation, other artist groups can be in a passive position of cognition and acceptance, and their relationship with elite social organisations is often considered to be loose and fragile. However, it is important to bear in mind that the effectiveness of the publicity and advocacy work of social organisations are usually based on the trust and recognition of residents in the community (John, 2005; Sershen et al., 2016), and this can be especially true in art world networking. In this regard, the most necessary and difficult task for social organisations, in the aim of effectively participating in governance, is to sustain the recognition of their identity and gain trust from other residents to fulfil a public expectation, which requires time and practice.

Characteristic 2: Resource preference and advocacy behaviour

In the implementation of governance activities, the governance resources of social organisations often rely on the government. Although social organisations are non-profitmaking, institutional resource is still an important factor affecting their behaviour (Hsu and Jiang, 2015; Peng, 2017) and this influence is more significant in non-government-run social organisations. In practice, resources from the government tend to be the preferred option for social organisations, not only because the resources are more abundant and stable than those of other subjects (Bar-Nir & Gal, 2010) but also because the government, as the main supplier of resources, can enable social organisations' access to the governance process and allow their convenient contact with their service objects (Li, Lo and Tang, 2016).

Although the government cooperates with social organisations to carry out governance activities, the setting of governance objectives, as well as the promotion of the governance process, control of projects, and the contact between different stakeholders, are still restricted by factors such as choice preference and administrative pressure in different levels of authorities. In academia, the survival and development space of social organisations is limited and under the control of authority. In this regard, how to deal with the relationship with the government and obtain greater development space to sustain status are the key factors affecting the strategic choice of social organisations (Van Slyke, 2006). Therefore, when the result of governance policy is inconsistent with social requirements, social organisations sometimes tend to put the government's policy requirements in an important position and actively achieve the government's goals (Salmenkari, 2014; Hsu, Hasmath, 2016). In other words, the action path and behaviour of social organisations in a governance system are always strategic under authorism.

2.3.3 Government-society relations in collaborative governance

2.3.3.1 Collaborative governance led by government OR social organisations?

The non-conflict relationship between social organisations and government is a common and important relationship form in urban governance, which has become the focus of Chinese scholars' attention. The government's control over social organisations is the key factor affecting the relationship. The government, being the public authority, takes in social organisations and carries out governance activities. In the process of the government's taking in social organisations, a new type of government-society relationship is emerging: the government is in a leading position, introducing different social communities into the governance process, and directly intervenes in social organisations and maintains control over society. However, like in the context of culture-led urbanisation, the connotation of the government's leading role in governance is changing. Collaborative governance suggests the greater power local communities are endowed in urban decision-making and the restructuring of the governing network. The government's control over social organisations and to what extent it will influence the respective roles of government and social organisations in urban space development needs to be investigated in more cases at the micro level. The discussions and findings can additionally further enrich the Chinese governance studies in a broader sense.

As has been discussed in an earlier section, government resources (decisions, policies and activities) are crucial and necessary for the realisation of collaborative governance. On the one hand, the government needs to provide an interactive platform for the participation of social subjects to ensure that the collaboration is happening (Sørensen, E., 2006). As an important stakeholder in urban space production, the

The “power” that social organisations need to participate in space planning is also endowed by the government to a greater extent (Bardhan, 2002). Therefore, the government is supposed to provide social organisations with the legitimacy of exercising public power through decentralisation at a different level. On the other hand, the government needs to supply appropriate public resources to ensure the effective operation of development projects. Government here is more inclined to participate in the process of social cultivation, as a "supervisor", and it will provide supportive resources when the social organisation power is relatively weak.

Some scholars analyse the structure from the social organisations’ incentives, thinking that social organisations can take active strategic actions, gain their own development space, and influence government decision-making. In the Chinese context, the relationship between the government and social organisations is defined as non-synergetic. Different institutional structures in government departments and government at different levels evolve into various behavioural strategies in collaborative governance when they are dealing with the relationship with social organisations. Such differences in policy-making and implementation logic provide diversified possibilities and opportunities for social organisations. In this case, social organisations need to identify and deal with the differences and strive for their own development space as much as possible, as a consequence, social organisations in the context of collaborative governance tend to complete tasks more than the authorities expected (Yao, 2013). Priority is given because they need the recognition and trust of the government to adjust and arrange their own development direction or goals. In addition, social organisations in collaborative governance, as the hub of government and society relations, also play a role in coordination, communication, and conflict resolution.

2.3.3.2 Collaborative governance by government and social organisations

When discussing government and social organisations in collaborative governance, scholars think that the two sides influence and construct each other, so attention is given to the interactive behaviour mode between them in real cases. In academia, the relationship between the two sides can be divided into two types, namely symbiosis (Wang, 2014) and unsymmetrical dependence (Xu, 2008). The former emphasises that collaborative governance is the common behaviour choice because both sides need each other. In this form, the government and social organisations, as partners, cooperate equally and jointly to promote the maximisation of public interests in development. The latter focuses on its asymmetric attributes, such as resource elements, which will affect the scope and depth of their respective participation in such governance, thus forming a distinct governance structure. NGOs, as spontaneous social organisations, are weaker than other government-run or government-recognised organisational forms in terms of their own capacity and influence. Therefore, in development practice, such social organisations in collaborative governance are more likely to form an accidental and fragile symbiotic relationship with lower-level government or a specific government department, thus strategically obtaining their own living space. In the strategic choice of such social organisations, the interest of both is the key. The higher the degree of "interest alignment" observed between government and social organisations, the greater the possibility of a collaborative governance formation with symbiosis characteristics in place (Jiang, Zhang and Zhou, 2011; Kang, 2011).

Compared with a relationship with symbiotic characteristics, a dependent relationship emphasises the complete dependence of stakeholders on specific elements and organisational models. In China’s urban development, particularly, enterprises and social organisations cooperating with the government heavily relied on the economic reality at the local level, the political status of local

authorities and preferable decisions made by the government. The government's administrative intervention and financial assistance will affect social organisations (Guo et al., 2016), which means the government's preferences, management approaches and resource supply methods are important influencing factors. However, it does not mean that social organisations only passively accept the government's requirements and are subject to the government. In China's context, social organisations under controlled power are more sensitive to opportunities and tend to explore and further strengthen positive factors (Teets, 2013). When the government adopts governance activities such as policy advocacy, different social organisations will take strategic and "softer" measures (Verschuere and De Corte, 2013) to deal with the relationship with the government and to give full play to their own advantage.

2.3.4 Examine the collaborative governance

2.3.4.1 Public participation in urban planning: through the ladder

Public participation refers to the behaviour that the public voluntarily participates in via political affairs through various legal forms, which reflects the status, role and choice of the public in affairs in the political system. In a broad sense, public participation not only refers to citizens' participation in national political affairs but includes participation in social public affairs and public interests. The public participates in the decision-making process through legal means so as to prevent monopolistic behaviour in decision-making (Yu, 2000). In decision-making, public participation emphasises equal dialogue between the government and citizens and requires the government to give citizens full participation rights. The will of the public needs to be reflected in the decision-making results. Public participation in planning, from the perspective of urban development, has been well documented, with discussions on community participation enhancing the

capabilities of citizens and increasing social satisfaction (Altshuler, 1970; Smith, 1998). In urban governance, public participation refers to the behaviour and process of the public, social organisations, units or individuals participating in urban space development in different ways. In practice, it refers to the process of urban planning decision-making, where the government builds a planning participation platform for the public, and guides residents or organisations to participate in the community planning process through various channels and ways, so that planning decision-making can represent the will and interests of the public and promote the sound development of urban space.

Based on the study of public participation in urban planning in the United States, Arnstein (1969) introduced a "Ladder of Citizen Participation", which laid a theoretical foundation for promoting public participation in public affairs decision-making and had a significant impact on the academic discussion and urban practice of public participation in urban planning. Arnstein compared public participation to a ladder in the theory of the "Ladder of Citizen Participation", which vividly explained the degree of public participation in urban planning. She divided the degree of public participation into eight rungs of a ladder from low to high: (1) Manipulation; (2) Therapy; (3) Informing; (4) Consultation; (5) Placation; (6) Partnership; (7) Delegation; (8) Citizen control. In addition, Arnstein further divides these eight rungs into three stages. The first stage is the lowest stage of public participation, which is "non-participative", including "manipulation " and "therapy". At this stage, the public has no right to participate in decision-making and no ability to negotiate with the government, only passively accepting the government's decision-making. The second stage is tokenism, which has three rungs: informing, consultation and placation. In this stage, the public has formal rights and the means to participate in the decision-making process, and the public's opinions can be listened to and even adopted by the government, but they will not

have substantial influence and constraint on the decision-making. Therefore, public participation is still regarded passive. Finally, "partnership" and "delegation" constitute the highest degree of public participation, that is, "citizen control", which is substantive public participation. At this stage, the government fully guarantees the public's right to know, participate in and supervise political affairs. The public can participate in the decision-making process and share power with the government in place (re)making. The two sides promote the formulation and implementation of decision-making through communication and cooperation in partnership.

The "Ladder of Citizen Participation" provides a framework to analyse to what extent citizens are participating in space governance and a direction to solve problems for better promoting public participation in planning and governance. From the ladder theory, we can see that only when the joint mechanism of planning and decision-making is established between the government and communities, the government can fully delegate power to the people and consult with the community on an equal footing. By this, the degree of community participation will be promoted, and the community will play a substantial role in urban planning decision-making. The "ladder of citizen participation" provides methods and techniques for defining the degree of participation in planning, by introducing the theory into the space governance studies, the interactive behaviours between the government and community in planning process can be evaluated, thus helping to examine the collaborative governance at local level.

2.3.4.2 Social capital and urban planning

Definition of social capital

Social capital refers to the state and characteristics of a close relationship between social subjects (including individuals, groups, society and even countries). It is a

resource existing in social structure, which is mainly manifested in social networks, norms, trust and so on. It is listed as one of three major capitals along with human capital and physical capital. In addition to the productive feature of capital, which can be formed by accumulation, compared with the other two kinds of capital, social capital has characteristics of public and reproducibility. In academic circles, there are two main viewpoints on the evaluation of the elements of social capital: one is the social network, social participation, social exchange and trust adopted by Putnam (2001); the other is Paxton's (2002) measurement of social capital at the national level, which selects two elements - social trust and the number of international NGOs. In Chinese academics, the famous research on social capital elements is the seven elements proposed by Gui (2008): local social network, community belonging, community cohesion, non-local social interaction, volunteerism, mutual benefit and general trust and community trust. Generally speaking, the measurement of social capital elements mainly focuses on social networks, trust, participation and reciprocity norms.

Role of social capital

Putnam (2001) clearly pointed out that social capital can make it easier for citizens to solve collective problems and promote the development of the community and expounded on the possible disadvantages caused by the lack of social capital. According to his work, social capital can be summarised as having the following functions: first, the integration function of social resources makes social operation more efficient; second, as a non-institutional norm, it can make up for the deficiency of mechanical system; third, assist other capital to produce and reduce the consumption of other capital; fourth, urge the government to decentralise power and promote the process of democracy; fifth, increasing the mutual trust between the government and other social subjects is conducive to maintaining the stability of urban development.

The reproducibility of social capital is one of the differences compared with the other two kinds of capital, which means that social capital is a kind of capital that increases as it is used. However, it will be exhausted if it is not used. Putnam (2001) emphasised the importance of social participation and social interaction for the generation of social capital in his research. By participating in social activities and cooperating with each other, the social subjects increased mutual trust and gradually established mutually beneficial cooperation norms, which made more cooperation and interaction possible, thus increasing social capital.

2.3.4.3 Agency in Collaborative Governance

Unlike traditional governance models, which often feature hierarchical structures and clear delineations of authority, collaborative governance involves multiple actors sharing power and engaging in co-production. This shared nature has given rise to several academic debates, particularly around the distribution, experiment, and impact of agency within collaborative frameworks. These debates are especially pertinent in urban planning contexts, including China's evolving planning system, where rapid urbanisation, state-led development, and new governance models provide a unique setting to explore how the agency operates and the challenges it faces. Recently, the emergence of creative communities in China's cities has further complicated these debates, serving as new sites for the exercise of agency in collaborative governance. Collaborative governance, which seeks to involve a range of stakeholders in co-producing policy and planning outcomes, relies heavily on genuine public participation and the building of social capital to be effective. Agency—the capacity of stakeholders to act and influence outcomes—serves as the connecting thread that ties these elements together, determining whether collaborative processes are genuinely transformative or merely instrumental in maintaining existing power structures.

In planning, participation is often considered a cornerstone of collaborative governance, enabling diverse actors to contribute their local knowledge, articulate their interests, and play a role in shaping urban outcomes (Arnstein, 1969). However, the extent to which participation translates into authentic collaboration depends on how agency is exercised within these processes. In China's urban planning context, participation is frequently framed as a tool for achieving social stability rather than empowering local communities (Wu, 2016). State-led participatory mechanisms, such as public hearings or community consultation sessions, are often regarded as tightly managed and offer limited scope for influencing substantive planning decisions (Zhang, 2016). This has led to what some scholars describe as "managed participation" (He & Warren, 2011), where the state engages citizens to create an impression of inclusivity without ceding real control. The risk of co-option is thus a significant concern, particularly when the state uses participatory processes to co-opt validate predetermined agendas (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). When participation is framed in this manner, stakeholder agency is curtailed, and collaboration loses its authenticity. This phenomenon is once evident in many urban regeneration projects in Chinese cities, where public participation is orchestrated to ensure compliance with state-driven redevelopment plans rather than genuinely incorporating local preferences (Shen & Wu, 2017) while authentic collaboration in planning would require that participation goes beyond tokenism to allow stakeholders to shape agendas, propose alternatives, and influence outcomes, thereby exercising their power meaningfully (Fung, 2006).

Social capital, defined as the networks of relationships, trust, and shared norms that enable collective action (Putnam, 1993), is crucial for the success of authentic collaborative governance. It enhances agency by providing actors with the resources and social support necessary to engage effectively in governance processes. In China's planning context, where formal participatory mechanisms

are often regarded as constrained, social capital has played a critical role in enabling alternative forms of engagement. Informal networks, community groups, and creative clusters have leveraged social powers to build alliances, share knowledge, and coordinate collective action outside the formal channels of governance (O'Connor & Gu, 2014). Creative communities offer a compelling case study in this regard. Their success in reshaping urban spaces and influencing planning outcomes, despite operating in a constrained environment, suggests that agency can be both resilient and adaptable. For instance, in cities like Shanghai and Shenzhen, grassroots cultural organisations have used social capital to navigate restrictive institutional contexts and assert their agency in shaping urban redevelopment projects (Keane, 2013). These networks not only provide the cultural support needed for sustained engagement in decision-making but also create a sense of shared identity and purpose that strengthens stakeholders' resolve to influence planning outcomes. This has been particularly evident in creative communities that have formed around the preservation of historic neighbourhoods or the redevelopment of cultural heritage sites in some Chinese cities, where strong social ties have enabled communities to resist displacement and negotiate more favourable development terms with the governmental authorities (Ren & Sun, 2012). However, the effectiveness of social capital in fostering agency also depends on the openness of collaborative process and the willingness of institutional actors to recognise and engage with these networks. When social capital is strong, but formal governance structures are rigid, there is also the risk of co-option, where community networks are used to deliver state objectives without allowing these networks to challenge or reshape governance priorities, particularly visible in China's planning context in the 2000s (Wu, 2016).

This has led to the debates of power asymmetries in collaboration, where power imbalances between different stakeholders are a persistent challenge in examining

a collaborative governance model. Scholars such as Booher and Innes (2002) and Cooke and Kothari (2001) argue that collaborative processes often mask existing power imbalances, creating an "illusion" of equal participation while allowing powerful actors to dominate. This critique is highly relevant in analysing the Chinese context, where the state retains significant control over planning processes even when inclusive mechanisms are in place. Roberts (2004) argues that for collaborative governance to be genuinely transformative, it must explicitly address these power asymmetries by creating mechanisms that empower marginalised voices and ensure that all participants have the resources and capacities to engage, and in the Chinese context, where planning is predominantly state-driven, the potential for authentic collaboration is often undermined by institutional constraints. Nevertheless, some urban planning projects have already shown that creative uses of social capital can expand the scope of agency, enabling specific local communities to assert greater influence over planning decisions. For example, the preservation of Beijing's 798 Art District, initially threatened by redevelopment, was achieved through the mobilisation of social capital by artists, local businesses, and international networks, which effectively pressured the government to reconsider its plans (Ren & Sun, 2012). By leveraging cultural production, producing alternative art space and practising participatory techniques for inclusion, these creative groups have started creating new platforms for social engagement that operate outside traditional governance structures, providing a counterbalance to state narratives and broadening the scope of public discourse at a micro level (O'Connor & Gu, 2014). While the risk of co-option remains, as the state increasingly seeks to harness creativity for economic development, by investigating creative-led case studies, I argue these emerging communities represent a unique form of agency that reconfigures collaborative governance in contemporary urban China.

2.3.5 Summary

Section 2.3 examines the concept of collaborative governance, focusing on partnerships between governments and civic society in managing urban spaces. This model promotes the involvement of various stakeholders, including social organisations, residents, and the private sector, in decision-making processes. The section argues that for collaborative governance to be effective, it must ensure a balanced distribution of power, decentralisation of authority, and active community engagement.

The literature reviewed in this section points to the complexities of implementing collaborative governance, particularly in contexts like China, where government oversight often intersects with the activities of social capital. While these organisations are increasingly acknowledged as crucial players in urban governance, their impact is frequently constrained by state control and resource limitations. Thus, a discussion of the authenticity of collaboration is raised. Agency and authenticity are critical in the discourse on collaborative governance in urban development. Agency, as conceptualised by Arnstein (1969), involves the empowerment of communities to participate and influence decisions in urban projects actively. This is essential for achieving authentic collaboration, characterised by genuine community involvement, transparent communication, and equitable resource distribution (Cornwall, 2008). Authenticity ensures that urban development initiatives reflect the true needs and aspirations of the community rather than merely serving the interests of external stakeholders. Conversely, co-option refers to the manipulation of collaborative processes by external entities, often leading to tokenistic participation that undermines community agency (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). In the context of urban development, co-option can result in projects that prioritize external interests over local needs, thereby eroding trust and legitimacy in collaborative governance frameworks.

Therefore, a critical examination of these dynamics is essential for fostering inclusive and sustainable urban growth, where all stakeholders have a meaningful role in shaping the future of their communities.

The section also critiques the existing research for its lack of empirical studies on the practical functioning of collaborative governance across different cultural and political settings. It emphasises the need for further exploration into how these governance models can be tailored to realise sustainable urban development, highlighting the potential benefits of integrating social capital and community participation into governance frameworks.

2.4 Overview of artist communities and art space in China

2.4.1 Contemporary art and artist communities in Chinese society

In China, contemporary art has been associated with the trend of liberalisation in the cultural context for a long time. The *85 New Fine Arts Movement* (八五新潮运动 *bawu xinchao yundong*, an art movement featuring modernism that appeared in mainland China in the mid-1980s), as the turning point in Chinese art history, set the basic characteristics of "anti-system" and "anti-ideology" in Chinese contemporary art and fine art. During the movement, many art groups and art associations were formed in the capital city of Beijing and later elsewhere in Chinese cities. Some active art movements or exhibitions became the important foundation and source of the contemporary art gathering areas. Most of the artists in the art gathering areas were "out-of-system painters" who had lost their formal jobs, and their "out-of-system" status enabled them to freely create, advocate, and practise the ideals of contemporary art whether as groups or as individuals; with

their enthusiasm for art, they gradually gathered in city centres and evolved from a latent current to a potential force (Yang, 2007). At the beginning, the art movement did not confront the system intentionally but, instead, just emphasised the expression of personal spirit and feelings of existence. Since the works of the gathered artists challenged the traditional Chinese art system and ideology with avant-garde characteristics, contemporary art inevitably had characteristics of the anti-mainstream systems at that time. To some extent, the early art exhibitions and artist gatherings in Chinese cities were seen as highly developed modern industrial civilisation, and the reason why the art-intensive clustering tends to appear first in metropolises with relatively developed economies is that these economic metropolises means the prosperity of businesses and markets, so that the artists can more easily obtain a relatively free and independent living space, regardless of the restrictions of religious power, political power, or other powers (Wu, 2014). In China, contemporary art has long been an "alternative" culture in the art industry, as the content of such an art form was usually regarded as being outside of "mainstream aesthetics". Since the CCI-led development strategy became popular in the 1990s, these "alternative" districts, where contemporary artist groups gathered, inevitably became a social capital captured by some urban governors that had some potential to empower city competitiveness by developing local CCIs.

In this case, artists, as in the context of Chinese CCI-led development, are no longer exclusively viewed as a tool for political ideology; they have become a wanted source for urban economic growth and image building. Scholars have noted that contemporary art has become one of the fastest-growing cultural exports simultaneously as creative (in terms of chuangyi) clusters operate as a new way for large-scale infrastructure upgrade projects in urban transformation (O'Connor and Xin, 2006). In other words, the expanding market, as well as the promulgation of CCI, has simultaneously redefined the art industry as in creative industries and

changed the way the Chinese government chooses to administrate art and everything related to it. In the eyes of Chinese urban governors, a contemporary art scene resembles the openness and modernness of a city's quality; the ability to present contemporary art allows a city to be "modern and cosmopolitan" (O'Connor and Xin, 2006: 278). With all the urban image-building benefits, the once-marginalised contemporary art is receiving greater tolerance and even support from the official. In art history academia, scholars have described this change as normalisation of contemporary art (Wu, 2014), while in urban studies, some scholars call it "artistic urbanisation" (Ren and Sun, 2012) in the way organic art villages or small art districts have been institutionalised; the institutionalised contemporary art district, that is, the art-intensive creative space we are talking about in this research, is recognised as a site where a group of creative people congregate and produce cultural products of high value.

Academically, the group of creative industry workers in the art industry is precisely what Florida (2002) calls the 'creative class'; in his view, the cluster of this group of open-minded "Bohemians" (the artists and art professionals) in an urban space can represent the overall competitiveness of cities (Florida, 2004). In urban studies, artist communities have been identified as a unique social niche to have influence on the (re)construction of the urban landscape (Bain, 2005). The economic and creative competency in high mobility the creative class brings has allowed urban governors to rethink where artist communities could fit in in the urbanisation process and what they could offer in the construction of a creative urban image. In urban academia, scholars have been arguing about the role creative class plays in urban transformation, although artists have been regarded as a valuable factor of production (Markusen and Schroc, 2006), some have argued that there has been a loss of self-identity (the "alternativeness" in this case) and political engagement in the capitalist gentrification (Whittel, 2001). In Chinese

academia, some empirical research in Chinese cities where there are recognised art districts has even put doubts on the actual ability artists have to enhance urban competitiveness in the entrepreneurial governance model (Zheng, 2011). In real urban practice, urban governors are enthusiastic about the urban landscape upgrade the creative class had promised (Kong, 2007; Strom, 2010). In the case of China, with the possibility that their "creativity" values can enhance local economic growth, the Chinese artist community is also drawn into the process of CCI-led urban transformation. However, the majority of urban researchers had taken the Beijing 798 Art Zone as the case study, and they take a negative account towards the role artist communities play in art space planning and governance (Zhu, 2016; Yan, 2017; Zhang and Huang, 2017).

In the literature, the production of non-institutionalised art districts has forced artists to become a group of people who experience contradictory states: they are sometimes "welcomed" and sometimes neglected. As the middle class of transitional urbanising, they are warmly welcomed, but when the value of real estate rises, artists are no longer welcomed or protected as legitimate tenants (Zukin, 2014). Therefore, they are not only interdependent with the government and the market, thus obtaining political protection and financial support, but they also are constantly contradictory with the nexus struggling to maintain a certain level of independence. As some scholars have pointed out, in a self-developed quarter or cluster, artists can play an active role, but in a planned cluster space, they are in the sales position (Stern & Seifert, 2010). This is reflected in Bourdieu's (1993) idea that they have a status high in cultural capital and low in economic capital, which makes them both in a dominant role and a dominated position. In Western societies, local communities work as a balance of power in the partnership of power and capital (McGuirk, 1995; McQuaid, 2000); in China, however, some researchers believed the local community was often seen as isolated and it could

not be allied with either side (Wu, 2014). This suggests that artists are simply passive or are victims in the development process; as Matthew (2014:1032) explained, they themselves are sometimes "actively involved in cultural ordering and gentrifying practices by marking particular outputs as appropriate/inappropriate to the space". This is the case in the art district development especially in the early 2000s, when large scale development of flagship art spaces led by the government and/or developers often resulted in a fast gentrification of a district, and the rise in local living expenses would then gradually drive local communities away (Wang and Zhang, 2009).

2.4.2 Institutionalisation of the art district in China

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, most of the cities with a recognisable art space in China were cities with a relatively mature social and economic development, which were undergoing a process of significant industrial transformation and upgrading during the CCI promotion period. Various abandoned factory buildings that were left over from the labour-intensive industry were gradually rented by artists at a lower rent and used as studios for artistic creation, thus making the earliest form of art space, that is, the non-institutional artist village in cities. Against the background of the political and economic reforms since the 1970s, across China, a group of "Bohemians" began to make a living by selling avantgarde paintings in city centres, and in order to pursue their artistic ideals and get rid of the restrictions of the system, they chose to become professional artists. They then became key participants in the later 85 New Fine Arts Movement. One large group in the cultural capital Beijing decided to settle in the area of Yuanmingyuan near Tsinghua University and Peking University, where three or four hundred artists were said to have gathered during its peak period, forming the "Yuanmingyuan Painter's Village". As the earliest artist clustering district in China, the Yuanmingyuan Artist Village in Beijing became an urban place tracked

by major media and news agencies at home and abroad for a time, but it was dismissed in 1995 due to the artists "vag" lifestyle that may have influenced a significant number of people, which annoyed the then government officials (Wu, 2014). With the rising recognition of the arts in the CCI development, these dismissed artists, who had chosen to move to the urban suburbs, once again obtained a development opportunity when a creative-led urbanisation strategy was established. This led to the establishment of the nationally renowned Songzhuang Art district and 798 Art district (Zhou, 2012), the earliest institutionalised art district in China, whose stories have presented what I consider to be an early stage of negotiatory cooperation between local governments and the artist community. Such institutionalised art spaces redeveloped in the early 2000s would be operated strictly in accordance with the business model, and in order to obtain government funding or fiscal and tax benefits, most artists and professionals had positively entered the management system. Empirical research in the early cases of Beijing and Shanghai have shown concern about art spaces being institutionalised, as it was felt that once the "elitism" pursued by artist groups was accommodated by the official system or accepted by the public after entering the field of consumer culture, contemporary art itself would lose its characteristic of "alternativeness" (Wang, 2009b; Currier, 2012). In their view, if the characteristics of anti-system and anti-ideology in the early 1990s made the traditional contemporary art space "alternative" to some extent, the institutionalised and systematised operation of the art space could quickly make it commercial and non-reproductive, and the artists' alternativeness gradually would disappear; as a result, they felt the creativity itself was very much in danger. To them, the relation between the government and society is a trade-off relationship. This might be true in some cases, if there is the preconceived belief that the artist community was regarded has having been passively drawn into the development process; however, looking at the social status of Chinese contemporary artist communities in a broader urbanisation

context over the past two decades, they are playing a more important and active role in China's CCI oriented urban development.

2.4.3 Government-artist relationship in China's urbanisation

In a broader sense, as soon as CCI was infused in urban development, attention has been paid to how art districts could enhance urban economic growth and realise place-marketing in a post-industrial urbanisation age (Zukin, 1987, 2000; Ley, 2003), addition to this, some studies examined art districts as a new urban space that helps cities attract tourists and promote local cultural consumption (Lloyd, 2005; Currier, 2008). In Western urbanisation history, artist communities have always been an integral part of the urban renewal movement (Zukin, 1982; Ley, 2004; Lloyd, 2005). In the context of China, however, although some scholars have suggested artist communities can play a positive role in the CCI-led spatial transformation (Wu, 2004; Zhou and Breitung, 2007; Wang, 2009a; Zhong, 2009), studies are largely centred on the conflicting roles of the government that is taking charge of the local cultural authenticity in a commodification approach (Yang, 2007; Wang, 2010; Zhao, 2010; Zhang, 2014; Zhang, 2017). These studies have suggested the need for mediation between development and social interests amidst creative places resulting in pressure on Chinese cities, as the government-artist relation has long been at the forefront of art-centred creative space research in China.

One extensively discussed Chinese art district development in the early 2000s is the case of Shanghai. The old factory buildings and warehouses along the Suzhou River used to be the gathering place of artists in the city; its favourable location meant it was listed to be demolished and redeveloped by the Shanghai municipal government in 2001. Various measures had been taken by the artists to protect the area, such as writing letters to the mayor at that time to discuss the historical and

cultural value of the Suzhou River, and the renovation and reuse of old warehouses. In 2002, Yan Zhuangzhi, a member of the Shanghai Municipal CPPCC and a professor at Shanghai University, submitted to the Shanghai Municipal CPPCC a proposal for the protection of art warehouses along the Suzhou River. Because of this proposal, the Shanghai government had to rework the planning scheme of the Suzhou River. Eventually, the buildings rented by a minority of artists were retained, while the rest were demolished (Chen, 2009a:549). Tianzifang Lane was another case of struggle and compromise between different parties in an art district. Following the outbreak of the Asian financial crisis in 1998, many development projects were suspended, and the real estate market crashed. The developer was unable to renovate Tianzifang Lane, providing an opportunity for the redevelopment project with a lower level of investment (Yung et al., 2014), that is, the residents in the community rented their houses to CCI-related enterprises and individuals. After five years of bottom-up persistence, the community not only successfully resisted the government's redevelopment plan but also persuaded the government of Luwan District to list Tianzifang as an official creative quarter. However, without any support of the municipal government, the district government did not want to accept the model of Tianzifang as a feasible way to create a "creative cluster"; instead, the government preferred those models that could be directly controlled from the very beginning of the renovation. Reluctantly, the district government sold a piece of land adjacent to Tianzifang to a private developer for the construction of a luxurious shopping centre (Gu, 2014). These early studies based on empirical research into the pro-growth coalition in art space development were mainly conducted in developed cities; they seem to overemphasise the government-capital nexus model in the art space transformation, and at the same time, they oversimplify Chinese art spaces as sharing similar characteristics, with artist communities not being able to participate in the planning process.

2.4.4 Summary

This part of the literature review overviews the artist community in Chinese society and urban art space development in China in the 2000s; it serves as a research context within which to understand the relationship between the creative community and government. Under China's CCI promotion programmes and the related creative city building campaign, Chinese cities ranging from first-tier to third-tier saw a growing number of art spaces and clustering of artist groups; Besides being one important economic factor in urban growth, artist communities and art-related NGOs have additionally shown their important social force in Chinese urban transformation. These artist NGOs in urban art spaces are supposed to open the door to both established and young art workers who devote themselves to experimental art creation in a fast-changing Chinese society. They will constantly adjust themselves to survive and fit in the urbanisation process yet value their partial autonomy and self-governance characteristics (Liu, 2017). In the collaborative governance research in terms of art space development, it is of great importance to investigate how various artist groups, by identification of interaction patterns with the government, have been consciously and unconsciously integrated into the urban system, in terms of their motivations, and how these tactics can challenge the entrepreneurial development model in space transformation.

2.5 Discussions of the chapter

This literature review chapter critically examines the evolving governance models in urban development, with a focus on the pivotal role of Creative and Cultural Industries (CCI) in urban spaces. The analysis underscores a global trend towards entrepreneurial governance, where cities use cultural assets to boost their

competitiveness and economic resilience. This trend, known as urban entrepreneurialism, marks a shift towards the commercialization of culture. In Western contexts, this has led to public-private partnerships aimed at urban regeneration. While these partnerships bring economic benefits, they often come under fire for sidelining long-term social and cultural goals. In contrast, in China, urban entrepreneurialism is largely characterized by strong state involvement, with government-led initiatives and state-owned enterprises playing key roles in developing creative clusters.

The chapter also delves into the concept of collaborative governance, which advocates for partnerships between government entities and civic society, including social organizations and local communities. This model promotes inclusive decision-making processes that involve a wide range of stakeholders. However, the chapter highlights significant challenges in ensuring the authenticity of collaboration, especially when applying Western governance concepts in different cultural and political contexts, such as China. Furthermore, the chapter identifies research gaps related to the long-term sustainability and cultural authenticity of CCI-led urban developments, particularly in state-dominated contexts. While these initiatives can drive economic growth and urban transformation, their impact on local cultural ecosystems and community well-being is not well understood. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the authenticity of collaboration within these governance models, ensuring that partnerships are not just symbolic but genuinely inclusive and participatory.

In conclusion, addressing these research gaps is important for developing governance strategies that are not only economically effective but also socially inclusive. As urban areas continue to evolve, it is essential to explore governance models that respect local contexts, empower all stakeholders, and maintain the

authenticity of collaborative processes. This holistic approach will be vital for nurturing resilient, vibrant, and equitable urban communities.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This research on government-community relations in China's CCI-oriented urban development uses primary and secondary data collection in various qualitative research methods. The study investigates the complex government-community relationship of China's urban governance system, looking particularly at the emergence of local creative capitals and a partnership forming between the Chinese government and creative communities at the local level through a CCI-oriented development strategy. The research explores the city of Chengdu's different development of art-centred creative spaces between the 2000s and 2020s; it presents the economic and political background and underlying rationale of a CCI-led development strategy and explains how the practice has accelerated the establishment of a collaborative planning model in Chengdu. The nature and activities of diverse artist communities based in different urban creative spaces are explored throughout the 2000s to 2020s; the discussions in two distinct periods help evaluate to what extent the Chinese local government has applied collaborative planning and governing techniques. In a broader sense, by exploring the motivations and governing methods of Chinese local government, I try to illustrate how governments embrace broader social participants in various urban development campaigns and by investigating the process of forming partnership relationships between the government and creative community at a micro level, I argue the creative community has become an emerging and active social force which plays an important role in China's urban governance network.

The literature review chapter has helped outline this research's interdisciplinary nature. Although this research lies in the academic studies of China's urban development, the literature sources encompass a variety of other disciplines, including China's CCI development, the art history of Chinese society and China's urban renewal. My previous academic background in arts management and a close reading of discourses around urban studies have inspired me to do empirical research in the fields to reach a thorough understanding of China's urbanisation and governance dynamics.

For this research, pilot research was conducted in 2018, and fieldwork and data collection were conducted in 2019 and 2022. This chapter presents the methodology of this study: Section 3.2 introduces the study's research aims, objectives, and questions; Section 3.3 discusses the research design, outlining the rationale behind choosing Chengdu as the case city and selecting art space cases in the city of Chengdu. Section 3.4 discusses and examines the data collection and analysis methods adopted in the study, as well as access to research participants, ethical research considerations, and challenges in the field. Section 3.5 is a summary of the arguments in the chapter.

3.2 Research aims, objectives and questions

This research aims to enhance the understanding of contemporary urban governance in China's CCI-oriented urban regeneration. It will examine the role that non-government actors, especially social communities, play in urban development. This research investigates the changing status of creative communities in Chinese society in the post-reform period and explores their role in creative space-making under China's new type of urbanism guided by culture-

led urban regeneration. By studying the local government's policy convey/implementation concerning engaging artist communities in creative space development and the community's response to these governing methods, the research seeks to understand the participation motivations and perceptions of the creative community in a fast-urbanising China, hoping to reveal the dynamics of Chinese urban governance mode in its post-reform period. As has been addressed in the Introduction, this research explores the following questions:

5. What are the motivations and aims of the Chinese local government in engaging creative communities in urban development in the context of China's CCI-oriented development?
6. In governing art creative space, what governing agendas have been adopted by the Chinese local government to broaden creative community participation?
7. How do these governing agendas influence the creative communities' incentives and activities of participating in the development process?
8. How do we understand and conceptualise the government-society relationship in Chinese urban governance and Chinese creative communities' role in CCI-oriented urbanisation?

These research questions are designed to unpack the complexities of urban governance network in Chinese cities in the context of CCI-oriented urbanisation: emergence of new urban space developed with creative industry; the role of government, market and local community, and collaborative or partnership relations built between them in the space (re)making at different stage; and most importantly, the governance mode constantly influenced by these non-government actors.

This research aims to understand the government-community relation in China's urbanisation at the local level concerning the CCI promotion program and culture-

led urban regeneration strategy, focusing on the governing of creative communities and their responses under CCI-oriented governance agendas. The researcher studies the motivations behind local government engaging creative communities in urban creative space making at different urbanisation stages to understand the governance network in Chinese urban creative space, it also explains why the network can be reshaped; the researcher further investigates the governing agendas adopted by Chinese local government, this helps to examine how the policy dynamics brought in by the government may influence or empower other actors in the process and reshape the governance network; in addition to this, specifically, the researcher studies the creative community's response to these governing programs to understand in what sense the influence or empowerment has changed the nature of the community itself, and whether the empowered community can function better in urban development; finally, the researcher can develop a critical vision of the government-community relation in the process and understand whether a new collaborative governance mode has emerged in China's CCI urban development.

3.3 Case study research design

3.3.1 Case study approach

An in-depth case study approach is chosen for the empirical research because it helps social science researchers investigate contextual effects upon social phenomena (Yin, 2013). This project will be conducted with a combination of on-site and remote field research to thoroughly investigate Chinese urban governance and community engagement regarding creative city making, aiming at evaluating and advancing the theoretical concept of collaborative governance at the local level

in China. According to Creswell, the case study approach explores a “real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information … and reports a case description and case themes” (Yin, 2013:97), for this reason, various data such as documents and interviews are required to be collected and analysed. In summary, case study research, which investigates single or multiple cases to capture the study object complexities (Stake, 1995), will be a practical approach to probe into this research's creative space planning and development process.

In social science research, case studies test hypotheses and generalise knowledge (Ekstein, 2000). According to Flyvbjerg’s (2006) discussions on the reliability and validation of the case study approach, context-dependent knowledge can be best learnt by this method, and “it is useful for both generating and testing hypotheses but is not limited to these research activities alone” (2006: 395). Additionally, the case study contains “greater bias towards the falsification of preconceived notions than towards verification” (2006: 399), which will help consolidate the argument of this research that a collaborative development model, rather than a previously perceived entrepreneurial model, is being established in Chinese cities. Following these discussions, for this research, a case study approach that can help researchers make generalisations (Bryman, 2008) will be used to realise the generalisation of contextualised knowledge of Chinese art space governance, and by studying the knowledge, the researcher will learn the contemporary Chinese urban development and governance model in a broader sense. On the other hand, a researcher also must recognise doubts about making valid generalisations from the case study approach: the main concern is that the study object is always one example (Platt, 1992; Gable, 1994). For urban governance research, a single case study in one specific city contains biases, and the single case must have been unique enough;

with the case's uniqueness, however, the research can lead to the weakness or limitation of the knowledge the research wants to generalise. Defenders of the case study research approach, like Hammersley and Gomm, have commented on such doubt; they pointed out that the aim of case study research is "to capture cases in their uniqueness, rather than to use them as a basis for wider generalisation" (2003:3). That means the "uniqueness" of a case and the selection criteria must be carefully thought through and systematically explained to readers in the research design section so that the readers will understand the connections between research aims, theories and the contexts in a case study. Flyvbjerg further commented that case-based social science research does not intend to produce general and context-independent theories. Instead, it "has in the final instance nothing else to offer than concrete, context-dependent knowledge" (2006:223). For this research, the primary argument is that a collaborative model is being formed in some cities in urbanising China. The consolidation of the concept of collaborative governance is not something the research aims to focus on; instead, the research aims to present evidence of the formation of such a governance model in some CCI-oriented urban spaces in a Chinese city. In other words, the research does not intend to generalise that collaborative governance is being practised massively in Chinese urban development; instead, the aim is to discuss new dynamics affecting China's urban governance under various urban contexts at a micro level.

For the choice of case city, unlike Bell and Jayne (2006, 2009), who have differentiated cities by "big" and "small" based on limited criteria, Robinson (2006, 2008) once suggested understanding cities as "ordinary cities". From her central thesis, the research of urban theories has long been hampered by the assumed division between "global cities" in wealthy Western countries and "undeveloped cities" in poor third-world countries. Economically, although China claims to remain a third-world country, many Chinese cities that have already been studied

in academia (even if they are not developed Chinese cities) will not commonly be regarded as "poor cities" or "undeveloped cities", as defined in Robinson's thesis. However, the significance of studying "ordinary city" is that urban researchers today are encouraged to assume the potential of learning in a broader range of diverse urban settings. In her understanding, cities should all be seen as "constituted through multiple and overlapping networks of varying spatial reach and composed of a diversity of economic, social and political relations" (2008: 75).

In this approach, the urban study based on a traditional global network is not prioritised; instead, it focuses on each individual city per se. These arguments have justified my overall case city selection and highlighted the critical point in this research: the changing social relationships in contemporary Chinese urban narratives. The selection of a case city should be based on the dynamic factors observed in a Chinese city that is noticeably going through an urban development strategy. For this research, an emerging or developing city, rather than a mature front-tier city, is selected.

3.3.2 Case choice and rationale

Scholars have claimed that urban practices in advanced economies or societies dominate the field of production of urban theory and knowledge (Keil, 1998; Dear, 1999; Robinson, 2002); similarly, in urban studies of China, it is always those economically advanced cities that attract academia's attention. This further echoes the idea of "urban paradigms", proposed by McFarlane (2010), that experiences and practices in metropolises somehow dominate people's understanding of urban development and planning. To challenge paradigmatic urbanism, urban academia calls for more urban experiences and practices in smaller or less advanced cities. Choosing Chengdu as the case study site is partly a response to these discussions,

and by studying Chengdu's urban development and planning experiences, the research engages in the practice of dissolving urban paradigms.

Chengdu, the capital city of Sichuan Province in southwest China (see Figure 3.1), has undergone significant transformation in the last two decades to become one of the country's leading centres for the creative and cultural industries. This shift reflects broader trends within China towards a CCI-led development, particularly emphasising chuangyi-oriented creative industries that applaud cultural and social significance in development.

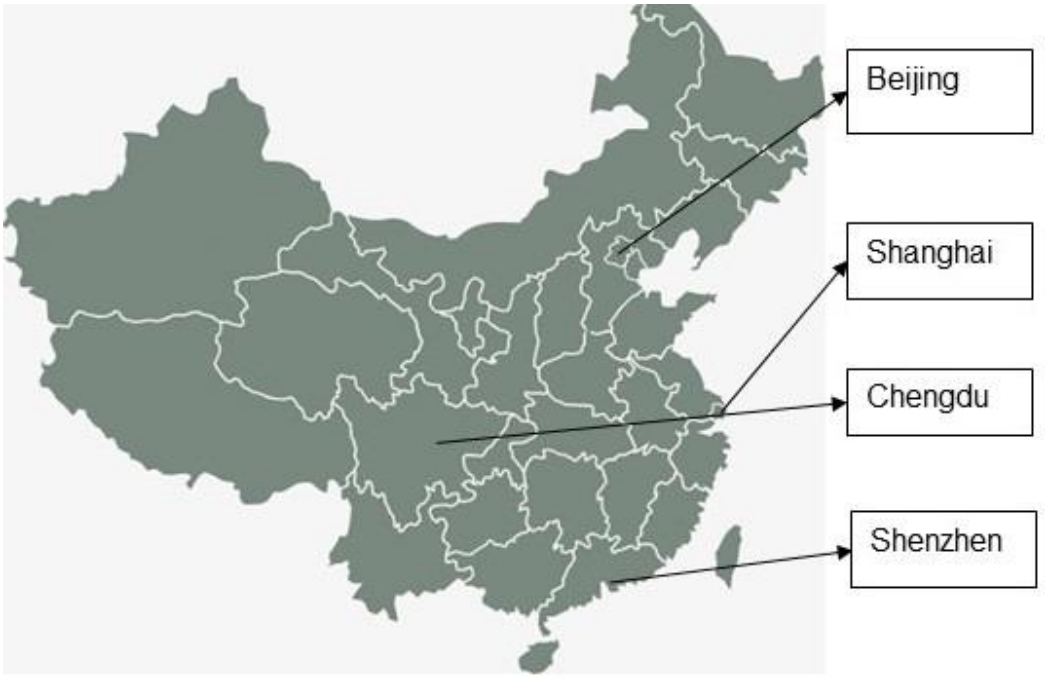

Figure 3.1 Location of Chengdu city in China

(source: created by the author)

In a historical context, Chengdu provides a fertile ground for the art-related creative industry with its deep historical roots and rich cultural traditions. The city's history of craftsmanship, opera, and poetry dating back to the Bronze Age inspires artists, who often incorporate traditional motifs and techniques into their

work, creating a unique blend of old and new. The city's reputation as a centre for cultures and arts in the southwest of China, dating back to ancient times, provides a culturally receptive atmosphere that is conducive to artistic endeavours and sets the stage for artist clusters, fostering the continuity of Chengdu's cultural and art legacy into the modern and contemporary era. In the past two decades, the city of Chengdu has witnessed an emergence of recognised creative urban spaces oriented by the art industry, from artist clusters in its southern suburbs to the art streets in city centres.

With the CCI-led development approach introduced nationally in China in the early 2000s, recognising the economic and social value of the arts, the government of historical Chengdu launched various land and financial initiatives to support the art industry's growth. At the same time, another national-level urban-rural integration experiment in southwest China also took place. At the time, artists of Chengdu were drawn to clusters in urban suburbs where they could find a sense of community and opportunities in a fast-urbanising world. These artist clusters in Chengdu frequently emerge in urban spaces with specific characteristics—such as historical neighbourhoods, old industrial zones, or underdeveloped urban areas—that offer affordable rents and ample space for studios and galleries. Over time, these areas become revitalised through the activities of the artists, attracting other creative businesses and curious visitors, which further enhances their appeal. In the context of China, in the 2000s, national development policies significantly influenced urban development or urban projects. In the case of Chengdu, its first official or institutionalised art space was established within a state-led urbanisation project experimented in the city following China’s large-scale urban renewal movement; more importantly, the establishment of the art space was authorised by local governments with various land policy support and financial support because the then municipal political leader of Chengdu personally was interested in arts.

This has differentiated Chengdu's art industry and art district development from those of China's metropolises like Beijing and Shanghai, whose institutionalised art districts emerged only a few years earlier than Chengdu, but the developments were influenced only and significantly by economic and cultural policies at a national level. Therefore, instead of looking at these metropolis experiences and practices, this research wants to bring to attention a less-known city, Chengdu, whose urban development narratives vary from those of more developed Chinese regions to CCI-led development studies of China. The aim is to unfold the complexities of Chinese urban planning and governance in the contemporary urban context through a critical insight into the dynamics of the relationships between the local government and the creative community. The city of Chengdu is selected as the case city for this research because of its distinguishing urbanisation contexts and unique CCI development background during the past two decades. Urban policy and administration changes relating to the city of Chengdu will be presented in the background chapter 4; various governance techniques at different urban development stages of Chengdu's art spaces will be discussed in case studies and presented in chapter 5; the findings of case studies will unveil a new government-community relation emerging in the Chinese urban planning and governance network, which should be further explored and examined in more empirical studies.

Regarding case study selection in the city of Chengdu, I have already learnt about the city's creative industry development while finishing my master's degree in art management in 2017. The experience, although not necessarily contributing to this urban planning research, has allowed me to gain some general understanding of the city's CCI-oriented spaces, especially art-led spaces, and their development circumstances between the 2000s and 2010s. In the city of Chengdu, up to 2017, there are more than a dozen recognised creative spaces oriented by the art industry.

As this research will only investigate the institutionalised art spaces rather than organic art districts (or artist clusters), types of art spaces have been narrowed down to officially recognised urban spaces that have gone through several years of government-led development, so selected art space cases must possess the following features:

1 The art space was established and developed because of an urban development campaign.
2 The art space must be recognised as a space that has completed physical transformation.
3 The creative community in the selected art space must be constituted by independent and non-governmental factors such as artists, art professionals, and art institutions.
4 The creative community is mobilised or participating in the planning and development of this art space.

Additionally, as this research regards the relationship between the government and the creative community as study subjects, the case will also have to meet the criteria listed below:

1 The development process of the art space would have shown some collaborative characteristics between the government and the creative community.
2 The data on the collaborative practices between the above stakeholders is accessible.
3 The interaction and communication between the above stakeholders are open to be investigated.

With these guidelines, I did a more careful investigation of Chengdu's CCI-oriented urban spaces that emerged after the 2010s, noticing more recognised

creative quarters have been established in central Chengdu following a CCI-led urban regeneration campaign from 2017.

In case study research, the case is the studied object chosen for an identified reason. The case selection procedures will inform the research design development and show research question(s) clarification. There are three types of case study frameworks proposed by Stake (1995): an intrinsic case study, that is to learn a single case's particulars; an instrumental case study, which is commonly used to improve theories; and a collective case study, that is defined as an instrumental case study with multiple cases with each case study is holistically studied and analysed. For this research, I understand that analysis of sole art space in the city of Chengdu cannot adequately reflect the breadth of changing urban planning and governance practices of the city; hence, I decided to use a collective case study approach to complete the research and to illustrate a "Chengdu model" for future art space development research. In the collective case study, careful consideration of the standard and peculiar nature of the case must be accomplished, and all relevant elements of the case will need to be adequately described to show potential bias and validity (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009), this will be achieved in this thesis by analysing the city's CCI-led development strategy contexts from early 2000s up to 2023, in two very different but somehow affiliated art space development case studies.

This thesis investigates two art space development projects in Chengdu: Chengdu's first institutionalised art space, named Blue Roof Art District, developed in the Shuangliu district, and a cluster of art-led community centres in the Wuhou district. In the first case study, an organic artist cluster in the southern suburb of Chengdu, namely Blue Roof Groups, was relocated to the city's first institutionalised art district, Blue Roof Art District, under a government-led urban development campaign. Although the establishment of the Blue Roof Art District

follows a typical top-down model, which was implemented in other Chinese cities at the time, the distinguishing character is that the establishment of this art space is supported and realised with preferable land and cultural policies at the local level. The study of the Blue Roof Art District will present those distinguishing characteristics and discuss government-artist relationships that have not been largely studied in China's developing cities. The second case of this research is a cluster of art-led community centres scattered in the central Chengdu Wuhou district. These art-led community centres are public urban spaces that went through redesign, reconstruction and restructuring of management process following a CCI-oriented urban regeneration campaign led by the Chengdu government in 2017; the creative people who participate in this project are either from the original Blue Roof artist groups or younger generation of creative industry workers. These creative-oriented community centres constitute Chengdu's CCI-led development narratives in the mid-2010s, and this part of the case study further understands the dynamic relationships between the local government and the artist community in the current context of China's urban development and governance strategies.

3.4 Data collection and analysis

3.4.1 Data collection

Under a case study approach, Multiple methods of data collection should be included in a case study research design (De Vaus, 2001); the details observed in a combination of qualitative methods will help researchers build a better understanding of the diverse social enclaves of a society (Jackson, 1985). In this research, qualitative data collection methods, including participant observation, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews, are chosen.

3.4.1.1 Participant Observation

In field research, participant observation is often employed, as it helps researchers to check the accuracy of definitions and terms the interviewer and interviewees use in interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 1995), and researchers can learn through involvement in routine activities of participants in the research setting (Schensul et al., 1999). This method relies on first-hand participation and observation of the researcher in various activities, from everyday routines to special events. This research method familiarised me with the case study areas' physical environment and generated visual data.

While there, I wrote down notes on my observations, interactions, and experiences; also, I took photographs to visually document the environment and residents' activities about my research, which serves as a rich supplement to my field notes. Additionally, I collected brochures, booklets, and posters from art spaces I visited to generate more detailed information than my interviewees had mentioned. Some physical materials were collected in a short site visit during a pilot field research in 2018; others were collected through onsite visits in 2022. The visual methods used in my participant observation enhanced the richness of my qualitative research data.

After art-led regeneration was enlisted into Chengdu's urban development plan in 2017, Chengdu's municipal and sub-municipal governments held many governmental meetings, some attended by local artists or art professionals, to discuss development strategy and progress. Sub-municipal governments, or more specifically, district governments, will organise meetings with sub-district level governments, and these meetings will be held for the purpose of consultation or conveying policies. I participated in and observed three such meetings in my pilot research in 2018, and participating in these meetings has allowed me to detect

potential interviewees, such as government officials, who play vital roles in planning and the decision-making process. Additionally, these meetings somehow reveal the power relationships between government officials, the creative community, and residents, as how they talk and communicate indicates power and position in the hierarchy. This immersion in the field allowed me to gather in-depth insights, enhancing my understanding of the subjects of my research within Chengdu's cultural and social contexts.

3.4.1.2 Document analysis

According to May (2011: 191), document analysis is "a means of enhancing understanding through the ability to situate contemporary accounts within a historical context". Documents are helpful for undercover meaning and developing understanding (Merriam, 1988). However, researchers must be cautious when dealing with certain documents, such as official development plans, that require a deep understanding of their authorship and readership (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004) in the planning process. According to Merriam (1988), different types of documents can help the researcher "uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem" (1988: 118). Understanding these, in this research, I chose public documents such as published policies, annual urban planning reports, and government reports in relation to CCI-led urban development at the state level to be selectively viewed in official online resources. These documents will help contextualise China's CCI-led development strategy and help further understand the influence on creative community development in the city of Chengdu. To achieve this, more documents between 2000 and 2023, including policies published by Chengdu's local state relating to urban renewal and urban governance, as well as reports, journals, online forums, and government official speeches published on the internet, will be selectively reviewed (see Table 3.1) as they will tell us about the stories of art-led urban development in this city.

Name	Description	Publication year
Master Plan of Chengdu	Public policy	1994
New Master Plan of Chengdu	Public policy	2011
Chengdu Industrial Mater Plan	Public policy	2005
Regulations for the management of the land market in Chengdu	Government document	2002
Measures for Enhancing Community Construction in Chengdu	Government document	2007
Measures for Urban Regeneration in Chengdu	Government document	2020
Notice of Starting Community Micro Regeneration in Chengdu	Government document	2019
Urban Mirco Regeneration, New Approach to Development	News report	2018
Creative Streets, Creative Chengdu	News report	2022

Table 3.1 Documents collected and analysed (selectively outlined)

I understand that selective document analysis can be a method with high study bias (Yin, 2013), yet it is an efficient way to generalise context knowledge over a long period, which will be helpful in this research covering two decades. Urban archive of Chengdu city will be visited through the website of the Chengdu Municipal Bureau of Planning and Natural Resources, Chengdu Institute of Planning and Design and departments/offices at the sub-municipal levels to understand Chengdu's urbanisation history and how urban development and governance

strategy changes in relation with CCI development in the city. These documents from government departments at the district and subdistrict levels will also be reviewed to help understand the rationale of local planning and governance policing. Additionally, media reports and journals of local art spaces will be reviewed to learn the general development situation of the art spaces at the district level. Art event reports and brochures collected in art community centres will also be analysed to unveil the experiments practised in Chengdu's art-led urban regeneration campaign. The discussion, which will be presented in Chapter 5, will highlight how local creative communities and other social stakeholders (the residents) are mobilised and engaged in the local governance system. In this research, most official documents are public online resources that can be accessed through government websites; some secondary resources, including cultural policies and CCI-oriented programs delivered in case sites, are provided by interviewees through remote and in-person communication.

3.4.1.3 Semi-structured interview

According to May (2011), researchers can build up interactions with participants through interviews, and the interviewing process allows rich insights into the interviewees' feelings, attitudes, and opinions. Semi-structured interviewing, similarly, based on guidelines of questions, has the advantage of flexibility, which enables the interviewer to probe beyond the answers, thus reshaping the interviewer-interviewee interactions as dialogues (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). That means that the interviewer can inquire beyond answers and explore in a verbal context using a semi-structured interview method based on lists of designed questions that can provide direction for the interview.

I use a selective sampling approach to choose my interviewees for the research; this means the selection is based on consistent reflection on the research aims and objectives. According to Schatzman and Strauss (1973), the selective sampling approach is a practical sampling method that is "shaped by the time the researcher has available to him, by his framework, by his starting and developing interests, and by any restrictions placed upon his observations by his hosts" (1973: 39). In this research, the selection of interviewees for this research about dynamic relationship in Chengdu's urban planning and governance is based on the research questions and will reflect the research objectives. So, interviewee groups are quite clear, including government officials at the district and sub-district levels in the city of Chengdu, the artist community based in the Blue Roof Art District and art-led community centres, and other local urban residents who have experienced the art space development. They all have constituted subjects of enquiry. A total of 33 people have been interviewed (see Table 3.2 for an outline of interviews; see Appendix 1 for more detailed information on interviewees). Interviews include remote and in-person ones conducted in 2018, 2019, 2021 and 2022; most interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed using a mobile app called Ifly Record; some without recordings were summarised in writing as soon as the interview was done.

Institution	Number of Interviews
Government officials	10
Creative workers	9
property management company staffs	3
Residents in case sites	11
Total	33

Table 3.2 Interviews completed

3.4.1.4 Visual Analysis

In this study, I also employ visual analysis of photos as a research method to gain a deeper understanding of spatial and social dynamics within urban environments. This approach is widely recognised for its ability to reveal subtle contextual elements that traditional quantitative data might overlook, such as pedestrian behaviour, the quality of public spaces, and the interaction between built and natural environments (Rose, 2016; Latham, 2003).

This method is combined with field research to provide a more comprehensive view of the study area. My fieldwork involves visiting key sites to document the physical environment, observe human activities, and collect photographic evidence. By integrating visual analysis with field observations, I am able to correlate visual patterns in photos with on-the-ground realities, such as how specific design elements influence human behaviour or how the spatial arrangement of urban features impacts accessibility and usage (Chapter 5 and Chapter 6). Additionally, historical and contemporary photos are presented (Chapter 4 and Chapter 5) to identify temporal changes and assess the impact of urban development over time. This combination of field research and visual analysis offers a powerful framework for understanding complex urban dynamics and evaluating both the functional and experiential aspects of urban spaces.

By using this method, the study gains a nuanced perspective that enriches our understanding of the lived experiences of different residents and the evolving character of the study area, ultimately informing more context-sensitive urban planning narratives.

3.4.2 Access in the field

As Okumus et al. said, “issues related to access vary to a considerable extent with the kind of case being investigated” (2007: 8). For most research on China’s urban studies, especially those on urban renewal in earlier years, problems concerning accessibility are related to the topic of property demolishment and controversial government-society relationship, which is, a sensitive issue in China. Gatekeepers, as defined by Okumus et al. (2007:10), are people who can “provide and facilitate access for the researcher” in conducting fieldwork; according to Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), they are also the group of people who are the initial contacts for a researcher in the research and who can help to find other informants to participate in the project. Meanwhile, gatekeepers also have the power to prevent the researcher’s entry as they “impose restrictions on researchers in ways that constrain their capacity to produce or report on findings that might threaten the interests of the powerful” (Lee and Renzetti, 1990: 515). In research on China’s government-society relationship in its urbanisation before the 2000s, when China’s development followed a strictly top-down model, government authorities were positioned as powerful gatekeepers who were reluctant to open up about urban planning and governance. In 2003, China’s then-president Hu Jintao put forward a Scientific Outlook on Development (科学发展观,kexue fazhan guan) that focused on sustainable development and social welfare at the Third Plenary Session of the Sixteenth Central Committee of the CCP; Hu put forward a people-oriented development concept that combines the concept of coordinated development and sustainable development. According to his speech, the Scientific Outlook on Development adheres to scientific socialism; under this development ideology, a humanistic society with increased democracy, which later became known as Socialist Harmonious Society (社会主义和谐社会,shehuizhuyi hexieshehui), will be established. In urban studies, China’s Socialist Harmonious

Society is a socio-economic concept that is regarded as a response to the increasing alleged social injustice as the consequence of fast and unchecked economic-oriented urbanisation, which eventually resulted in social conflict often related to government-entrepreneur collusion. The idea of creating a "harmonious society" as one of CCP's ruling ideas after 2005 emphasises the government learning the people's needs and recognising their roles in development; it naturally calls for more open discussions on state-society or government-community relations. With the Scientific Outlook of Development becoming one of the CCP's ruling philosophies and the Socialist Harmonious Society concept consolidated after the mid-2000s, openness and people's participation became the essence of China's many urban policies.

In this research, the important gatekeeper is a senior government official working at the municipal level government in Chengdu, with whom I have had personal connections. In my pilot research in 2018, I met with a senior government official to introduce my research, and it was through this government official, I had the chance to get contacts of some potential interviewees. After I briefly explained my research on Chengdu's CCI-led development, the gatekeeper proposed some sub-municipal (district level) government departments that I should get in contact with; he thought those contacts would be of much help in providing more specific information on CCI development and art-led urban programs at the district level. The primary way I later interacted with these key informants in different administrative districts of Chengdu was through WeChat communications. The gatekeep, after a few rounds of questions on my research topic, asked me to provide a copy of my CV and a brief research introduction in Chinese in PDF format to him; he then shared the documents with one of the informants he proposed at the municipal level on WeChat, and I added the informant to start our conversation. Other government officials I interviewed in this research are

accessed in a similar way. I found my communication process with government official interviewees straightforward and smooth, thanks to the introduction by the gatekeeper who works at the superior level; however, the whole process did not feel like functioning in the way of a superior government official delivering administrative orders through the government hierarchy: when I reached out to those sub-municipal officials, they were all willing to schedule an interview with me soon after they understood what I was trying to present in my research. A sense of "confidence" could be sensed in the pre-interview communications as government officials sounded proud of what has been achieved in the past years regarding Chengdu's urban development. For example, in one pre-interview communication with an official working at the Wuhou district government, when I thanked her for accepting the interview invitation, she added: "China's government has been working hard to build a good relationship with the people in urban development and governance; here in Chengdu, you will find out we are innovatively doing a good job".

Regarding access to creative community interviewees in this research, my initial contacts were a few freelance artists I talked to and built personal connections with while I finished my master's degree. When this research started, they all lived or worked in the Blue Roof Art District of Chengdu's administrative Shuangliu district. For interviewees in art-led community centres, some were introduced by my personal connections who have been working in CCIs in Chengdu, and others were suggested by those sub-municipal government officials who have been working with them for a while in local CCI-oriented urban projects since 2017. Important creative interviewees, such as the directors of two art centres in the Blue Roof Art District who experienced the establishment of the art district, were introduced by a Shuangliu district government official who has worked with them, and key creative interviewees from art-led community centres in central Chengdu

were introduced by my friend who has worked in many art-oriented projects in and outside Blue Roof Art District. Although the art community can usually be a very closed circle, as has been discussed in the literature review chapter, I somehow found out that they were quite open about speaking about the working experiences with the government if those art-oriented collaborative projects they did with the local government had helped promote CCIs or their art-related brands. Interviews with younger creative workers (as opposed to those leading artists from Blue Roof artist groups who are primarily in their 50s and 60s) in these community centres, who are aged between 20s to 30s, were more informative as they had a larger connection to a new and growing creative circle in central Chengdu, which was believed to have been formed during Chengdu's art-led regeneration campaign starting in 2018. It is also through my interview with these younger creative workers based in the Wuhou district that I was introduced to talk with some residents.

In urban research, when the interaction involves interviews with government officials, property development management companies, and residents, researchers can find themselves enwrapped in different relationships and must deal with different research subjects. To take good control of the interviews or the research direction, researchers, according to Liu (2015), should demonstrate their credibility or expertise in the field of research by preparing themselves with fundamental knowledge and understanding of the research subject; this is also the means to win interviewees' trust and respect to make the research process go easier. Following the argument by Feldman et al. (2003) that identity is the vehicle for researchers to gain access and exert certain control over interviews, in this research, I wanted to be perceived as a professional whom my interviewees would think worth spending time with, so I always sent the copies of my CV and a brief research introduction to my potential interviewees beforehand.

Additionally, I followed four broad ethical principles proposed by De Vaus (2001): ensure voluntary participation, give informed consent, do no harm to participants, and confirm confidentiality in my research. For ethical concerns, information sheets and consent forms (see Appendix 2) were sent to interview participants before interviews; I explained the research aims before the interview, telling them about their rights to withdraw or refuse an answer to questions at any time. Twenty-two interviews with government officials, creative workers and employees from property management companies were recorded by phone with their consent, while the remaining interviews with residents were recorded by writing notes. Each interview took approximately one hour, and all recorded verbal sessions were transcribed into text documents for data analysis.

3.4.3 Challenges in conducting the field research

Although all data collected in the field were guaranteed by a reliable network of sources by the time the field research was conducted, there were some challenges and unexpected obstacles to my research regarding the qualitative interviews, which are due to the change of circumstances in case sites and the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As with selecting interviewees, because I am examining government-community relations in Chengdu's urban governance, government officials and creative communities are naturally included in my interview groups. The approaching process has been very fluid in the pilot research in 2018. By the time I began the pilot research in Chengdu, the Chinese government was going through a major institutional restructuring following an institutional reform plan approved in March by China's State Council (see https://www.gov.cn/guowuyuan/2018-03/17/content_5275116.htm and http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/13/c_137036855_3.htm); the content of this comprehensive reform plan

includes bureaucracy cutting and cabinet downsizing that were affecting dozens of entities. According to reports, the reform plan was released to make a better-structured, more efficient and service-oriented government. With the deepening of the reform plan, the government of Chengdu went through a significant institutional restructuring in the year; the changes in local bureaucracy and their positions in development made it difficult for me to identify suitable government offices to get in contact with. Although I gained access to some government officials for interviews through my connections - as discussed in the last section - it took me a few rounds of communications on WeChat to speak with all of them, reconnect with others, and finally figure out the proper departments and right persons for my interviews.

Regarding the process of approaching the creative communities, as has been discussed in the previous literature review chapter, artist communities in China have always been a very closed circle; for me, it was easy to identify some leading artists that could provide helpful information on local development, but it became more challenging to get the chance to connect with them, especially when my research is not necessarily of art studies. I had to reach out to some of my friends who worked in broader CCIs in Chengdu to see if they knew some artists. In this way, I wanted to build some connection with those elite artists so they would listen and understand my studies in the area. After inquiring with my "CCI connections", knowing they would be able to introduce me to some artists, I went back to Chengdu for a second round of pilot research in late 2019; however, with the unexpected outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, travel restrictions around China made these planned visits to potential contacts and to the art spaces where those people based almost impossible. With the massive national lockdown imposed in January 2020, I learnt that many of my CCI contacts rushed back to their hometown, not knowing whether they would return. This situation has made my

early research stage in the Blue Roof Art District particularly challenging, as I had to return to the UK then, and I would not know what to do with this art district case study. Despite this, however, I managed to do some remote interviews in January 2021, thanks to my contacts, who helped to connect me to a few creative workers still working in Blue Roof Art District. Although these interviews were done remotely, which means the conveying of the interview message (Seidman, 2006) may have weakened, they equipped me with an understanding of the art space development and transformation scale. Another bonus is that more contacts of potential creative interviewees were introduced by the people I remotely interviewed, although I never had the chance to really "see" the development and changes in my case sites between 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic and travel restrictions. In spring 2022, I had a chance to return to Chengdu for a short while when travel restrictions imposed on international and domestic flights in China were slightly raised; I visited the Blue Roof Art District and these art-oriented community centres in Chengdu to meet some contacts, hoping to connect with more potential interviewees. Approaching people took me another two weeks, but I managed to do some in-person interviews before I left.

3.4.4 Thematic data analysis

Thematic analysis, a key tool in qualitative research, focusing on identifying and interpreting patterns or 'themes' within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), is used in this research to analyse the textual, verbal and visual data collected. The analysis process, which includes coding, theme development, and final report writing, allows for a deep understanding of the dataset (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2011). The analysis framework requires careful documentation, alignment of data interpretation with themes, and an awareness of potential researcher bias (Nowell et al., 2017).

The thematic analysis framework is a practical tool for qualitative research when applied to data collected from qualitative semi-structured interviews and document reviews. This process involves several iterative stages. The initial stage of thematic analysis is familiarisation, requiring the researcher to review interview transcripts and documents thoroughly. Then, it follows with generating initial “codes”, labelling relevant aspects in the data, and grouping these codes into potential ‘themes”. These grouped themes are then reviewed and refined for relevance and coherence to the coded data and the entire research. After defining and naming the themes, the researcher produces a report, presenting findings in a logical manner, usually backed by quotes from interviews and excerpts from the documents. This iterative process allows a nuanced understanding of the collected qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2011).

With this analysis framework, I begin with thoroughly reading all the interview transcripts. When reviewing, I make notes of my initial thoughts or ideas related to my studies aside from the transcripts. Then, I was able to identify some key ideas in the data and assign labels or "codes" to them. For instance, sections of the interviews discussing "urban development," "industrial development programs," and "community participation" could be coded accordingly. Similarly, parts of the government documents referring to “policy implementation”, “creative industry development", and “community development” could receive these codes. I then begin searching for potential themes by grouping these codes. For example, “urban development” and “art development programs” might fall under the theme of “impact of policies on urban regeneration”, while “community participation” and “residents engagement” form another theme, “public participation in community governance”. A constant comparative method was employed in this naming themes stage, in which comparisons concerning similarities and differences among codes were carefully conducted. All the codes were kept until the end of the data

analysis; some themes that consist of codes with similar characteristics were present, while some codes seemed to belong nowhere so that they might be temporary. Then, the themes are carefully reviewed to ensure they represent the coded extracts and the entire dataset. The themes are refined based on this review. For example, the theme "participation in community policy making" is expanded to "government-community collaboration" to encompass all aspects of collaboration observed in the data more accurately (see Table 3.4 for examples).

Sample Theme	Codes
Trust Building between the government and artists in Blue Roof Art District	How long is the development of Blue Roof Art District? How many artists participate in the planning? What sort of policies were implemented in the planning?
Policy Changes of Community Governance	How many urban communities were regenerated? How is a community regeneration considered art-led? Who are the stakeholders in an regenerated community
Government and Creative Community Collaboration	What sort of programs are designed and delivered in an art-led community regeneration? How do you value the regeneration project?

Table 3.3 Samples of themes and codes.

(Source: created by the author.)

At the last analysis stage, I define what each theme means within the research questions and start writing the report detailing the analysis findings with quotes from the interviews and excerpts from the policy documents.

3.5 Summary

According to Bourdieu (1996), social science researchers and research participants are part of the power relationships sketching the research narratives. This means researchers will confront people who are resistant to objectivation and (re)define research relationships by seeking to "impose their own definition of the situation and turn to their advantage" (1996: 25). In this chapter, I examine how my research is embedded in, and affected by, China's social and political culture in the 2000s and 2010s; I also explore to what extent my fieldwork practices are enwrapped in different research subjects and their relationships. I have also reflected on how these social relationships have affected access, data validity, and research ethics.

The methodology adopted for this study presented a significant tool in unravelling the complexities of government-community relations. The case study approach, coupled with qualitative research methods, enabled a holistic and in-depth exploration of the issue under investigation. Firstly, the case study approach was mainly instrumental in understanding urban development as I understand different cases offered distinct insights, contributing to a more nuanced picture of the research narratives. Following this approach, I choose a collective case study framework as it helps investigate both the uniqueness and universality of the studied sites. The use of qualitative research methods enhanced the depth of the data collected: participant observation, document analysis and semi-structured interviews were used to obtain information and insightful responses from research

subjects. This also allowed for a comprehensive exploration of interviewees' perspectives, experiences, and motivations. Finally, following a thematic data analysis approach, the research was able to offer interpretations of the subjects of the research questions.

In the following chapter, I will examine Chengdu's urban planning and governance in the last two decades. Archives, policies, and government documents were reviewed to help better understand the context of Chengdu's transformation into a people-oriented and creative city in the 2000s and 2010s. The contexts of urban renewal and urban management will also be systematically explained to provide a more informative city profile for the reader.

CHAPTER 4

FROM THE HISTORICAL CITY TO THE CREATIVE CITY: URBAN PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY REGENERATION IN CHENGDU

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines Chengdu's urban transformation in terms of urban planning, urban governance and industrial development over the past two decades. It depicts Chengdu's development trajectory, from a historical city to an industrial city, which is now transforming into an innovation and creative hub in southwest China. This chapter introduces Chengdu's urbanisation, development, and governance over time in relation to its historical and economic background, policy changes, and administrative innovations.

Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province, has undergone a profound transformation in its urban planning strategies, moving from a predominantly state-led model to a more community-oriented approach. This evolution is closely tied to China's broader economic reforms, which have reshaped the country's urban landscapes over the past few decades, and this chapter finds that top-down development strategies and urbanisation policies are an integral part of urban transformation in the city of Chengdu, where local experiments and practices accompanied the transformation through different forms. Historically, the planning of Chengdu followed geographical characteristics, and urban projects

have been primarily oriented toward agricultural production. With the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Chengdu's urban landscapes were reshaped by fast industrialisation led by the central government under socialist ideology. In the 1980s, under the influence of China's economic reforms, Chengdu's urban planning was driven by state-led initiatives aimed at rapid economic growth, and the planning focus was on developing infrastructure, relocating industrial zones, and attracting investment. Centralised planning and top-down decision-making characterised this era; large-scale projects and state directives were the primary tools for urban development, with limited input from the market and local communities. As China's economic reforms progressed into the 1990s and 2000s and the side effects of market-oriented development and rapid urbanisation such as environmental degradation, social inequality, and strained public services highlighted growing urban problems, Chengdu's urban governors were challenged by the limitations of a purely state-led approach and this period saw the introduction of people-centred development strategies that encouraged environmental protection and social equity, aligning with the nation's increasing emphasis on improving people's livelihoods in development. By the 2010s and into the 2020s, Chengdu initiated some large-scale urban renovation projects to transform its economic and cultural landscape, and in the 2020s, urban planners embraced a more comprehensive community-oriented approach to realise better urban governance. Public participation, community engagement and social collaboration became central to the planning process. Initiatives such as community-driven urban regeneration projects and the development of community self-government highlighted this new direction.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into four sections. Section 4.2 is an introduction to incentives that guided Chengdu's urban planning during the historical period, the socialist period, and the economic reform period. The

planning of historical Chengdu was oriented by its geographical and climate characteristics, while in the socialist era, urban planning aimed to accommodate the needs of a centrally planned economy in line with the state's socialist ideologies, and in the economic reform period in the 1990s, a more inclusive urban-rural integration planning to expand the urban population and employment was practised. Section 4.3 looks particularly at Chengdu's development in the post-reform era, exploring its modernisation realised through two state-led industrial-oriented urban projects in the 2000s and the 2010s. It points out that although state-level governmental policies principally guided the development of urbanising Chengdu in the first decade, a market-led development strategy oriented by cultural and creative industries was conducted by local government to enhance the city's cultural competitiveness in the 2010s. Lastly, section 4.4 unpacks Chengdu's urban renewal and governance policies in the past two decades; it presents how Chengdu's centralised planning gradually progressed to a community-oriented approach through localised governance methods and techniques, forming a more inclusive and participatory urban system in the period. Section 4.5 is a conclusion to the discussions in this chapter.

4.2 Urban planning of Chengdu before the 2000s

4.2.1 Urban planning of historical Chengdu

Chengdu, which literally means "forming capital" in Chinese, holds significant historical importance in China. As the capital city of Sichuan Province, Chengdu is a hub for politics, industry, culture, logistics, and technology. It has been a key economic centre for the entire southwest region of China since ancient times. Situated in the fertile and well-irrigated Chengdu Plain within the Sichuan Basin,

this area features extensive flat, cultivable land that has supported the local population and generated agricultural surplus for thousands of years.

The urban planning of historical Chengdu is an interesting study of the application of ancient wisdom and strategic design, which laid the foundations for a city that thrives in harmony with its natural resources and natural environment. Rooted in the philosophies of the Warring States period and flourishing through successive dynasties, Chengdu's urban design has historically centred around a grid pattern, as still shown in today's urban layout (see Figure 4.1); this is thought to have been influenced by the concept of idealised city layout in the ancient Chinese technical encyclopaedia Kaogong Ji (考工记), which is particularly noted for the early discussions of urban planning. This city pattern was typical of ancient China's highly organised and structured approach to urban development.

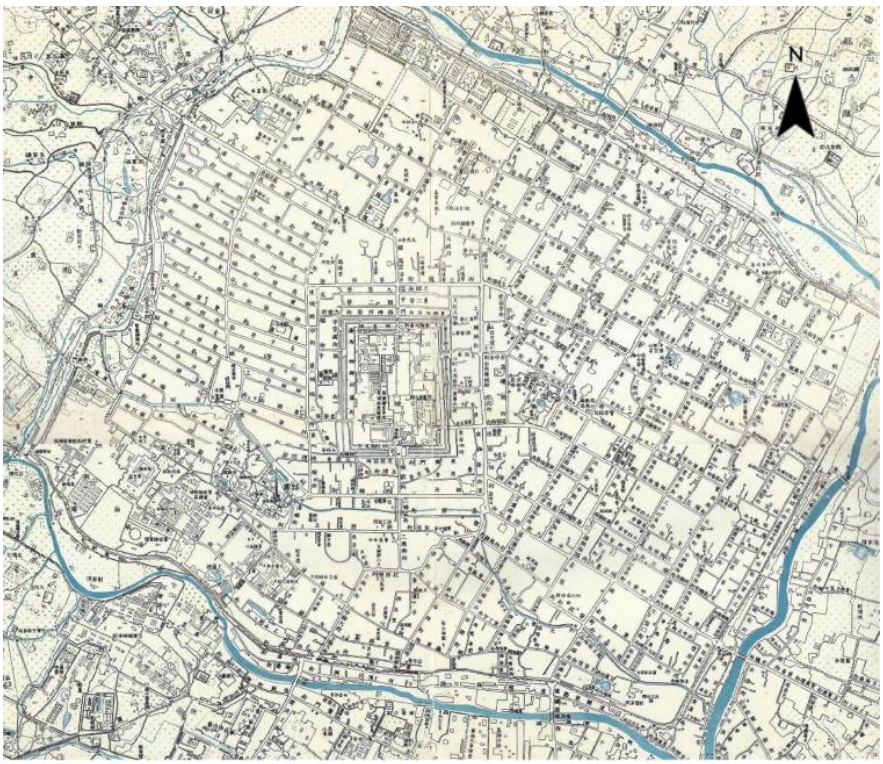

Figure 4.1 Chengdu Streets Map in 1948. Source: Yuan (2010)

The adaptation to the local geography and climate was also central to Chengdu's urban structure. Located on the fertile Western Sichuan Plain, agricultural sustainability and water management principles historically influenced Chengdu city's urban planning strategy. For example, one of the most significant and known achievements in this regard is the Dujiangyan Irrigation System, engineered during the Qin Dynasty. This system controlled flooding along the Min River and distributed water efficiently throughout the city and its surroundings, supporting extensive agricultural production that underpinned the local economy. Moreover, Chengdu's city walls, which defined its boundaries for centuries, were designed with both defence and administrative efficiency in mind. The city was traditionally divided into quarters of the east, the west, the north, and the south, each serving different administrative and commercial purposes, facilitating effective governance and various trade within its walls, which can still be observed in its urban landscape today; and thanks to its humid climate, Chengdu also placed a high value on green spaces, integral to its urban layout: the presence of numerous public spaces helped maintain ecological balance and provided the city's inhabitants with recreational spaces, enhancing the quality of urban life since the early ages.

Throughout its history, Chengdu's urban planning has exemplified a commitment to the principles of sustainability, integrating social, economic, and environmental needs. The planning preserved the city's cultural heritage and ensured its resilience and sustainability over time, making historical Chengdu a model of ancient urban planning excellence in China.

4.2.2 Urban planning of socialist Chengdu

Chengdu's urban planning after the establishment of the People's Republic of China and before China's economic reforms in the 1970s and 1980s was heavily

state-directed, with a strong focus on industrial growth, social equality, and integrating rural and urban economies. These strategies resulted in a city that was functionally aligned with socialist principles, providing a structured city environment to fulfil the needs of its time.

Before China's reform and opening-up policy was initiated in 1978, Chengdu's urban planning strategies were deeply influenced by the broader political and economic frameworks of socialist China, whose development concerns were centralised planning, industrial development, and self-sufficiency. During this era, urban planning in Chengdu, like in much of China, focused primarily on industrial growth and the integration of agricultural populations into the urban fabric, reflecting the nationwide drive towards economy-driven industrialisation. The layout and expansion of Chengdu city during this period were characterised by the establishment of various state-owned enterprises, which were strategically placed both within and on the city's outskirts. The rationale behind this placement was to facilitate the transition of its larger rural populations into urban industrial workers; the aim was to promote urban employment and achieve economic development in line with the socialist ideologies of China. Residential areas or dormitories were constructed around these industrial zones to minimise travel time for workers and to integrate living and working spaces closely, following the Soviet model of micro-districts.

Overall, from 1949 until the late 1970s during the Maoist era, Chengdu, like many other Chinese cities, experienced significant transformations in its urban planning to accommodate the needs of a centrally planned economy. The urban industrial landscape of Chengdu before the economic reforms in the late 1970s was less influenced by market forces and more by central planning directives. This led to a concentration on fulfilling national industrial policies rather than efficiency or innovation. At this stage, planning focused on creating a self-reliant city that could

support large-scale industrialisation. The city's layout during this period reflected the influence of Soviet urban design principles, emphasising wide boulevards and large public squares often serving as political and social gathering places within a highly regimented framework. These elements, which can still be observed in Chengdu's urban landscape today (see Figure 4.2), were intended to foster a sense of collective identity among the urban residents at that time.

Figure 4.2 Tianfu Square, the central point of Chengdu.

(Source: https://news.sohu.com/20090904/n266458730.shtml)

4.2.3 Urban-rural integration of post-reform Chengdu

After China's economic reform and opening-up policy in 1978, Chengdu's urban planning underwent significant changes, transforming from a primarily industrial focus to a more diversified and inclusive urban economy. The urban-rural integration project was one important post-reform urban development project that marked Chengdu's modern urbanisation. In 2007, Chengdu was selected by China's central government as one of the national urban-rural integration experiment zones. The national integration experiment was initiated to narrow China's widening urban-rural gap post-reform (Abramson & Qi, 2011). This strategic experimental initiative in Chengdu aimed to bridge the development gap

between Chengdu's urban centre and its larger surrounding rural areas to achieve a more balanced regional development (Jiao, 2011).

The project focused on improving infrastructure connectivity, extending public services, and facilitating economic opportunities in rural regions. Planning focused on upgrading transportation networks to ensure that rural areas had better access to the city centre, and this included the expansion of road networks and the introduction of public transport systems, allowing for easier movement of labourers and goods and integrating the rural population into the broader urban economy. In addition to infrastructure, Chengdu's urban-rural integration strategy also focused on socio-economic measures to provide public services to the rural population, and this was achieved by extending urban amenities such as sanitation, healthcare, and education to rural areas, aiming to uplift people's living standards in the region. As with enhancing employment, manufactural industrial parks were located near rural areas to create jobs for residents and stimulate local economies. With the deepening of urban-rural integration, Chengdu transformed from a historical city to a larger modernised metropolis in western China; its urbanisation and modernisation process is referred to as the "Chengdu model" (Yang, 2010; Gang, 2009), which has been replicated and adopted in many other Chinese cities.

4.3 Industry-led development of Chengdu since the 1990s

4.3.1 Innovation and technology led development

Like most Chinese cities, the primary goal of Chengdu's post-reform urban development was to enhance economic growth and city competitiveness. Established in 1988, the Chengdu Hi-Tech Development Zone (CDHT, as shown in government documents) was approved by China's State Council in 1991 as China's first national high-tech zone. It was listed as the pilot zone in the national

efforts to build “world-class high-tech parks” proposed by the Ministry of Science and Technology, reflecting China’s innovation and technology-led development strategy adopted in its inland cities. As the name of the development zone suggests, CDHT was established to attract leading technology and research companies, showcasing Chengdu’s ambition to promote local technology industry development. The development zone covers the southern area of Chengdu and a “new southern area”, which was previously the city’s outskirt rural region. The so-called “new southern area” of Chengdu was later included in Chengdu's urban-rural integration plan. Strategically, this development zone was established in the connecting location to constitute the city’s modern economic structure, which was led by innovation and technology industries. Following the establishment of CDHT, Chengdu positioned itself as “a regional hub for technology, commerce, finance and culture in western China” for the first time in its Master Development Plan in 1994. According to an introduction to CDHT on the government website, the development within this zone focuses on three leading industries: electronic information, biomedicine, and the digital economy. Sticking to the national industrial development reform by the concept of industrial ecology, it mainly focuses on 15 critical industrial chains, including IC, novel display, innovative medicines, high-performance medical devices, high-end software, AI, finance, modern business and trade, aerospace and metaverse. Over the past two decades, with the deepening of urban-rural integration and development of CDHT, Chengdu has transformed from a cultural and historical city to an innovation and hi-tech centre in western China. In 2015, CDHT was approved by the State Council as the first national independent innovation demonstration zone in west China; in 2022, CDHT realised a regional GDP of RMB 301.5 billion (approximately GBP 36.2 billion), exceeding the threshold of three hundred billion. The innovation and entrepreneurship base of CDHT was inspected and praised by the General Office

of the State Council, making it the only base of its kind winning such a title in Sichuan Province.

Economically, the CDHT has been instrumental in driving Chengdu's GDP growth and has significantly contributed to its employment. The focus on high-tech industries has fostered a competitive and innovative business environment, which has helped diversify the city's economic base beyond traditional sectors like agriculture and manufacturing before reform. In terms of urban planning, the development of CDHT has also enhanced infrastructure improvements and residential properties in and around Chengdu's city centre. The zone has prompted the construction of advanced transport links, including major roadways and the extension of the metro system, which further improve the overall connectivity and accessibility of the city and enhance its urban-rural integration, benefitting a broader urban area by improving urban living standards. In conclusion, the establishment of CDHT has been fundamental to Chengdu's economic expansion in the 2000s, transforming the city into a leading technology and innovation hub in western China. This development has advanced Chengdu's financial landscape and played an essential role in its urban and infrastructural development, setting a model for other Chinese cities aiming for similar modernisation and development.

4.3.2 Cultural and creative led development

Chengdu's cultural and creative led development started in the late 2000s and continued through the 2010s, and it was guided by both national directives and local initiatives. In 2011, the Sixth Plenary Session of the 17th CPC Central Committee passed the Decision on Deepening the Reform of the Cultural System and Promoting the Development and Prosperity of Socialistic Culture. According to the new aims of "realising the goal of building a moderately prosperous society" set in this Decision, any development should not only provide the people with

material living conditions but also enable people to “enjoy a healthy and rich spiritual life”. Subsequently, the following Cultural Industry Revitalisation Plan (2011) promulgated by the State Council demonstrates that China's top decision-making level has confirmed the CCI-oriented development strategy to be adopted nationwide. In response to this, In November 2011, the Sichuan Provincial Committee issued a document, Deepening the Reform of Cultural System and Accelerating the Construction of a Strong Cultural Province, which had put forward its culture-led development strategy at the provincial level as "accelerating development with culture”, “innovating development with culture”, “integrating development with culture”, “characterising development with culture” and “upgrading development with culture". In this document, the provincial government proposed promoting CCI as the pillar of industry that contributes to Sichuan’s economic development. As Chengdu is the capital city of Sichuan Province, the municipal government of Chengdu soon issued Opinions on Deepening the Reform of the Cultural System and Accelerating the Construction of a Strong Cultural City as a follow-up step to the provincial document. The Opinion states that the ultimate development goal is to transform Chengdu into the “most influential, national first-class and internationally renowned creative city in western China”.

In 2015, the *Chengdu Urban Master Plan* was promulgated in response to the *Opinions*, proposing that CCI should be integrated into urban planning to accelerate the establishment of a creative Chengdu. In the process of promoting the CCI-led development, the Chengdu Municipal Government implemented various economic policies in the master plan with a clear guiding principle of “market makes the decision, government facilitates the process” (市场决定，政府推动, *shichang judging, zhengfu tuidong*), which signifies a new development approach with the retreat of governmental interference. According to the master

plan, the government will clarify their roles and responsibilities in development, assisting the evolution of promising industries and mobilising CCI resources for future urban development through "cooperation with industries and professionals within CCI" to build Chengdu as a cultural and creative centre in western China. In August 2017, the Chengdu Municipal Party Committee and Chengdu Municipal Government released the *Action Plan for Building the Western China Cultural and Creative Centre (2017-2022)*, a detailed five-year CCI-led development plan to make Chengdu among the top-ranking creative cities at national and international level. The document also emphasised that the production of CCI development will be integrated into Chengdu's urban planning, and a CCI-led urban development was "starting up in one year, developing by leaps and bounds in three years, and completing in five years". Additionally, in terms of governance, the document emphasised the integration of local creative resources and the mobilisation of the creative resources in optimising urban governance. With government-led development, Chengdu's CCI and CCI-led urbanisation peaked in the mid-2010s. In 2018, the Chengdu Municipal Development and Reform Commission published the *White Paper on Chengdu Industry Development (2018)*. This *Paper* is seen as a more in-depth follow-up step to the 2017 published five-year development plan, announcing multiple creative spaces will be established or redeveloped in Chengdu, with the municipal government's aim of making Chengdu "a benchmark city for the development of CCI in China and an international creative city with strong economic and cultural competitiveness". According to the *Paper*, Chengdu's creative class population and creative industry consumption market would be significantly improved within five years, and a "Chengdu model" in terms of CCI-led development will become representative significance for a vast area of China where cities share economic or cultural characteristics.

4.4 From macro urban renewal to micro regeneration: policy change and governance innovations in Chengdu

4.4.1 Urban renewal for people's livelihood

People's livelihood (民生,*minsheng*)in terms of Chinese urban planning refers to how city development strategies and policies impact the quality of life for its residents; planning with consideration of people's livelihood can encompass a wide range of factors such as housing, environment, transportation system, essential services, economic opportunities, and community cohesion that contribute to the overall well-being of an urban area. Chengdu, known for its historical cultural heritage and modern technological advancements in western China, has balanced rapid urbanisation with community welfare, realising a modern image with improved living conditions, a better economic environment and a cooperative urban system.

In post-reform Chengdu, documented urban projects considering people's livelihood started with urban environment improvement and can be traced back to the 1990s, when modernisation and large-scale industrialisation brought a growing number of populations to the city. The rapid growth of urban populations and industrial development has resulted in the massive production of domestic sewage and industrial wastewater discharging into the Funan River that runs through Chengdu city, leading to blockages in the river with garbage and slit and a deterioration of the surrounding environment. In addition, with the urban infrastructure lagging behind population growth, the existing facilities in the city centre were overwhelmed, and shanty towns were densely packed along the riverbanks, resulting in poor living conditions in the city (see Figure 4.3). Between 1992 and 1997, the government of Chengdu initiated a large-scale Funan River Remediation Movement, including urban projects of flood control facilities

renovation, eco-friendly facilities upgrade, roads and pipelines improvement and housing renovation, focusing on remediation of areas where environment and people's living conditions had worsened. This government-led remediation movement changed the image of Funan River, which was known as a "stinking ditch" in the early 1990s due to the rapid industrialisation and explosive growth of the urban population in Chengdu, winning the Chengdu Municipal Government a national award for Innovation and Excellence in Chinese local Governance and international awards including UN-Habitat Scroll of Honour and Dubai International Award for Best Practices. With the continuation of the remediation movement in the late 1990s, this urban project relocated a total of around 100,000 people and constructed 24 new residential communities and 19 green parks along the river (Chengdu City Archives). The project transitioned from a demolition operation to a housing initiative, and by the early 2000s, the real estate market along the Funan River in Chengdu city had matured, and more public parks were built, marking the beginning of the city's modern riverside living (see Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.3 Funan River in 1993.

(Source: https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/184930001)

Figure 4.4 Funan River in the 2010s.

(Source: https://news.sina.com.cn/c/2018-12-02/doc-ihmutuec5479630.shtml)

With the completion of the environment-oriented Funan River Remediation Movement in the 2000s, the living conditions of residents were significantly improved, and the Chengdu Municipal Government soon turned to the improvement and upgrade of the economic and social landscape of the city centre. In Chengdu, there is a saying about the urban form in the 2000s: "The east's poor, the west's honour, the south's rich and the north's a mess". This is a common saying regarding the living standards of urban residents in the 2000s Chengdu: the "honoured western region" is where the government entities were traditionally established and based, so it was believed residents in the area were mainly government officials or civil servants working in these departments. As with the "rich southern region" covering three main districts of central Chengdu, it is where Chengdu's many famous historical and cultural heritage sites are located; therefore, the high-end real estate market matured in the 2000s with the tourism development in this area was, and still is, believed to have attracted the upper middle class to settle in. For Chengdu's urban governors, the "poor east" and the "messy north" areas were yet to be transformed. The "poor eastern region" covers the vast

industrial areas developed in the planned economy era in the eastern suburb of Chengdu; in the 1980s, with China's economic reforms deepening, the east region was packed with shut-down factories and empty industrial buildings, leading to the decline of the once busy area. The shutdown of once state-owned enterprises led to many laid-off workers in the city with poor living standards. Between the late 1990s and the early 2010s, with the continuous urban-rural integration project and industrial restructuring in Chengdu, the eastern suburb area developed quickly with a government-led urban renewal campaign, including multiple heritage-led regeneration projects (see Table 4.1).

Name	Establishment Year	Main Characteristics	Current Status
Sichuan Machinery Bureau (the preserved building)	1878	Western architectural style, representing the early modern industrial buildings in Chengdu.	Listed in the 9th batch of Chengdu's Historical Buildings. Selected in the first list as an industrial heritage site. Open to the public.
Former Address of the Air Force Oxygen Factory	1940s	Incorporates both Chinese and Western architectural elements. One of the few remaining wartime historical buildings in Chengdu.	Listed in the 9th batch of Chengdu's Historical Buildings, selected as an industrial heritage site, now used by Chengdu Zuoyuan Gas Company. Open to the Public.
Chengdu Blade Factory (the office building)	1956	Soviet architectural style, representing the industrial architecture of socialist China.	Built for industrial production use, current usage unchanged.

State-run Hongguang Electronic Tube Factory	1958	One of the largest complexes for semiconductor electronic components, produced China's first metal-ceramic tube.	Converted into East Suburb Memory Park
Chengdu Machinery Factory (the Bulb Ball Court)	1979	The ball court was where factory workers usually social with others, enjoying entertainment events such as open-air ball or cinema.	Listed in the 9th batch of Chengdu's Historical Buildings. Open to the public as museum, showcasing the lifestyle of workers in the 1960s to the 1980s
Hongming Electronics Factory (repair workshop)	1987	Specialised in manufacturing new types of electronic components.	Converted into Chengdu Industrial and Cultural Museum.

Table 4.1 Chengdu East Suburb Industrial Zone Development.

(Source: Created by the author according to the information provided by the Eastern Suburb Memory Management Committee)

As part of a larger effort to revitalise unused urban spaces in the eastern suburb of Chengdu while preserving its industrial heritage, the local government wanted to establish a public space to attract businesses and to revitalise this once lively area. In May 2009, with the coordination of the Chengdu Municipal Government and the Chenghua District Government, the Chengdu Media Group and China Mobile Communications Sichuan Co., Ltd. signed a vital cooperation contract to bring a national-level China Mobile Music Base to eastern Chengdu. In the planning stage, the local government decided to retain some of the large industrial structures at the former site of the Hongguang State-run Electronics Factory built in the 1950s (see

Figure 4.5). The development plan was to integrate these industrial structures with the fast-developing cultural and creative industries to create a new type of public space in Chengdu.

Figure 4.5 Industrial Structures of Former Hongguang Electronics Factory.

(Source: https://m.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_14717368)

Construction of the project began around the end of 2010. The constructions focused on maintaining the original industrial architecture to preserve the area's historical ambience while adapting the buildings for commercial use, and this adaptive reuse approach saved the industrial structures from demolition and maintained a link to Chengdu's industrial past. In 2012, the music-themed Eastern Suburb Memory Park (see Figure 4.6) was open to the public. It was built on the industrial sites of the large Hongguang State-run Electronics Factory and now serves as a bustling hub for the arts and entertainment. In 2015, the Eastern Suburb Memory Park Commission was established by the Chenghua District Government to coordinate CCI-oriented businesses within the park; with the government-led business planning, the Eastern Suburb Memory Park quickly developed from a music industry oriented public park to an art-oriented industrial park. Large industrial spaces such as boiler rooms were transformed into art studios and theatre

venues within the Eastern Suburb Memory Park. Smaller spaces, such as old office units, were redesigned to fit in galleries, cafés and restaurants, attracting businesses, locals and tourists. Since 2013, the Eastern Suburb Memory Park has been the main hosting venue for CCI-oriented activities and festivals in Chengdu and has delivered many national and international art collaborative projects. As a regeneration model for how a city can repurpose industrial heritage into functional and appealing urban spaces, the art-led regeneration of Chengdu's eastern suburb contributed significantly to the cultural landscape of historical and modern Chengdu in the mid-2010s.

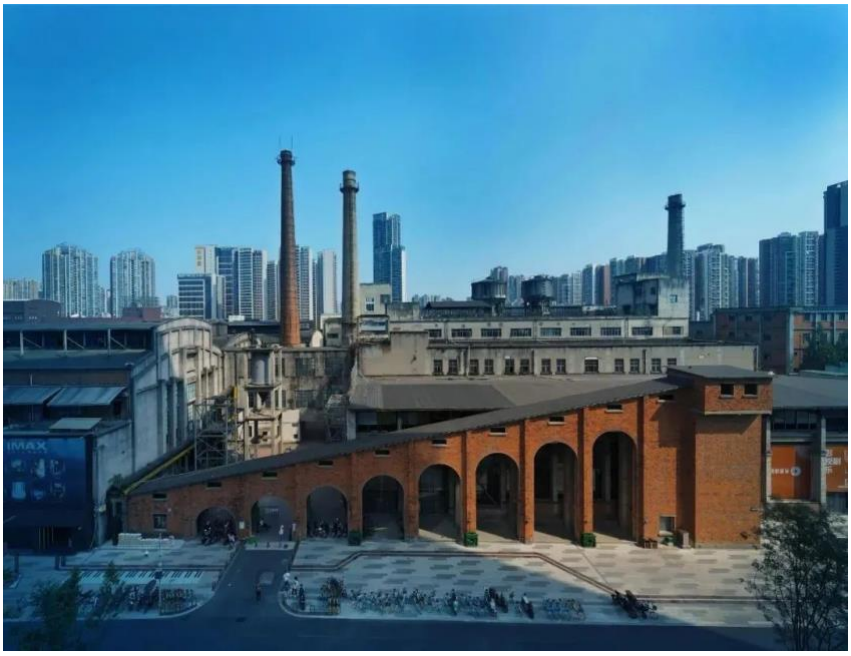

Figure 4.6 Eastern Suburb Memory Park.

(Source: https://www.chenghua.gov.cn/chqrmzfw/c137335/2020-12/15/content_a9579613f60f4e27b3597af65fc0635e.shtml)

As with the "messy north", a government-led urban renovation in northern Chengdu started following the successful east regeneration. In 2011, the municipal government of Chengdu drafted the Renovation Project for the Old Urban Form and Distribution of the Productive Forces in the Northern Area (known in short as

Renovation of the North), calling it the largest regional renewal project and the largest people's livelihood program at the time (Chengdu City Achieves). Historically, the northern region of Chengdu, covering Jinniu, Chenghua, and Xindu districts, has been a market-intensive area where small and wholesale businesses were based. From a business perspective, the municipal government regarded the business function in this area to be low-end with a simplistic industrial chain; from the perspective of urban planning, although Chengdu's oldest coach and railway stations were within this area, the urban form of the north was regarded as outdated, with a severe shortage of infrastructure and public facilities for residents and commuters. The Renovation of the North project proposed renovating and developing the northern area to another city centre of Chengdu; according to the draft, the renovations included large-scale infrastructure construction, public amenities upgrades, business structure planning, transportation system optimisation, and housing construction. In terms of policy support, in late 2011, the municipal government released the Suggestions for Advancing the Renovation of the North to guide the overall administration of the project. In this document, realising "government-led, multi-participation and voluntary participation" and experimenting with "unified policy, innovative practice" were two main principles for the renovation. With these guiding principles, a flexible administration system and loose fiscal policing were practised. In terms of policing, the municipal government increased financial support for district-level governments by allocating infrastructure construction funds to each district; at the district level, local governments encouraged private funds to participate in the renovation construction by enacting land and fiscal policies to simplify the application process and to reduce taxes. In January 2012, the then Secretary of the Chengdu Municipal Party Committee announced the launch of the five-year Renovation of the North at the Chengdu Municipal Economic Conference, and he also announced the large-scale renovation aimed to

transform northern Chengdu into a “business-friendly and, more importantly, an inhabitable place for all the people”. Until December 2017, with a total investment fund of over RMB 300 billion and over 1000 demolition and construction programs completed (Chengdu City Archives), the Renovation of the North was the largest urban renewal project in central Chengdu in the mid-2010s.

In Chinese urban planning, demolition and construction programs are usually called 拆迁 (chaiqian) programs; in the planning context, chai refers to the process of removing existing structures to make way for new development projects and qian means the relocation of the residents. A chaiqian program is often driven by government initiatives aimed at urban development and beautification, as governmental policies regarding chaiqian programs are always part of broader urban strategies to enhance residents’ living standards, improve city aesthetics, or boost economic growth. Although chaiqian is crucial in urban renewal and modernisation efforts across Chinese cities, the process can be particularly controversial regarding social and economic disruptions when it involves the displacement of residents. From a financial perspective, demolition and subsequent redevelopment often lead to increased property values, attracting investments and boosting local economies; however, this can also result in local gentrification, where original residents might be priced out of newly developed areas. This will usually lead to issues such as inadequate compensation, loss of community and heritage, and legal disputes, which cause common concerns among affected populations and, if not dealt with properly, lead to social conflicts between the residents and the government. During the five-year government-led renovation in northern Chengdu, older buildings and neighbourhoods were frequently demolished to make space for modern infrastructure, including residential complexes, commercial areas, and public amenities like parks and

schools; how to deal with chaiqian programs and the relationship with the original residents was the biggest concern of Chengdu's urban governors.

Following the guiding principle of "government-led, multiparticipant and voluntary participation" proposed in the Suggestions for Advancing the Renovation of the North by the municipal government, the district governments in the renovation project let the residents make their decision of chaiqian by putting into practice a "public signing" scheme. The "public signing" scheme will start a signing phase among the affected population, asking residents if they are willing to proceed with the program. The program will only commence if the signing rate of "yes" reaches 100%, and if it doesn't, the chaiqian program will be suspended until all "conditions" are met. In terms of the conditions, they are compensation options proposed by the district government in delivering the scheme; the scheme will offer the residents different compensation options in a potential chaiqian program in the signing phase: this can be a one-time financial compensation, where the residents take a certain amount of compensation money from the government for moving out, or the residents can choose to be relocated elsewhere temporarily and return to the original site after the renovation completes. To ensure the "public signing" scheme is delivered with fairness on all sides, the government initiated the establishment of the Autonomous Renovation Committee in different planned renovation areas, which are formed by residents' representatives. The representatives are members of different residential blocks elected through general nominations and secret ballots, realised by weeks of volunteers visiting each household in the chaiqian area and residents having mass meetings. Autonomous Renovation Committees will help facilitate public participation in the decision-making process of local renovation. Their work covers completing household surveys, proposing renovation plans, and evaluating relocation options. Specifically, they also negotiate and coordinate with the minority residents who

demand unreasonable compensation and are reluctant to move. With the implementation of the "public signing" scheme and the Autonomous Renovation Committee helping facilitate the scheme at the urban sub-district level, the Renovation of the North progressed with peaceful chaiqian programs where the community public participated in the decision-making process. In December 2014, as a reflection on the ongoing Renovation of the North project, the municipal government released the extensive Ten Action Plans for the Transformation and Upgrading of Urban Construction and Management of Chengdu for the general urban renewal in Chengdu city. In this document, there were the "Four Renovations", including shantytown renovation, urban village renovation, old residential building renovation, and old market renovation, and the "Six Managements", including air pollution management, river canal pollution management, transportation order management, urban standard decency management, illegal construction management, and environmental management (Chengdu City Achieves). The "Four Renovations" were intended to transform Chengdu's urban forms and improve residents' living standards, while the "Six Managements" aimed to improve people's quality of life. This action plan was developed from experiences in the Renovation of the North, emphasising concern for people's livelihood; it was also a comprehensive and systematic urban development instruction covering contents of Chengdu's urban space transformation, urban industrial restructuring, urban environmental protection, and urban management innovations, marking the beginning of Chengdu's urban governance reform in the mid-2010s.

4.4.2 Community regeneration and governance: urban policy change and public participation

The urban transition from centralised development to a more decentralised, participatory approach that emphasises local needs and public engagement has

significantly shaped urban governance in China. Community governance in terms of Chinese urban governance can be traced back to the introduction of the slogan "social welfare is realised by the society (社会福利社会办,shehui fuli shehui ban)" by China's Ministry of Civil Affairs in the early 1980s when a national-level community construction campaign was initiated; the campaign was significantly shaped by China's then economic reforms as traditional social management and welfare functions of the socialist era were systematically transferred to the society, with regional governmental organisations taking responsibility for implementing urban management.

In 2000, China's Ministry of Civil Affairs issued a governmental document titled Advice on Promoting Urban Community Building in the Country; this document defines a community as "the commune of the social life of people assembled within a certain geographical boundary", describing community building, or community construction, as "a process of following the Party and government's leadership, relying on community forces and strengths, mobilising community resources, intensifying community functions, solving community problems, coordinating the development of community politics, economy, culture, and environment, and enhancing community members' living standards and quality of life". With China's large-scale demolition-oriented urban renewal transitioning to a more people-centred approach in the late 1990s, community management has been increasingly seen as vital for "better urban management" by China's urban governors as a community-based management system can engage urban residents in the local decision-making, reducing government's social management burden by tailoring services and infrastructure to specific community needs while fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility among the residents. In Chinese cities, geographically, the *Community* (社区, *shequ*) in terms of urban planning typically refers to the sub-district *Street* (街道, *jiedao*) and *Residential*

Neighbourhoods (居民社区, *jumin shequ*). The Street, or *jiedao*, in Chinese urban administration divisions, is the subdivision of urban districts covering a specific area and including all Residential Neighbourhoods within this area; a *Street Office* (街道办事处, *jiedao banshichu*) serve as the lowest level of state administration in a Street area. Below the Street Office is the *Urban Residents Committee* (城市居民委员会, *chengshi jumin weiyuanhui*), which is a non-governmental but officially recognised urban management unit; the Urban Residents Committee functions under the dual leadership of local governments and residents, operating at the grassroots level to facilitate government initiatives, manage public services, and engage residents in decision-making, representing a hybrid model of state control and public participation in Chinese urban governance. The Street Office and Urban Residents Committee constitute China's urban governance system at the community level and play a crucial role in social management in Chinese cities today as the primary interface between the local government (the district government) and the public.

With the establishment of China's market economy, the Chinese government had to deal with a fast-changing society and deploy market-like instruments to achieve development objectives, meaning China's urban governance must involve non-governmental social and market actors following the notion of an entrepreneurial city. The community construction campaign in the 1980s marked a pivot from the socialist collective forms of urban governance structure to a focus on community-level autonomy and local management. Between the 1980s and the early 2000s, the social management of the Chinese government focused on the systematic construction of grassroots organisations and public service delivery in cities. In 1986, China's Ministry of Civil Affairs hosted the National Urban Community Service Forum in Wuhan city, suggesting the delivery of more and various public services in all Chinese cities; the term community, or shequ, was first introduced

in the forum regarding the urban management in post-reform China. In 1989, the Organic Law of the Urban Residents Committee of the People's Republic of China was put into effect; according to the law, an Urban Residents Committee is a mass organisation for self-government at the grassroots level where residents manage their affairs and serve their own needs, and the Urban Residents Committee shall facilitate community-level services for the convenience of residents. In 2001, with the prevailing marketisation and deepening of China's urban management system construction, the Ministry of Public Affairs carried out the Suggestions for Advancing Community Development at the National Level. The document explained that community development was led by local party committee and local government, co-led by local civil affairs authorities, and hosted by the Urban Residents Committee, emphasising the engagement of more social forces in China's community construction and urban management and pointing out the importance of public participation in the process.

Following the state-led community construction campaign in the 1980s, the government of Chengdu carried out its community construction and community governance work. It established a clear urban management framework with a three-tier management system at the municipal, district and street levels. Between the 1990s and 2000s, community construction policies in Chengdu mainly focused on establishing a community-level management system and integrating public services and social resources (see Table 4.2). This laid an institutional foundation for Chengdu's later community governance reform, in which a government-led management approach gradually progressed into a self-governance and collaborative governance strategy in the mid-2010s.

Year	Policy Document	Content
1991	Three-Year Development Plan for Community Services in Chengdu"	Initiating community services within Chengdu city
1992	Decision on Strengthening Street-Level Work Decision on Strengthening the Construction of Urban Residents' Committees	Organising the first Chengdu Urban Street Conference and discussing the work content of street-level management
1997	Decision on Strengthening Urban Management Work	Divided management of the municipal government and district governments; establishment of the three-tier urban management system in Chengdu
2005	Opinions on Coordinating Urban and Rural Economic and Social Development to Promote Urban-Rural Integration	The municipal government strengthens support and guidance for urban community construction; the municipal government holds seminars on community management system reform and carries out pilot projects
2006	Harmonious Community Standards	The district governments help establish the Community Residents' Congress and the Community Consultative Committee to strengthen the democratic management and supervision of district-level affairs; set up an information-based service system for community affairs, integrating public service resources and social service resources within the community.

Table 4.2 Key community construction and governance policies in Chengdu in the 2000s.

(Source: Created by the author)

In 2010, the Chengdu Municipal Government issued the Notice on the Pilot Scheme for Improving the Urban Community Residents' Self-Government Mechanism, marking a community governance reform in all administrative

districts of Chengdu. The document stated the divided responsibility of the municipal government, the district government and the community-level office of Chengdu; it encouraged public service purchases and provided advice for improving the community residents' capacity for self-government. The document aims to achieve a better community management mechanism that balances government administration and community self-government. In the 2010s, the Chengdu Municipal Government, Chengdu Municipal Civil Affairs Bureau and Chengdu Municipal Finance Bureau took the lead in the community governance reform, facilitating the realisation of community self-government through multiple policies that enable social organisations, social workers, and residents to be engaged in community regeneration (see Table 4.3). By the mid-2010s, Chengdu had established its community-based management system in which social organisations and residents are mobilised to participate. In December 2014, the Chengdu Municipal Government introduced the Work Programme for Transition of Chengdu Urban Development and Governance, which references people's livelihood and a "people-centred urban renewal" in future government works; to guide the transition, the Regulations of Planning and Management of Micro Administrative Area Development Strategy of Chengdu was put in place in 2015 by the municipal government. The document emphasised that the government would expand its scope of urban renewal in Chengdu. More attention will be given to the social and cultural connections between different "micro administrative areas" that constitute Chengdu's urban communities, and urban governors will start to conduct comprehensive research and innovative experiments regarding regeneration rather than renovation in these "micro areas". In September 2017, the municipal government of Chengdu officially announced at the Urban and Rural Community Development and Governance Conference that Chengdu's urban development in the next few years, as a reflection of the state's people-centred development strategy, would be community-oriented, calling it a community

micro-regeneration campaign; the campaign aimed to develop a multi-participant governance system in which social organisations and individuals would participate, and residents' quality of life in an urban community would be significantly improved.

Year	Department	Document	Content
2011	Municipal Civil Affairs Bureau	Community Social Organisation Filing Management Measures	Encouraging social organisations to directly serve residents and participate in social management.
	The Municipal Government	Plan to Accelerate the Cultivation and Development of Social Organisations	Providing policy and practical support for social organisations.
	The Municipal Government	Opinions on Establishing a System for Government Procurement of Services from Social Organisations	Establishing systems and mechanisms for government procurement of services from social organizations; setting up the Chengdu Social Organization Information Service Platform to enhance communication among government departments, social organizations, experts, scholars, and residents, facilitating inquiry and collaboration.
	The Municipal Government	Implementation Measures for Government Procurement of Services from Social Organizations	
	The Municipal Government	Guidelines for Government Procurement of Services from Social Organizations	
2012	Municipal Civil Affairs Bureau. Municipal Finance Bureau	Chengdu Urban Community Public Services and Social Management Special Funds Management Measures	Pioneering a national initiative for urban community public services and social management special funds system: allocating to each community a funding standard of no less than 3,000 RMB per

			hundred household to support community resident self-governance projects, thereby enhancing residents' participation awareness.
2013	Municipal Civil Affairs Bureau	Chengdu Urban Community Residents' Council Organisational Rules (Trial Implementation)	Standardising the formation and responsibilities of community-level party organisations, residents' committees, and councils, and improving urban community governance mechanisms.
	The Municipal Government. Municipal Civil Affairs Bureau	Mutual Aid Mechanism among Communities, Social Organisations, and Social Work.	At the community level, leveraging social organisations and professional social workers to support social collaboration and promote public participation in social management.
2015	Municipal Civil Affairs Bureau	Notice from the Civil Affairs Bureau on Strengthening the Construction of Autonomous Organisations in Old Courtyards.	With "empower the community" as the core of the work, promoting the construction of urban residents' self-governance mechanisms and strengthen democratic consultation system among residents.

Table 4.3 Key policies for developing community management system in the 2010s.

(Source: Created by the author)

The Chengdu Municipal Community Governance Committee (CMCGC) was established at the municipal level following the conference to facilitate the community micro-regeneration. According to information provided on its official website, CMCGC organises, advises and coordinates in servicing and governance of different communities and some rural areas of Chengdu; it is responsible for setting and overseeing medium-term and long-term goals in Chengdu's community development, and it helps enhance urban policy by conducting empirical studies and theoretical research in the community micro-regeneration. More importantly, CMCGC will function in coordinating between different public sectors to reinforce public service construction and community building, by which it will ultimately improve the mechanism to manage material, financial, and social resources as a whole and respond to the call of pluralistic governance in China's people-centred development strategy at the national level. At the district level, the District Community Governance Committees (DCGCs) are established and managed by the district governments of Chengdu. The role of each DCGC is to implement the policies and complete assigned work from the CMCGC. Compared with the CMCGC, DCGCs will carry on more specific tasks in community regeneration as each committee will work out development and governance agendas with subdistrict-level administration agencies. With the deepening of the community-oriented regeneration strategy in Chengdu's urban development, in 2019, CMCGC released the Notice to Carry Out the Community Micro-regeneration Campaign. By reviewing Chengdu's urban development policies in the past few years, the document officially puts forward the concept of Chengdu's community micro-regeneration as a "comprehensive bottom-up renewal approach" practised at an urban community level to improve people's livelihoods. It is fundamentally a continuation of the past urban renovations but focuses more on community development and governance (see Table 4.4).

Phase	Year	Policy titles
Phase 1 : Targeted Urban Renovation	2014	Chengdu Urban Construction and Management Transformation and Upgrade 'Four Reforms and Six Managements' Ten Major Actions Special Work Plan
	2014	Opinions of the General Office of the Chengdu Municipal People's Government on Further Advancing the Renovation of Shantytowns in Five Urban Districts
	2015	Special Work Plan for the Renovation of Old Courtyards in the Central Urban District of Chengdu
	2015	Key Work on the Renovation of Old Courtyards in Chengdu for the Year 2015
	2015	Chengdu Civil Affairs Bureau's Guidelines on Strengthening the Construction of Autonomous Organizations in Old Courtyards
	2015	Opinions of the General Office of Chengdu Municipal People's Government on Further Accelerating the Development of Urban Villages in Five Urban Districts
	2015	Chengdu 2015-2017 Shantytown Renovation Plan
	2016	Chengdu 2018-2020 Shantytown Renovation Plan
Phase 2 : Comprehensive Community Governance	2017	Opinions on Deeply Promoting the Development and Governance of Urban and Rural Communities to Build High-Quality, Harmonious, and Liveable Residential Communities
	2017	Chengdu Community Development and Governance 'Five Actions' Three-Year Plan
	2019	"Community Micro-Renovation" Special Action
	2019	Key Points of Urban and Rural Community Development and Governance Work in Chengdu for 2019

Table 4.4 Policy change regarding urban governance in the mid-2010s

Works of a community micro-regeneration include the renovation of old residential buildings and other idle public spaces within a community area; the aim is to create urban landscapes that are characterised by local history and cultures, and the planning should be guided by the demands of community residents and the governance be accomplished with the participation of residents. In December 2019,

the municipal government and CMCGC jointly released the General Planning of Chengdu's Urban-Rural Community Development and Governance (2018-2035) and the government document is regarded as a master plan to "mobilise multi-participation and public participation in planning and governance and to enhance the city's liveability and cultural landscape" in the community regeneration campaign. This document emphasised the realisation of multi-participation in regeneration by introducing a community planner system, which was an innovative approach designed to enhance the planning and development of urban and rural areas. In 2018, following the municipal government's decision to initiate a comprehensive community micro-regeneration campaign and to strengthen community governance, CMCGC released the Guiding Opinions on Exploring the Establishment of Urban and Rural Community Planner System to "bridge the gap between professional urban planning and local community needs"; by introducing dedicated community planners who focus on the unique characteristics and requirements of individual communities, the system serves as a strategic framework for integrating community input into the planning process, not only enhancing the quality of urban (and rural) planning but also promoting community engagement and empowerment. In this guiding document, CMCGC specifies two types of community planners: the internal community planner and the external community planner. Internal community planners are "local planners" from local community members, including Urban Residents Committee members, active residents and local volunteers; these individuals will be intensively trained under the mentorship of professional planners and eventually form a local planning team contributing to the development and governance of the community. External community planners are professionals recruited by the district government or the street office; they are hired publicly from specialised institutions such as enterprises, social organisations, associations, design institutes, and higher education institutions to meet community needs.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined Chengdu's development and urbanisation after China's economic reform period as related to urban planning and governance. The chapter points out that urbanisation in Chengdu is essentially a top-down process that is accompanied by changes in local development policy. In the last section of this chapter, I examined the urban renewal strategies of Chengdu in the past two decades and found the emergence of bottom-up dynamics in the 2010s with local authorities' experiments with new governance initiatives. I also illustrated how Chengdu's local government adjusted its urban renewal with a community-oriented regeneration strategy and systematic policy-led urban governance reform and how these relate to discourses of public participation.

In the mid-2010s, the Chengdu Municipal Government initiated the community micro-regeneration, with its urban governance strategy progressing to a participatory and collaborative approach; the micro-regeneration campaign aims to mobilise social capital in urban development to achieve self-government at the urban community level. In the following discussion chapter, I will examine the roles of arts, the art industry and the creative community in Chengdu's urban planning and governance throughout the past two decades: I will explore the early artist clustering and art space institutionalisation in policy-led urbanising Chengdu in the 2000s, looking at the trust-building process between the artist community and local authorities in one particular institutionalised art space, Blue Roof Art District; by looking at the agenda and functions of various stakeholders, I will then turn to examine the collaborative relationship between the creative community and local government in Chengdu's community micro-regeneration, with a focus on the art-led community micro-regeneration in the mid-2010s.

CHAPTER 5

URBANISATION AND THE RISE OF THE ARTIST COMMUNITY

5.1 Introduction

Artists are valuable resources in the process of shaping a place. Zukin (2011) describes this as involving the migration of artist communities, the construction of local knowledge, and the creation of distinctive visual artistic characteristics. As a result, the renown of art spaces gradually increases in contemporary urban planning. The reshaping of localities by art scenes and art workers positions them as intermediaries for capital and power in local production in Chinese cities. Consequently, attracting art and creative workers has become a clear objective in today's government policy-making. What was once on the periphery of urban policy platforms, arts-related policy has become central to today's many urban development strategies. This chapter tells the story of the rise of an institutionalised art space called the Blue Roof Art District in Chengdu's urban suburb in the 2000s. It examines the legitimacy and institutionalisation process of local artist clustering by investigating the contracting behaviours between the local government and the artist community, and I argue in this chapter that trust and partnership are formed between the government and the elite artist community in dynamic policy narratives

The rest of the chapter is divided into three sections. Section 5.2 introduces the emergence of non-institutionalised art spaces in Chengdu in the post-reform era. It presents the first organic artist clustering in Chengdu's urban suburbs in the early 2000s and how some artists and art professionals started in an organic art village to become a legitimated artist community by contracting with the local government

in Chengdu's urban-rural integration context in the period. The legitimation of the institutionalised Blue Roof Art District signifies that the change of policy and political leadership at the local level can have a significant impact on the development of urban space. Section 5.3 is a reflection on the development model of the Blue Roof Art District, and it points out that, to achieve stable development, the artist community is willing to form a partnership with the government by utilising their professionalism. Section 5.4 is a conclusion to the chapter.

5.2 The emergence of art spaces in urbanising Chengdu

5.2.1 The rise of the artist community

The development history of urban art districts in China has been closely intertwined with the development of contemporary art in China. When reviewing the art industry development history of this country, during the 1980s and 1990s, it is evident that the major development of artist communities did not originate primarily from traditional or institutional art organisations such as art academies and art institutes. Instead, art clustering emerged predominantly from various remote villages located on the outskirts of cities as "artist villages" or "painters' villages". Many contemporary artists, faced with societal pressures and economic constraints, choose to leave the urban city centres and migrate to suburban villages, abandoned factories, and other marginalised areas for their artistic creation. As a marginalised group within the urban structure, early contemporary artists in China were considered weak, non-mainstream, and heterogeneous compared to traditional artists within the system. These artists were viewed as peculiar individuals deviating from the mainstream urban lifestyle. Constrained by institutional restrictions and facing public criticism from the mainstream urban space, these unconventional artists occupied a lower position within the urban

resident hierarchy and were compelled to relocate to the outskirts of the city. Consequently, their freedom of expression was highly confined.

In the Chinese context, the contemporary artist community, a community with self-governance characteristics, has become the shelter place for avant-garde artists to share art ideology and get united to protest against the commodification of their space (Wang, 2016). This independent artist community is also known as an "alternative community" (Terroni, 2011), originated in New York in 1960s-1970s when contemporary art gained a prosperity, and when the art world was calling for independence and self-consciousness. Artists in groups is the early form of the non-governmental organisation (NGO) in Chinese society. The independence in the self-governance community refers to the artist community in a certain urban space having a relatively independent management and decision-making system; it can be beyond the framework of a traditional political system. More importantly, such communities do not need to respond to instructions of "political correctness" as general government institutions do; on the contrary, independence is precisely aimed at making artists not have political responsiveness (Liu, 2017).

In history, this form of art NGOs in the cultural industry can be traced back to the 1970s, the late period of China's Great Cultural Revolution; under a high-pressure political atmosphere, Chinese artists organised "secret" art exhibitions and gatherings in private places like their own apartments, sharing art creations that were not in line with the mainstream aesthetics at that time (Wu, 2014). In 1970s China, the governments seemed to be very cautious about any form of activity by non-official group gatherings with strictly enforcing regulations; apart from the contemporary art itself being opposite to the Chinese government's political ideology, the emphasis on "independence" and "self-governance" in the concept of NGO has put such artist groups in margination. In fact, due to China's distinct socialist political system, there were no typical NGOs of conventional definition

in mainland China before the late 1990s. On September 24, 2002, the Ministry of Finance of the People's Republic of China issued the Accounting System for Nongovernmental Non-profit Organisations (Draft for Comments), which regulates mainly the accounting of non-governmental non-profit organisations. The draft for comments points out that non-governmental organisations in China, including any social organisations, foundations, and non-governmental non-enterprise units, are different from normal and commercial public institutions. From the perspective of legal form, any artist group in China is regarded as an officially approved NGO; this can also be understood as a follow-up policy, in the context of general decentralisation in Chinese economic and cultural reforms since the 70s, to offer communities and social organisations more responsibilities, in the ultimate aim of government spreading the burden of tackling social problems, particularly in the transition period.

In the case of Chengdu, organic artist clustering took place as early as the late 1990s, when China was experiencing an extensive economic reform. Like any other artist clustering in Chinese cities, Chengdu's organic art districts emerged in the urban suburban areas or city margins. In 2002, a few artists and professionals from the School of Oil Painting at Sichuan University started seeking places remote from the city centre for their art creations. In the summer of the year, one of the art professors cycled to the boulevard near a village, where the art professor found several unused self-built houses owned by local farmers. The village was called Gaodi village, located within the governance area of Sansheng township under the Shuangliu district of Chengdu. After a few communications, the art professor was satisfied with the village's natural surroundings and the relatively low rent price (2.5 RMB Yuan per square metre per month) offered by the farmer, which made Gaodi village an ideal place for art creation and living. The art professor rented the houses from the farmer, moved in, and soon set up several

studios for art student supervision. After this, some of the art professor's colleagues also came to the village to rent farmers' unused houses, quickly bringing more art students to visit and live around the area. Gaodi village became the first artist clustering district recognised in Chengdu's art circle. As many of the artist residents were art professors at Sichuan University, academic institutions such as China-US Art Exchange Studio, the School of Art Postgraduate Workstation of Sichuan University and the Student Art Library were later established in Gaodi. The clustering of art professionals, independent artists and art students made Gaodi village the most attractive and diverse "art utopia" in 1990s Chengdu. As one artist who lived in Gaodi had put it:

"There is no specific planning or organisation there, and artists who wanted to come in can generally do so without any prerequisite. We did not have unified responsibilities, and incoming artists just needed to sign rental agreements with the farmers themselves."

-interview June. 2018

The relationship between the artist community and villagers was, according to my interviewee, harmonious. On the one hand, artists rented houses from farmers, providing them with economic security; on the other hand, farmers felt proud and honoured by the artist's residency, which offered some "cultural and emotional support" (interview 2018). Villagers believed that the presence of artists enhanced the local cultural atmosphere; they sent their children to attend some free classes or workshops organised by the artist community, hoping to cultivate their artistic literacy from an early age. Moreover, the daily activities of the artist community did not disturb farming works; instead, the various art exhibitions and lectures brought them "surprises" and enriched the otherwise plain daily lives of the farmers. Thus, villagers actively supported the development of the Gaodi art

village; for example, they would hand over mud walls to artists for art creation use and spontaneously kept the village quiet and clean.

However, the prosperity of the arts in the village did not make Gaodi a developed art district. Although the local town government and village officials claimed support for the residency of the artist community, supportive policies were only limited to things such as water, electricity and gas supplies. The main reason is that this artist clustering was remote and small in scale, having almost no economic impact or promotional effect on the development of Gaodi village or Sansheng township. Naturally, village officials and the Sansheng town government were reluctant to intervene or provide more support, and it certainly did not attract the attention of the Shuangliu district government or the municipal government of Chengdu.

"We occasionally received policy support from the town and village governments, but it always came to nothing. The main reason was our small scale, unable to bring industrial benefits, unlike those top art districts with significant government support."

-interview June 2018

Because the artist community's studio houses were all rented from local farmers, the property rights remained in the hands of the farmers. As an organic artist clustering village, or an non-institutionalised art space, the lack of official regulations on rent increases in the village also caused conflicts between the artist community and local farmers a few years later. The development of Gaodi Art Village was an unstable development model without institutional guarantees. Many who had lived there believed the rise of Gaodi was spontaneous and just by chance, and the fall of the "art utopia" was only inevitable. Many art residents

ended their tenancy at those farmer houses in Gaodi village and started to seek new settling places.

"Gaodi was only suitable for small-scale or short-term development. Every artist directly rented houses from farmers. Artists did not form a well-organised group, and we did not ask government departments for support. Every artist operated independently, without any administrative hierarchy. The discursive way of doing things made it difficult for the Gaodi village to form a scale effect."

-interview June 2018

Historically, the southern suburb of Chengdu was the home to many manufacturers built in China's planned economy era in the 1950s and 1970s; with the economic reform taking the lead in China's development plan in the 1990s, accomplishing industrial transformation became the main task of governments at all levels. As early as 1996, some district governments of southern Chengdu had established their own Leading Office for Non-state-operated Economics to help facilitate the dissolution of those state-run factories and the transformation of local industries. Most manufacturers were dismissed during the period, and many factory buildings were abandoned. This has resulted in a few workplaces in the southern suburbs available to the "art bohemians" of Chengdu. In 2004, four independent artists from Gaodi found a set of abandoned warehouses near the village; after they understood the fact that these were no longer in use, they rented the warehouses from local individuals who managed the properties and moved their art studios from Gaodi village to the warehouse area. In a few months, many other artists, including some Sichuan Fine Art Academy art professionals, followed their art friends to move into these almost "rent-free" workplaces, where they resumed art creation and student supervision. The enlarged artist group in this warehouse area was named the Blue Roof Artist Community, as the warehouses they lived or

worked in were all covered with giant blue iron sheets. This artist clustering area, which was near Gaodi and still in the governance area of Sansheng township in Shuangliu district, was known in Chengdu's art circle as Blue Roof Art District. However, the humid climates of Chengdu constantly damaged warehouse studios set at lower grounds, and lousy drainage systems around this area could not help with drowning rains. Thus, flooding constantly destroyed artists' paintings. The situation was worsened by air and water pollution from nearby furniture factories relocated from the city centre to the urban remotes.

"The Blue Roof was initially located by the airport road. With the expansion of the airport area, the rent increased. Artists could not afford the high rent, and also, at that time, the factory owner rented some spaces to a few furniture factories, which caused a lot of disturbance to the art district. Many artists could not bear it and moved away."

-interview 2018

According to the interviews with artists who had lived and worked around the original Blue Roof Art District, many think the urbanisation and tourism development initiated in Sansheng township in 2003 was the timely problem-solving offered to the Blue Roof Community, who had been facing a living conditions crisis.

In 2003, the central government of China drafted an experimental Urban-Rural Integration Project in the southern part of Chengdu. This urban master plan included vital development tasks, including airport ring road expansion and industrial transformation in Chengdu's south region. Shuangliu district, the largest administrative district in southern Chengdu (Figure 5.2), was the development ground.

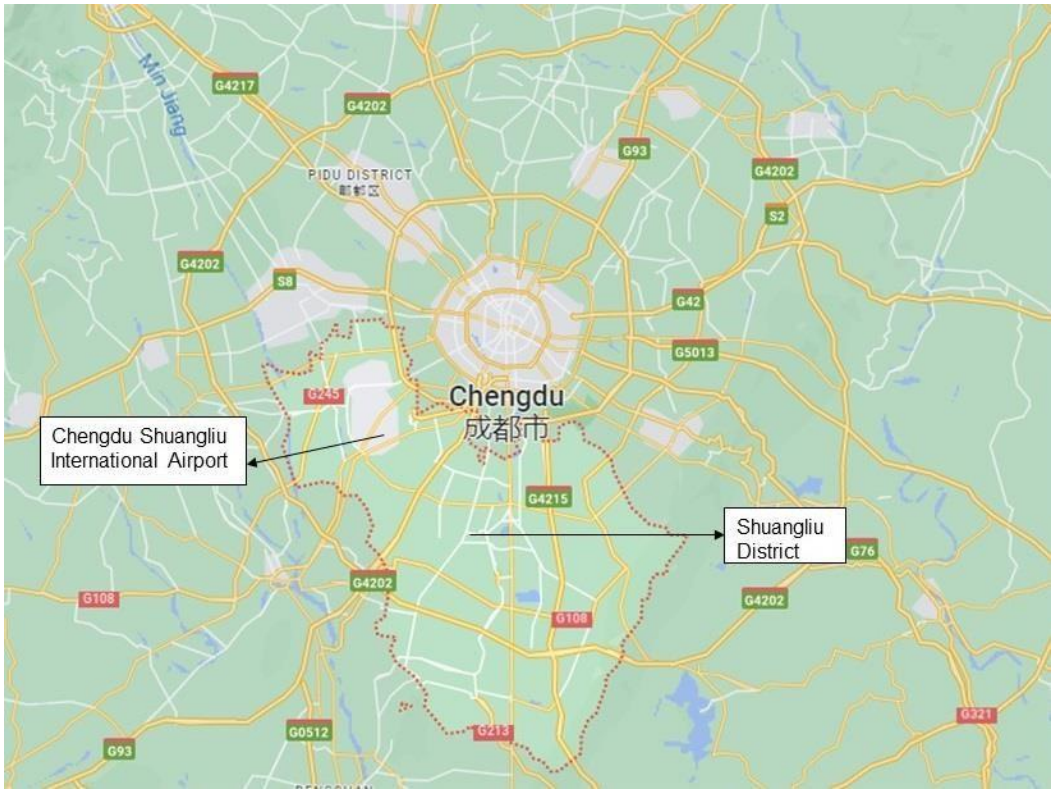

Figure 5.1 Location of Shuangliu district in Chengdu

In 2004, the Chengdu Municipal Government selected Sansheng township, one of the subordinate administrative areas of Shuangliu with large undeveloped rural areas, as the experiment township for the upcoming Urban-Rural Integration Plan. The town government, following the fundamental development aim of the project, which was to "modernise undeveloped rural areas with local resources", proposed to develop the Sansheng township area into a Class 4A National Scenic Area. This was a ten-year tourism-oriented development ambition that the then Chengdu municipal and Shuangliu district governments wanted to achieve, according to the Sansheng Township Tourism Development Master Plan (2006-2015). In November 2005, the municipal planning conference passed the planning of a contemporary art space within the Sansheng Scenic Area: with a total investment fund of 250 million RMB Yuan from the Chengdu Municipal Government, the Shuangliu District Government and Sansheng Township Government would

complete the construction of studios (with land property right and leasehold), an art centre, and a public art exhibition area in the scenic area; the development vision, as had been stated in the Sansheng Township Tourism Development Master Plan (2006-2015), was to "characterise the Sansheng Scenic Area with local cultural and creative connotation". From a policy view, this art-oriented development strategy is part of the Shuangliu district and Sansheng township governments' efforts to comply with the national and municipal Urban-Rural Integration Plan.

5.2.2 Contracting between the government and the artist community

Since 2004, the Sansheng Scenic Area has been developing with an investment fund of 18 million RMB Yuan from the municipal government and 9.7 million RMB Yuan from the Sansheng Township government, becoming a key tourist destination in Chengdu. To be nominated as a National Class 4A Scenic Area with cultural connotations, the Sansheng Township Government identified the development of artistic and creative industries as a crucial focus and wanted to transform Sansheng township into the art base of Chengdu. According to the interview with one of the leading artists from the Blue Roof Community, the urban-rural integration and tourism development accelerated the establishment of the art space in Sansheng township, but more importantly, the then municipal political leader's personal preference for arts had significantly influenced the decision of planning an art area in the Sansheng Scenic Area.

> *"Chengdu's rural-urban integration plan brought many opportunities to people living in the urban remotes; for the artist community, we met some officials who could make big decisions in the process, and most fortunately, the leader was someone also interested in what we do at that time."*

-interview Jan. 2021

In 2005, three art quarters located in the vast Sansheng Scenic Area were planned (see Figure 5.3), composed of 24 painters' studios and various exhibition and event venues, and the government decided to invite the Blue Roof Community to this planned art quarter.

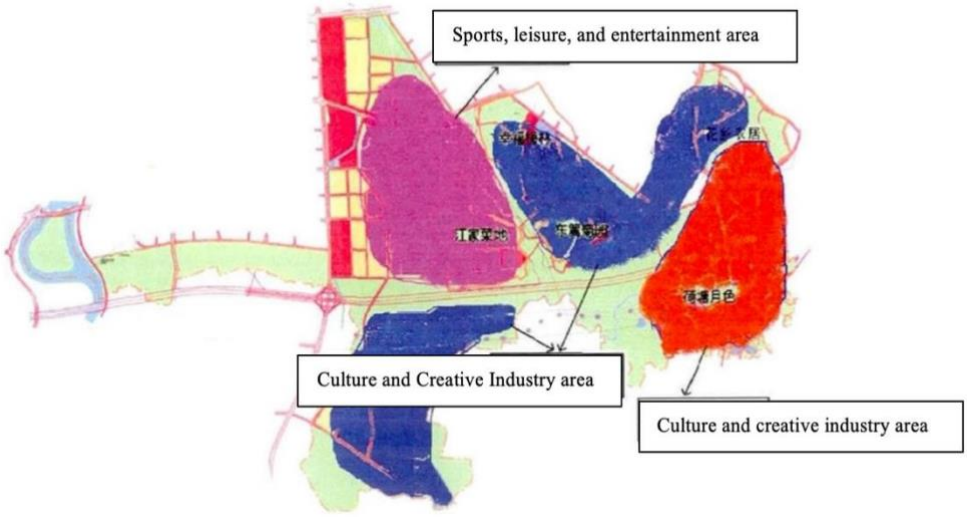

Figure 5.2 Tourism development plan of Sansheng Scenic Area.

(Source: Jinjiang and Shuangliu Planning Map)

In 2004, some leading artists, including those who first came to settle in the warehouses in the Blue Roof area, had jointly established an organised artist society and an artists-run company that mainly focused on art businesses within and outside the Blue Roof Community. Officials from the Shuangliu District Government approached the leading artists in 2005 to discuss planning art spaces in Sansheng township. A detailed plan regarding the artist community's relocation was generously proposed to these artists; the message was that the relocation agreement had been granted by the municipal government of Chengdu (interview 2021). At the time, with China's deepening of national-scale cultural industry promotion and land reform, Chengdu, as one of the earliest experiment sites for

the Urban-Rural Integration Plan, the local government was more flexible on land use distribution policing: the local government could administrate a large amount of spare land for agricultural and non-agricultural use with the introduction of the Chinese Land Circulation Policy (土地流转制度 tudi liuzhuan zhidu, see State Council, 1999; see also Xu, 2002; Ho & Lin, 2003; Ling, 2014; Lu, 2017), which essentially means the price of land for cultural use was relatively low. In November 2006, the leading artists together signed an agreement contract with the government. The agreement specified that the government would allocate more than one-third of the land in the scenic area for cultural use at a preferential price, and the government would develop three designated art quarters for the artist community with infrastructures including art centres and spare lands for art industry development use. The artists would pay the construction costs of some artist studios and the annual land rent according to a separate lease agreement. In May 2007, under the guidance of the Shuangliu District Government, the construction work of the planned art quarters within the Sansheng Scenic Area, known as the New Blue Roof, began. The government developed the first development phase, with a total of 24 property right studio complexes (Figure 5.4) for artists.

Figure 5.3 Artists' studios in the scenic area

Source: Picture provided by the interviewee

Geographically, the studio area within the Sansheng Scenic Area lies on the Shuangliu district, Longquanyi district and Jinjiang district borders; in consequence, the relatively nuanced construction regulations caused some governance confusion within the planned art quarter, but that also left artists with wiggle room in their use of the complexes and nearby spare lands.

"The government invited the Blue Roof Art District artists to come over. However, the studios would have to be built based on the needs of the artists, for example, whether the building height was satisfactory. The construction by the government could not fully meet artists' requirements. At that time, some unused lands within Longquan district, Shuangliu district, and Xinjin district were relatively underdeveloped and thus unregulated… the government allocated the entire piece of land to the Blue Roof Community, allowing them to build studios according to their own needs."

-interview Jan. 2021

Before the construction began, these district governments came to an agreement to allow artists settling in this area to have some flexibility in exterior renovation and more freedom in interior design. However, extra costs caused by the alternative construction would be at the artist's expense. Financially, at the district level, the Jinjiang District Government and Shuangliu District Government set up a special art industry fund called the High-level Talents Special Fund; this fund was established with the development asset from the municipal government that had been allocated to the southern district governments to accomplish the urban-rural integration project. At the local level, the fund was allocated to individuals

or artist groups to help them set up studios or establish research centres in the New Blue Roof area. In 2007, most art professionals and established artists based in Gaodi village or the old Blue Roof art district started moving into studios within the Sansheng Scenic Area. In 2009, the leading artist who had founded the Blue Roof Community and led the relocation program signed another cooperation contract with the Shuangliu District Government on behalf of other Blue Roof Community members. This contract clarified that a Blue Roof Creative Enterprise, which would be co-founded by several elite artists and art professors from the original Blue Roof Community, would be responsible for a second phase of artist studio development within the New Blue Roof area; moreover, the project would be financially invested by the artists-run enterprise and partially funded by the district government (interview Jan. 2021).

During a short pilot field research in 2018, I visited the Blue Roof Art District and asked for several independent artists' thoughts on the development of New Blue Roof in the 2000s; all believed the way the government initiated the co-development of the property right studios for the artist community distinguished the New Blue Roof from any other institutionalised art spaces in China.

"People usually regard the New Blue Roof Art District as the 798 Art District of Chengdu; we know they are different."

-interview Sep. 2018

To the artist community, the government-backed Blue Roof development differs from the market-oriented developments in cities like Beijing and Shanghai. Despite establishing the New Blue Roof art space within a tourism development project, the art quarter development in the project was purely for the artist community's good. National-level development plans and land policies in the

transitional period accomplished the development of the New Blue Roof. Still, more importantly, the political leader's preference for the art industry accelerated the establishment. Apart from these complimentary comments, it is also notable that those property rights studios were mainly owned and used by established or elite artists who could afford them. In 2021, I had a remote interview with the director of the Blue Roof Creative Enterprise; according to the director, intending to support younger art generations in the Blue Roof Community, the artists who founded the Blue Roof Creative Enterprise jointly proposed to the Shuangliu District Government that they were willing to develop some built-to-let studios utilising refurbishing unused farmhouses, making use of the contract-documented spare lands around the New Blue Roof.

> *"We were allowed to build our property right studios in the New Blue Roof area. The Shuangliu District Government offered the lands at a discounted price…the government wanted a bigger art scene… the continuation of construction started in 2011. With financial help from the government, the construction work proceeded so quickly that in late 2012, it was completed…"*
>
> *-interview Jan. 2021*

"The youth art village site was originally planned as a resettlement housing area for the farmers from Miaoshan village who the government relocated. However, some of the farmers had houses in other places and did not need to live here, so they rented the houses to young artists. Later, the Blue Roof company became the lease-holder of the whole undeveloped area; it was rented from the government as a whole."

-interview 2021

In 2012, these studios built by the Blue Roof Creative Enterprise were rented out to young artists and art students who wanted to settle in following their “artist icons” or their art supervisors who are living or working there. The new development phase in the broader Sansheng Scenic Area, with refurbished farmhouses and some newly built houses, is called the Blue Roof Youth Artist Village (Figure 5.5).

Figure 5.4 Opening of the Blue Roof Youth Artist Village.

(Source: Picture provided by the interviewee)

Studios in Youth Artist Village were popular with not only young artists but also small-scale art-related businesses (mostly design studios) that wanted to settle in the tourism area, so the district and township government agreed to let Blue Roof Creative Enterprise expand their development. The expansion development of the Young Artist Village officially started in July 2014 and was completed in 2016. According to the director of Blue Roof Creative Enterprise, with government-

backed policies, the idea was to develop a diverse local art circle in the Blue Roof Art District so that artists could further develop businesses on the market. The expansion development in 2011, although led by the government, was completed and managed mainly by the property development and management company under the artists-founded Blue Roof Creative Enterprise. According to my 2018 and 2021 interviews with people who had been living or working in the Blue Roof Art District, the comments are mostly positive toward the Blue Roof development, pointing out the significance of urban policing in the transitional period.

"The Blue Roof Art District in Shuangliu district previously housed some factories. In July 2011, the municipal government relocated the local enterprises to the Longquanyi district, where they were planning some industrial restructuring, leaving the empty factory buildings to be converted into studios."

-interview 2018

The Blue Roof Art District's phase 2 and phase 3 development was mainly within the Shuangliu district. The Shuangliu district has been classified under the new Tianfu High-tech Zone. This means that in the future, it will be directly managed by the Chengdu Municipal Government, giving us more administrative (policy) advantages.

-interview 2021

The establishment of the Blue Roof Art Base is the result of the combined efforts of the government, local farmers, and, of course, the artist community, achieving a win-win situation for each side. For the government, Blue Roof Art District promoted local tourism with art scenes, which created an open and creative city

image; for the farmers, house rent increased their income, and the development of scenic areas improved the living conditions. Notably, the establishment of 80 property-rights studios provided to the artist community means artists have secured property rights, and the "urban bohemians" eventually found their place in urbanising Chengdu, settling in as an institutionalised art community.

"As an organic artistic clustering, without legal, institutional, or financial guarantees, it is very difficult to survive... The art district should be developed following a model like the development of a scenic area. The art district should be integrated with the market, attracting crowds of artists, bringing in art training stimulating consumption in the surrounding area, and driving regional economic development. This can also attract government attention, especially regarding land and financial support. However, it should also maintain a certain distance from the government. This distance allows the art district to develop, having its own ideas and directions and enabling artistic creation without completely turning into a commercial tourism space."

-interview Jan 2018

5.3 Reflections of the "Blue Roof Model"

Looking at art space development in China in the 2000s, institutionalisations of urban art districts were all government-led, following the national CCI-oriented development strategy. In Blue Roof's case, local authorities still played the ultimately influential role in planning concerning flexible land policies and preferable development plans. Although most, if not all, Chinese art space developments are government-led, there is still some substantial difference

between the institutionalisation of the Blue Roof Art District in Chengdu and the typical entrepreneurial "798 model" practised in other places.

"We are proud of the development of Blue Roof because it is a one-of-a-kind art space development. It may have been a matter of timing and chance, but without the policing support of the government and the support of local people at that time, Blue Roof would not be here. Unlike the well-known 798 model, the Blue Roof model is unique."

-interview 2018

The 798 Art District in Beijing was developed by a private property development company that is a division of a once state-owned enterprise, meaning the parent enterprise, although transformed into several private brand companies during China's economic reform, still held a robust economic relationship with the government. In Blue Roof's case, however, the enterprise, founded by an elite artist group, had acted as the art space "developer" and the "manager", so, economically, it is much more independent from the government.

Also, the nexus between the artist community and local political power had been essential in the "Blue Roof development model". Artists and art professionals have come to the position of crucial actors in urban transformation. Still, any negotiation about art space planning and development only happened between the government and an elite artist group, and the group of less mature artists and other members are not at all participatory in the process.

Policy changes in China can significantly impact any development at a local level. In 2014, the State Council of China announced the establishment of a new massive national-level economic development area, Tianfu New District in Chengdu, covering a majority of Shuangliu district and some other administrative districts in

the southern city; the following year, Shuangliu district went through a significant institutional restructure and political leaders change. Since 2016, the Sansheng Scenic Area and New Blue Roof Art District have been under the sole governance of the Jinjiang District Government due to these urban plans and institutional changes. In my remote interview with the art director of Blue Roof Art Centre in 2021, who has some personal connection with local authorities of Jinjiang district (Jan. 2021), the interviewee believes that the art industry in New Blue Roof Art District would not be further developed as some five-year or ten-year development plans to promote the tourism industry and technology industry in the vast Tianfu New District are coming out.

As has been discussed in previous chapters, in the context of China, changes in political agendas can influence local development to a large extent; it is common that a once prosperous urban development project could suddenly be left out. In the case of art space, such changes will bring instability to the artist community in an institutionalised space, resulting in instabilities in their relationship with local authorities. To the elite artist community who needs to maintain their relationship with the government to keep up with the top-down development decision, the only exit seems to be seeking opportunities to take part in other government-backed projects in which their talents and professionalism are valued, and their previous connections with the government can be mobilised. The goal is to rebuild a "long-term collaborative relationship" with the government (interview Jan. 2021), and in this way, they may be able to find their place in the urban system of fast-developing China.

5.4 Conclusion

In post-reform China, state control over artistic production has notably diminished (Kraus, 2004). Nonetheless, with the advent of art industry discourse, the state has

shown renewed interest in promoting and leveraging these industries while reestablishing its authority over urban production. My investigation of the Blue Roof Art District examines the methods by which local authorities still play a crucial role in facilitating urban space production but have lessened their control in the development process. I propose that the conversion of former artist villages into official art districts initiates a process of art-oriented urbanisation on the city's outskirts. This transformation, driven by art-focused development, is guided by multiple levels of local government. The regional state has instituted control over land-use modifications and the monitoring of artists to reestablish an inclusive and more flexible governance strategy. Although the case of Blue Roof Art District cannot be duplicated in other art space productions due to the distinctive policy and political narratives and the elitism in the community itself, it is worth noting that the artist community as a whole has become an unignoring social actor in China's urban planning and governance. Deep down, the state-society relationship is undergoing a transformation, marked by the dissolution of China's traditional "big government, small society" dynamic. It is increasingly shaped by new urban governance strategies that profess to value the empowerment and autonomy of civil society.

In the next chapter, I will bring another art-led urban project in Chengdu to address the arguments I made further. By exploring Chengdu's community-oriented urbanisation under a macro CCI-led development strategy in the second decade of 2000s, I will examine the roles and functions of the broader artist community participating in Chengdu's urban governance.

CHAPTER 6

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP IN CHENGDU'S ART-LED REGENERATION

6.1 Introduction

With the economic reform since the 1990s, the notion of the entrepreneurial city oriented by market-led development was deepened in China's urbanisation and governance in the first decade of the 2000s. As the country's development gradually progressed into a people-centred and community-oriented approach (see Chapter 4), the nexus of government-society at a local level became central to today's Chinese urban governance discussions. Additionally, the proliferation of CCI-led urban development strategies in China has directed the narrow realm of art spaces towards broader multidisciplinary urban studies. The Chengdu Municipal Government's urban development ambition with regards to CCI in the 2010s was the "marketisation of local creative resources" to strengthen the creative community (interview Mar. 2021) so that they can realise participation of creativeness in the urban redevelopment, hoping they can motivate broader public participation to achieve better governance at the local level. In Chapter 5, I examined the legitimacy of Chengdu's artist community and the government-backed establishment of the reputable art space New Blue Roof Art District. I have argued that the artist community can play a vital role in China's urban space production. Still, it remains unclear to what extent their participation is reproduced in the process. Social capital, according to Field (2003), suggests that the nature and quality of interpersonal relationships, including trust and reciprocity, can be developed by the government as part of a process of governance. To address this, I further argue that the local government's deployment activity of engaging the

creative community in urban planning was part of a tactic in which the nurture of social capital was conceived as a foundation for collaborative governance.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into five parts. Section 6.2 examines the participatory community micro-regeneration in Chengdu and the relationships between different stakeholders. It illustrates a collaborative model in which reciprocity is valued in the interplay of various stakeholders. It also points out that the emerging social stakeholders (where the artist community positions) are playing a significant role in the restructuring of Chengdu's urban governance network in the community-oriented development strategy. Section 6.3 discusses the marketisation of arts and the artist community; it examines a government-led campaign to develop the local art industry so the marketised artist community with economic capital and professionalism can be mobilised in urban production. Section 6.4 is the case study of art-led community regeneration practice in Yulin street, where I investigate the collaborations and partnerships in urban space production. In this chapter, I argue the artist community, as social capital, plays a significant role in the production and production of urban space.

6.2 Community micro-regeneration in Chengdu: participation, collaboration and self-government

In the 2010s, Chengdu's community micro-regeneration initiative exemplified a practical application of China's people-centred development strategy, with a particular emphasis on fostering public participation. This approach aimed to balance urban modernisation with cultural preservation, aligning with broader national objectives to improve urban living standards while maintaining social harmony (see Chapter 4). The campaign involved targeted interventions in old

urban neighbourhoods, focusing on small-scale, context-sensitive projects that addressed upgraded housing and realised better governance. A critical component of the regeneration campaign was the active involvement of local residents and larger creative participants in both the planning and management phases, which ensured that regeneration efforts were attuned to the specific needs and preferences of the community.

This participatory regeneration strategy not only enhanced the effectiveness of urban planning at a micro level but also fostered a sense of ownership and empowerment among residents and social actors. The community micro-regeneration campaign in Chengdu represents a collaborative effort that brings together the diverse range of stakeholders involved in the urban program; this section will discuss and examine the governmental, market, and social stakeholders in Chengdu's community micro-regeneration to better understand how their distinct actions converge to drive the success of collaborative governance in Chengdu.

6.2.1 Participants in community micro-regeneration

Government participants

Government participants in community regeneration include district-level government, departments, and primary-level party organisations. In 2017, the Chengdu Municipal Government published a *Three-Year Plan of Implementing Five Campaigns of Chengdu's Community Development and Governance* as a follow-up plan of its community regeneration campaign. It explains the roles and responsibilities of the district-level government and district-level departments (except DCGC), such as the Bureau of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, Bureau of Public Affairs, Bureau of Finance and Bureau of Urban Management

and Law Enforcement, in a community regeneration project. All departments will cooperate accordingly to make sure the operation of a community project is smooth.

As China is a one-party state, the organisational work of the ruling Chinese Community Party includes the construction of a leadership team, appointments of an administration team, construction of a talents team and the construction of primary-level party organisations (基层党组织， *jiceng dangzuzhi*). According to the *Constitution of the Chinese Communist Party*, a primary-level party organisation, or grassroots party organisation, is a party group responsible for accomplishing organisational work in a grassroots unit: it is established in enterprises, public educational institutions (schools, universities and scientific research institutions), rural areas, subdistrict areas in cities, social organisations, People's Liberation Army and any other grassroots units in China. It should be formed in line with the number of individuals that are CCP members in a grassroots unit and perform in response to requested organisational work in the unit. Where within a unit there are three or more CCP members, a primary-level party organisation should be established, and the organisation should be composed of a primary-level party committee (基层委员会, *jiceng weiyuanhui*), a general branch committee (总支部委员会, *zongzhibu weiyuanhui*) and a branch committee (支部委员会, *zhibu weiyuanhui*). In the context of urban governance, Street Office and Community Residents Committee are two forms of primary-level party organisation in subdistrict areas, whose main role in the area or a *shequ* is to coordinate between district-level government and departments with community residents, to help facilitate in the governance of the regeneration.

A Community Residents Committee is defined as another grassroots governmental organisation that delivers policies and services to community residents (the main types of occupants of community residents are residing

commercial businesses and residential inhabitants in a designated sub-street area) to help achieve self-management, self-education and self-service in a community area. According to the latest *Organisation Law of Urban Residents Committee of the People's Republic of China* of 2018, the tasks of a Community Residents Committee currently include publicity of the constitution, the laws and national policies, advocating community residents' legal rights and leading different forms of campaigns to promote socialist spiritual construction; providing public service check-ins and providing social services; mediating interpersonal conflicts in a community; helping maintain public order; cooperating with the government in works or programs related to residents' interests; collecting public views and demands and delivering them to the government. Most importantly, a Community Residents Committee does not belong to the state organs; in this case, it does not carry out administrative tasks directly related to development projects as a Street Office will do; instead, the committee is responsible for collecting public opinions towards those government-led projects or programs in the community area. In other words, the Community Residents Committee functions as a platform through which the government and community residents can communicate.

The working place for a Community Residents Committee is called a community centre (社区中心, *shequ zhongxin*), in many Chinese cities, a community centre is a co-working office or sharing working space for the Street Office and the Community Residents Committee that usually located in some state-owned properties. With Chengdu's community regeneration campaign beginning in 2017, there is a notable growing number of renovated multi-functional community centres that provide wider public and social services in the city.

Market-oriented participants

During the past two decades, with China's market economy being established in the 1980s and consolidated in the 1990s, a real estate economy boomed in most Chinese cities concurrently with its land and housing policy reform. Large property development groups and private realty management companies flourished in the market as China's property-led development unfolded in cities in the 2000s. Property developers and realty management companies are two main market-oriented stakeholders in a property-led development model; the former can be either state-owned or private-owned and benefits from construction, reconstruction or renovation on urban lands, while the latter makes profits as small private companies from providing services including management and maintenance to different types of urban properties.

China's property-led development in the first decade of the 2000s has received academic criticism, including the large-scale construction of commercial property buildings leading to the over-commercialisation of an urban area and the further damage it does to the urban cultural landscape. Soaring housing prices and rising living costs around those developed commercial areas can usually drive urban residents away. Thus, a place eventually loses its "originality". Debates are mainly made around commercial development projects within a city area. However, market-oriented stakeholders, as is being investigated in Chengdu's regeneration practice, at a micro level, are not large development groups but smaller-scale service-providing companies in community regeneration.

A realty management company is a market-oriented business organisation that is an expert in the management and maintenance of public properties and commercial residential blocks; their job is to accomplish various management works for property buildings. In a residential area of a community, a realty

company is usually employed by an Owners Committee, which is a representative organisation established by the Owners' Congress with the task of safeguarding the property owners' and tenants' legitimate rights. The Owners Committee and the realty management company run management and maintenance work around a residential area based on a signed business contract. At the same time, the committee is expected to act as a management decision-maker, and the company is the service provider. In reality, however, the relationship between the owners committee and the realty management company is not as simple as it seems, considering in the first place, the Owners Committee in China is more of an institution approved by sub-district level authorities than an independent self-governed organisation established by resident individuals; secondly, the realty management company can usually be subsidiary to a larger property developer that has developed or renovated the properties, which means it will also have to follow procedures and regulations posed by a parent company when operating its management servicing; additionally and most importantly, in most cases, realty management company's contract with the Owners Committee is mostly assigned by the developer rather than obtained through market-oriented activities such as bidding by the management company itself.

Emerging social participants

The purchase of public services is a typical policy design adopted broadly by governments. By contracting out, the government can achieve public service cost containment and improvement of the service quality. Such government procurement behaviour in China is an adjustment to its former socialist social service system as the country has gone through reforms of decentralisation and marketisation since the 1980s. At municipal level, in the case of Chengdu, Chengdu Municipal Government in 2017 distributed the *Opinions of Chengdu Municipal*

Government's Purchase of Services from Social Organisations: This document confirms a government procurement mechanism to help enhance governance in communities. Some public services provided directly by the government in the past will be delivered by qualified social organisations employed or paid by the public sector.

Opposed to the profit-making social organisation is the non-profit making social organisation, which is usually known as a volunteer organisation servicing in

China's urban communities. Community volunteers are a group of self-organised people who work to help deliver some public services in communities. They are not paid or employed but work closely with local authorities. For instance, during the COVID-19 outbreak period in China, community volunteers help with door-to-door food delivery from the district government or in a mass PCR test scheme in blocked community residentials.

Another type of social participant emerging in community regeneration campaigns is the community planner. Although called planners, they are not necessarily planning professionals or experts usually hired by municipal or district governments in large-scale urban development projects. In the case of Chengdu, a community planner works closely and collaboratively with other participants in a community-level project. In the case of Chengdu's community regeneration, a community planner can be someone who has expertise in any discipline that can contribute to community regeneration projects.

Community resident participants

Community resident participants include community residents who constitute property owners and tenants, community businesses that serve community residents, and resident workplace units.

6.2.2 The collaborative framework in community micro-regeneration

Chengdu's community micro-regeneration initiatives exemplify a model of collaborative governance where multiple stakeholders participate and take action to achieve shared urban development goals. This participatory and collaborative approach integrates the efforts of governmental bodies, social organisations, the private sector, and community residents, ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive process. According to Opinions of Deepening the Sustainable Urban and Rural Community Development Campaign, which was jointly produced by Chengdu Municipal Bureau of Public Affairs and CMCGC in 2017 to guide the regeneration, all stakeholders will participate in the planning and development process so “everyone benefits” (see Figure 6.1). A key feature of this model is the principle of reciprocity, which fosters mutual benefits and shared responsibilities among all participants.

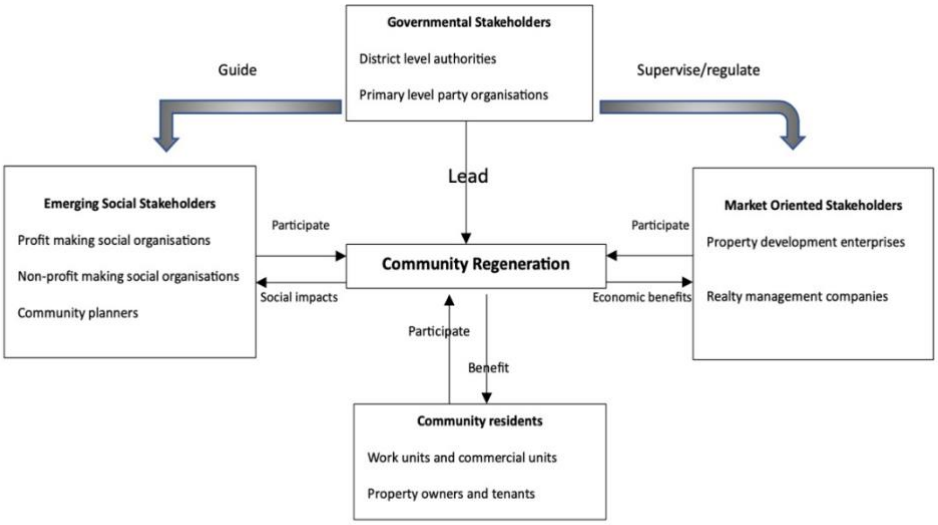

Figure 6.1 stakeholders in the community micro-regeneration

(Source: Created by the author)

Governmental Stakeholders, including district-level authorities and primary-level party organisations, play a leadership role in the regeneration process. They set policy directions, establish regulatory frameworks, and provide oversight to ensure that regeneration efforts align with broader public interests and urban planning objectives. The involvement of market-oriented stakeholders, such as property development enterprises and realty management companies, highlights the economic aspect of regeneration efforts. These stakeholders provide critical financial investments and expertise in real estate development and management. Their participation is driven by potential economic returns, which helps in making the projects financially viable. The collaboration between these market-oriented entities and other stakeholders ensures that economic benefits are balanced with social considerations. Emerging social stakeholders, including profit-making and non-profit-making social organisations and community planners, bring specialised knowledge and professionalism. These stakeholders are actively involved in designing and implementing strategies that address the social dimensions of regeneration. Their participation ensures that the initiatives are responsive to community needs, fostering greater engagement and support from local populations. At the core of this collaborative framework are the community residents, including work units, commercial units, property owners, and tenants. As the direct beneficiaries of the regeneration projects, their input and engagement are vital. Residents' participation helps tailor the projects to meet local needs and preferences, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility for the outcomes. This grassroots involvement is essential for long-term governance success.

Reciprocity in this collaborative governance model is manifested in the mutual benefits that all stakeholders derive from the regeneration process. This interplay of reciprocal relationships ensures that the interests of all parties are considered and met, leading to a more robust and resilient urban development process.

Overall, Chengdu's approach to community micro-regeneration through collaborative governance underscores the importance of integrating various stakeholder groups. By enhancing the strengths and addressing the interests of governmental bodies, social organisations, private sector entities, and residents, the process becomes more effective, equitable, and sustainable. This model serves as a valuable example of how diverse actors can work together to achieve collaborative urban development.

6.3 The marketisation of the arts and an art-led development strategy

In June 2010, Cultural Equity Exchange, an integrated service platform approved by the Sichuan Provincial Government and Chengdu Municipal Government (regulated by the Sichuan Provincial Bureau of Financial Work since 2018), was established in Chengdu. The service platform marks the first cultural equity exchange institution in western China and currently works in cultural property rights transfers, art investment and finance inquiries, art business incubations and art development information release in Chengdu. In 2014, the district government brought in the Chengdu Art Bonded Facility, making it the fourth art bonded facility in China after the city of Beijing, Shanghai and Xiamen, marking it the first founded within China’s inland regions. In 2012, China’s import tariff rate for artworks was reduced from 12% to 6% for a provisional one year, which means the 6% rate was maintained in 2013 (State Council, 2011); however, in the actual transaction process, a 17% value-added tax is required on top of the 6% import tax, bringing the tax on imported artworks to a total 23%. If any sales tax or surcharge for overdue tax occurred during the transaction process, the expenses on tax would easily exceed 30%. Because of this, many artworks Chinese art

collectors and institutions had purchased had not been brought back to China, and art collectors and institutions had to purchase extra services to maintain their collections. An art bonded facility houses artwork owned by local art collectors and institutions that had been imported from overseas; in this way, collectors and institutions do not have to pay the extra 30% for the transaction, and artworks housed in the facility can be exhibited (but returned to the facility afterwards), or they can go into overseas resale by request of their owners, with the convenience of tax reduction/deduction. The government's aim of setting up an Art Bonded Facility is to build an artwork trading platform to meet the growing demand for art material resources in the city of Chengdu.

In 2015, Tomorrow Arts Fund was established following the second anniversary of the opening of the Chengdu Art Bonded Facility. According to my interviews with one artist who had based in Blue Roof and who is now connected to the fund, the government initially established the fund with the intention to help young artists, following a joint suggestion letter sent to Shuangliu district government then forwarded to the municipal government in 2014; the letter was proposed by a small group of art professionals who work in Sichuan University supervising art students based in Blue Roof Youth Artist Village (remote interview Feb. 2021). The idea of the letter was that professionals had noticed many young art students based in New Blue Roof in Shuangliu district could not pursue art industrial careers as they had hoped for because there was a rent increase and lack of art market overall since the local expansion of the tourism industry. Chengdu municipal government led the establishment of the fund, the fund is now administrated by Chengdu Social Organisation Development Foundation (CSODF). This art fund follows a "1+N" development model; it started with annual financial assets from the Municipal Finance Bureau and grew with collective fund-raising activities across the city of Chengdu. Between 2015 and

2018, CSODF reportedly organised the Young Artist Charity Exhibition Competition. Some established artists based in the new Blue Roof, who are also committee members of Tomorrow Arts Fund, have worked as referees and reviewers in the exhibition competition. According to the interviewee connected to the fund, 10 to 20 out of 35 young artists were elected to be financially sponsored for three years, with an annual allotment of 50000 to 100000 RMB yuan per artist. The fund was believed to have helped some young artists or art students to stay and pursue their careers in Chengdu.

When reviewing the art industry development plans of Chengdu in the 2010s, the phrase "supporting dragon head enterprises" was repeatedly mentioned. The term *dragon head enterprises* (龙头企业, longtou qiye) are academically discussed in Chinese agrarian studies: by defining and studying the enterprises, scholars present the process of state and private elites working collaboratively to consolidate a domestic agribusiness sector (see Schneider, 2016; Huang el al. 2012; Hairong and Yiyuan, 2015; Moustier, 2018). In context, dragon head enterprises are those leading or promising enterprises equipped with superior resources, thus possessing greater development potential within a certain industry. In CCI specifically, the government identifies "dragon heads" by business development statistics if it is a company or by reputation in a specific field if it is an artist individual. In China, in terms of dragon heads, at the municipal and provincial levels, there are various types of talent development and training programs following a 2004 national-level Talent Development Plan (see Wang, 2011). These talent development programs usually benefit electees with financial, academic, and networking resources from higher levels, usually from the state, enabling the dragon heads to evolve better with the corresponding support they need. At the district level, the district government works out a list of outstanding CCI-related projects or institutions on a yearly basis with the help of reports from the district Cultural and Creative

Industry Promotion Research Office that's been introduced in the last section; the nominated projects will be received and systematically reviewed at the municipal and provincial level, the municipal and provincial government then examines their development potential and decides whether supportive funds should be provided to these fast-growing dragon heads. For example, in the case of Blue Roof, in 2018, several art institutions and artists based in the art space were selected to compete in the municipal talent program with others nominated by different administrative districts, one long-established art centre that has been running multiple art-related businesses with connections of various design artists basing in Blue Roof was then admitted at provincial. With these programs, according to the interview with one official working in the CCI Promotion Office of the Jinjiang district , the government is committed to promoting cooperation among a larger community of creative businesses and individuals:

"Dragon head enterprises and projects are the core competitiveness of the development of cultural creative industry in a district, they have strong leading and radiating effects."

-interview Feb. 2021

By saying "radiating effects", the government still wants to consolidate and promote a local art-friendly image so creative capital can be produced and reproduced in local development. The idea has been urged as "developing a promising local creative brand to bring in outside resources to realise a creative-led development model" in the 12th, 13th and 14th five-year development plan (2011-2025) of the municipal government of Chengdu.

More specifically, an art-led development strategy was proposed, along with Chengdu's extensive community regeneration campaign in the mid-2010s. This

proposal reflected a shift in urban policy towards leveraging creative assets for urban revitalisation and public mobilisation, and the art-led development strategy sought to integrate the development of the city's art market with broader socio-economic objectives, utilising art and cultural initiatives as tools for transforming smaller urban spaces and stimulating public engagement. Key components included the establishment of dedicated art centres with the adaptive reuse of the former community and the installation of public artworks at the community level. These initiatives were underpinned by district-level supportive urban policies that incentivised investment in cultural infrastructure and facilitated the growth of the creative community. For example, between 2011 and 2013, Shuangliu District Government hosted three annual Creative Changes the City Forums, inviting local and outside scholars, artists and dragon head enterprise directors to explore the development dynamics in art-oriented urbanisation such as academic collaboration and design industry led urban space transformation (ChinaDaily, 2011; Sina, 2012; Huanqiu, 2013;). Between 2013 and 2015, Blue Roof Art Festival was co-hosted by the government of Shuangliu district and neighbouring Jinjiang district, with local dragon head enterprise Blue Roof Art Enterprise organising art-related conferences and workshops for artist residents and general visitors (interview Feb. 2021). Since 2017, as informed by the director of Blue Roof Art Enterprise, who casually worked for the municipal Art Promotion Centre to provide professional advice, dragon heads, including many design artists in the New Blue Roof, have participated in an annual Chengdu Creative and Design Week, which is a municipal government-led art and design expo. The expo aims to encourage the exchange and integration of local and outside creative businesses or individuals, as their collaborations could further enhance the creativeness in an art-led regeneration. The strategy exemplifies a contemporary trend in urban planning where the creative sector is integral to strengthening urban development.

6.4 Collaborations in Chengdu's art-led community micro-regeneration: the case of regeneration of Yunlin

Yulin street area is under the Wuhou district of Chengdu. In the 1980s and 1990s, some of Chengdu's state-owned work units began to build workers' dormitories in the Yulin area, marking the beginning of its development. At that time, Chengdu had not seen many real estate developers, so these dormitories were built by different state-owned units. They were mostly uniform brick-and-concrete structure blocks equipped with independent balconies, and living infrastructures were regarded as very "modernised" at that time. The "modernisation" of the Yulin area and its prime location in the city centre (see Figure 6.3) has attracted a diverse group of artists, poets, and young cultural enthusiasts, drawn by its unique atmosphere and relatively low living costs. Historically, the Yulin street area has been an area where local established poets and artists lived and gathered; many of the artists are members or friends of the Blue Roof Community. The presence of these artists, poets, and musicians not only enriched Yulin's cultural landscape but also fostered a sense of community and identity among residents and visitors. This period of artistic and cultural blossoming established the Yulin area as a key cultural landmark in 1990s Chengdu. Artists who lived in this area believed Yulin was the "art camp" of Chengdu's artist community, as one I interviewed commented:

"There is only one real art district in Chengdu, it is Yulin. The avant-garde artists and underground cultures started from Yulin… arts are the essential of Yulin."

-interview Mar. 2022

During the 1990s, Yulin became a significant gathering place for young artists and poets, whose creative expressions deeply influenced the cultural landscape of the

area. The music scene, particularly, saw a surge in independent and underground rock music. Yulin Little Bar, also known as “Chengdu Xiaojiaoguan”, is a renowned music venue located in the west Yulin area of Chengdu (see Figure 6.2). Established in 1997, it quickly became a cultural landmark and a central hub for independent music and artistic expression in the city. Yulin Little Bar was founded by the couple Tang Lei and Xu Xiaoyan. Both founders were passionate about music and deeply involved in the local cultural scene. Their primary motivation for establishing the bar was to create a space that fostered creative expression and community among musicians and artists. At the time of its founding, Chengdu lacked venues that supported independent music and provided platforms for emerging artists and poets. Tang Lei and Xu Xiaoyan recognised this gap and sought to fill it by creating a venue that was not only a performance space but also a gathering place for the growing creative community.

Figure 6.2 The Little Bar in West Yunlin.

The bar quickly became a popular venue for live music performances, particularly for underground and indie bands. Its intimate setting and supportive environment attracted a diverse array of artists and music enthusiasts, contributing to the growth of Chengdu's independent music scene in the period. During the late 1990s, China's

mainstream music industry was predominantly focused on pop music, and there were limited platforms for alternative genres like rock and punk, which were considered unconventional and sometimes controversial. Yulin Little Bar provided a rare platform for these genres, allowing musicians to experiment and perform in front of receptive audiences. As a result, the role of Yulin Little Bar extended beyond hosting performances; it was instrumental in the broader cultural movement in 1990s China that sought to challenge and expand the boundaries of Chinese music and broader cultural expression. By providing a venue for those underground cultures, the bar helped normalise arts within Chinese society, gradually shifting public perceptions and broadening the scope of acceptable cultural expressions in a transitional period. To the artist community, Yulin is never a music-only landmark, as the development of the venue also signifies Chengdu's early artist clustering, including that of some members of the Blue Roof Community.

Let's walk together on the streets of Chengdu,

Until all the lights are extinguished, we won't stop.

You'll hold onto my sleeve, and I'll tuck my hands into my pockets.

We'll walk to the end of Yulin road and sit at the corner of the little bar.

-Lyrics of Chengdu

The solid concept of art-led community regeneration in Chengdu appears to coincide with the timing: in 2017, when several TV music variety shows gained nationwide popularity in China, there was a "music fever" among the Chinese population. A folk song in Chengdu composed by folk singer Zhao Lei won a breakthrough success after the show, and the song itself won first prize for the "Best of the Year" Committee Music Award. The rapid popularity of the song

Chengdu quickly boosted the development of tourism in the city, coinciding with the city's promotion of community micro-regeneration focused on local cultures. While many believe the art-led urbanisation practice in Chengdu is part of China's larger creative industry promotion campaign, officials at district and subdistrict levels denied it, as one street office official in Yulin I interviewed clarified:

"I do not think this art-led development in Chengdu city has come from any national policy…it is the popularity of the song of Chengdu that inspired the government of Chengdu, and the municipal government was clever enough to promote the art history in Yunlin."

-interview 2022

The municipal government decided to seize the chance to further monitor its micro-regeneration strategy as well as CCI development, with a focus on the promotion of the local music industry and the presentation of an "arty vibe" in the Yulin street area. A community regeneration project led by the music industry started in West Yulin in 2018. Following the popularity of the historical and arty "Yulin lifestyle" and the iconic music hub Little Bar that is beautifully illustrated in the song Chengdu, the community regeneration around west Yulin in the Yulin street area marks Chengdu's first art-led regeneration at the community level.

The Yard Cultural and Creative Park, or just The Yard, as local residents called it, is a small-scale music industry oriented urban creative space within the Nijiaqiao community of theYulin street area (see Figure. 6.4). It was co-founded by the Wuhou District Government and Little Bar's sub-company The Yard Company in a renovated residential yard. The collaboration between the local government and Yulin Little Bar emerged from a shared recognition of the

cultural and economic potential of the Nijiagiao community where the original site of Little Bar is located.

Figure 6.3 The Yard Cultural and Creative Park

(The photo shown here is The Yard renovated from the previous residential yard. The outside space now serves as a public square for entertainment, and the side is the co-working space of the Street Office and Community Centre, as well as a public library with a café, and creative production studios)

The Yard's initiative had several key objectives. Firstly, it sought to preserve and enhance the unique cultural heritage of the area, which is characterised by its rich artistic and musical traditions. Within a renovated old residential yard, there are creative workplaces available for creative teams to rent and settle in (see Figure 6.5), and there are public places for the public to visit or rest (see Figure 6.6). Nijiaqiao Community Centre, where primary-level party organisations work, is also located within one of the renovated houses on the ground floor with a public café and library (see Figure 6.7). According to my interview with the party

secretary of Nijiaqiao Community during a short visit in 2022, the operation of The Yard follows a collaborative approach to "achieve functional integration" :

"The renovated yard houses belong to the district government,the Yard Company runs the management of all creative industry matters within The Yard… now it is a multi-functional complex where Yulin Street Office, Nijiaqiao Community Centre and many more creative industy studios work…residents come here for the community matters, they also come to join the art activities."

-interview. Jul. 2022

Practically, public spaces in the Yard can be used for community development programs led by district government and primary level part organisations; they are also used for art-related programs such as small music festivals and book fairs that are usually organised by local creative units or The Yard company itself (see Figure 6.8). On some occasions, resident creative units in The Yard will take the role of helping promote community programs, for example, by designing the leaflet for the programs that are happening in the community. In this park, cooperation among music or broader creative units and institutions can be realised.

The outcomes of this music-led regeneration have been significant. Since 2017, the Nijiagiao community has experienced increased tourism, economic growth, and a reinvigorated creative scene. This case study highlights the role of arts and culture as catalysts for urban development, demonstrating how strategic partnerships and collaborations between cultural institutions and government can successfully promote both economic vitality and cultural preservation.

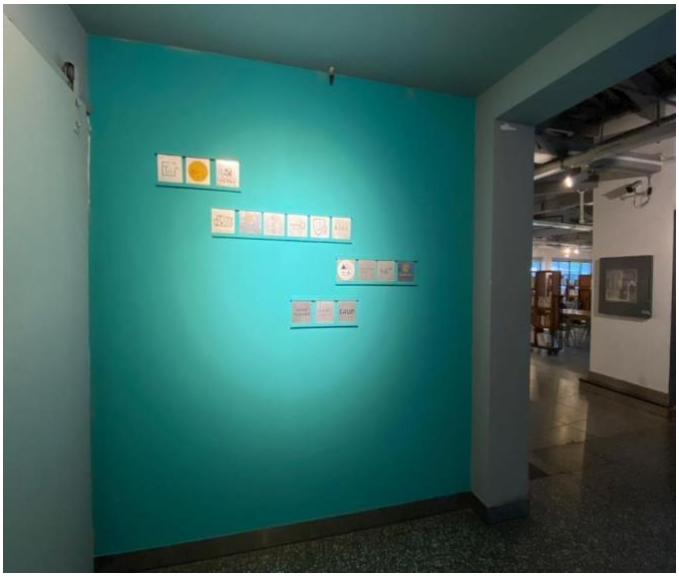

Figure 6.4 Creative units in The Yard
(This is the corridor linking the co-working space and the public library on the ground floor. On the wall are the plaques of creative production studios based on the first floor of The Yard in 2022)

Figure 6.5 Public Space of The Yard

(The photo here shows the backyard area of The Yard, where the government-led community activities or studio-organised art festivals and art fairs happen.)

Figure 6.7 The Public Library in the Yard
(This is the public library area where the community residents and street office officials come for reading, leisure or have meetings. The café of the library is run by the Little Pub company)

Figure 6.8 Information board of art programs and activities happening in Nijiaqiao community
(This blackboard is regularly updated by the community centre officers with community programs organised by the Street Office and art or art education activities organised by the creative production studios based in The Yard)

In recent years, the Nijiaqiao community has witnessed a notable expansion of creative spaces, solidifying its status as a cultural and artistic hub.

The integration of traditional street businesses with the creative industries starting in the covid period has been a key characteristic of Nijiaqiao's recent development. For example, “Cafe & Canvas”, the public café on the ground floor next to the workplace of the community centre, regularly hosts art exhibitions and live painting sessions, providing artists with a platform to showcase their work while offering patrons a unique cultural experience. Another example is “Soundwave Bistro”, which has partnered with local musicians to host weekly live performances, blending dining with live music and creating a cultural scene in the

yard ground. These businesses not only enhance the cultural appeal of the area but also support local artists financially by selling artworks and hosting events.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter presents the main findings of the research touching on government-artist relationship. The case of the regeneration of Yulin illustrates a unique approach within the broader context of Chengdu's people-centred development strategies. By integrating creative groups into the role of community planners, the renewal process has not only preserved the cultural identity of the area but also significantly enhanced community engagement. The active participation of the local creative community and other creative professionals has been vital in shaping the community's physical and cultural landscape, fostering a sense of ownership and belonging among residents. Moreover, the collaboration between the local governmental stakeholders and the creative community underscored the importance of shared governance in urban projects; this participatory approach has demonstrated that involving creative groups as a key stakeholder in urban planning can bridge the gap between top-down planning and grassroots involvement. The involvement of creative groups in the regeneration process was instrumental in achieving community engagement. By acting as intermediaries, utilising participatory art-led programs with the local government stakeholders, these groups were able to articulate the cultural and social needs of the community, ensuring that the regeneration was widely accepted by the residents. This collaborative model, where the creative sector plays a central and more active role, offers valuable insights for future studies on the relationship between the government and the creative community.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

7.1 Discussions of case studies findings

7.1.1 Comparative analysis to case studies

The Blue Roof Community and the Yulin Street Regeneration project provide contrasting examples of how agency, social capital, and stakeholder engagement play out in art-led urban development. While both case studies involve collaboration between creative communities and local government, they differ significantly in terms of who holds influence, how participation is structured, and the extent to which they achieve authentic public engagement. I argue that the Blue Roof model, although progressing from previous top-down model, exemplifies an elitist approach to collaboration, where power and agency are concentrated among a select group of influential artists, resulting in a constrained form of participation. In contrast, the Yulin Street Regeneration demonstrates a more inclusive and democratic model of engagement, where art-led programmes organised by creative communities function as mechanisms for genuine public participation and social empowerment. Below is more comprehensive comparative analysis to the two linking case studies.

Elitism in the Blue Roof Model: A Departure from Top-Down Models

The Blue Roof Community's development was heavily shaped by the presence of a small group of elite artists who acted as intermediaries between the local government and the broader artist community. I argue that this reliance on a

narrow set of cultural elites to represent the interests of the entire creative community created a skewed power dynamic, reinforcing hierarchical structures within the community and limiting the scope of participatory agency. The elite artists, with their established reputations, professional networks, and greater access to government resources, effectively monopolised the channels of negotiation and decision-making, leaving little room for younger, less-established artists to contribute meaningfully to the development of the district.

This elitist structure resulted in a form of what I call "selective participation," where only those deemed influential or strategically valuable to the government were given a seat at the table. As a result, the Blue Roof model facilitated a controlled and top-down form of engagement that primarily served the interests of the state and the artistic elite, while the broader community remained peripheral to the decision-making process. Such dynamics align with critiques of art-led urban regeneration, which caution that elite-driven cultural projects often prioritise economic gains over social inclusivity, potentially leading to gentrification and the marginalisation of less powerful stakeholders (Evans, 2009; Miles, 2012). This dynamic undermines the authenticity of collaboration, as the government's co-option of elite artists diluted the participatory potential of the Blue Roof Community, transforming what could have been a vibrant, inclusive art district into a more exclusive and commodified cultural enclave.

However, it is important to note that, although the Blue Roof model may not have realised authentic collaboration in its art-led development, its development still distinguishes itself from earlier, purely top-down approaches like the 798 Art District in Beijing, which emerged in the early 2000s. The 798 model, characterised by strong state intervention and rapid commercialisation, was initially driven by external policy goals with limited agency for the artist community to shape the district's evolution (Currier, 2008). In contrast, the Blue

Roof Community, while heavily influenced by government interests, was developed through a more negotiated process where elite artists were able to assert a degree of influence and advocacy over the design and use of the space. This distinction reflects a subtle but important policy shift towards recognising the role of creative communities as stakeholders in urban development, even if this recognition was limited to a select elite group.

The policy impact of the Blue Roof's development thus lies in its hybrid nature—it blurrs the line between top-down state planning and bottom-up creative agency. While the Blue Roof model did not achieve full inclusivity or authenticity, it marked a departure from the more rigidly state-controlled approaches of the early 2000s by acknowledging the value of creative capital and involving cultural elites in the planning process. This partial integration of creative voices set a precedent for later projects, such as Yulin Regeneration, which adopted a more community-centred and democratic approach to governance.

Public Engagement through Art-Led Programmes in Yulin Regeneration: A Shift in Policy Approaches

Building on the foundation established in the Blue Roof development, the Yulin Street Regeneration project, which emerged in the mid-2010s, reflects a significant progression in policy approaches and a shift towards recognising the broader role of creative communities in urban governance. This transition from an elite-driven model to a more community-centred approach was influenced by significant economic and institutional changes in China's urban planning and governance frameworks during the 2000s and 2010s. These changes were marked by the national shift towards a service-oriented economy, an emphasis on sustainable urbanisation, and new governance frameworks that encouraged community-led and small-scale regeneration projects.

The Micro-Community Regeneration Campaign, introduced in the mid-2010s, emerged as part of China's broader policy shift towards "people-centred" development, reflecting the central government's growing emphasis on improving urban liveability and promoting social cohesion in response to the socio-economic challenges of rapid urbanisation (Shen & Wu, 2017). I argue that the Yulin project embodies this transition, where art and culture are leveraged not only as tools for economic growth but as mechanisms for fostering social inclusion and grassroots engagement. This shift is indicative of a broader trend in China's urban policy that seeks to balance economic development with cultural sustainability and community well-being.

Additionally, the Yulin Street Regeneration aligns with China's growing promotion of *shequ zizhi* (社区自治, self-governance at the community level), a policy orientation aimed at empowering local communities to take more active roles in shaping their own urban environments (Xu & Wang, 2015). The Yulin project's art-led programmes, such as public art workshops and community-based planning sessions, serve as practical expressions of self-governance, allowing residents to articulate their needs and aspirations directly. This incorporation of community self-governance is a significant step forward compared to earlier models like the Blue Roof, where participation was limited to a small elite group. By promoting wider community agency, Yulin has contributed to a more robust and inclusive form of urban governance that reflects the principles of bottom-up planning advocated in recent Chinese urban policy reforms.

Unlike the Blue Roof's elite-driven approach, Yulin's creative communities have actively mobilised all local residents including small businesses, and independent artists through participatory events such as public art installations, community workshops, and neighbourhood festivals (Chapter 6)(Chapter 6 Collaboration…). These art-led programmes are not merely symbolic gestures but function as

genuine platforms for public engagement, fostering what Fung (2006) describes as "deliberative participation," where stakeholders engage in meaningful dialogue and co-create urban spaces that reflect local values and identities. The use of art as a medium for participation in Yulin has helped to decentralise agency, enabling a broader spectrum of actors to express their visions and contribute to the regeneration process.

Agency, Social Capital, and the Dynamics of Authenticity

The comparison between the Blue Roof and Yulin cases illustrates a broader shift in how agency and social capital are mobilised within Chengdu's urban governance. The Blue Roof Community, with its concentration of social capital among elite artists, offered a narrow and controlled form of collaboration, where the potential for genuine public engagement was limited. In contrast, Yulin's regeneration project harnessed the social capital of a wider array of stakeholders, including grassroots artists, local businesses, and residents, enabling a more distributed form of agency that empowered these groups to shape the urban environment actively.

The transition from the Blue Roof model to the Yulin Regeneration project was not merely a response to local cultural dynamics but was fundamentally shaped by broader economic and institutional transformations in China during the 2000s and 2010s. As China shifted from an industrial to a service-oriented economy, cultural industries and creative communities gained greater prominence in urban policy discourses (Keane, 2013). This shift was accompanied by institutional reforms aimed at promoting sustainable and community-based urban development, which emphasised the role of diverse social actors in creating liveable and culturally vibrant cities (Ren & Sun, 2012). I argue that the Yulin project's success is emblematic of this new policy orientation, where community empowerment and

cultural sustainability are increasingly seen as key components of urban governance.

Overall, the comparative analysis of the Blue Roof Community and Yulin Street Regeneration highlights key differences in their approaches to collaborative governance, participation, and the exercise of agency. The Blue Roof model, characterised by a top-down, elite-driven partnership, offered limited scope for genuine collaboration and broader community engagement, but still differed from earlier, more rigid top-down models like the 798 Art District. In contrast, Yulin's regeneration project, grounded in a grassroots, community-oriented model, represents a more authentic form of collaboration where diverse stakeholders exercise real agency in shaping urban outcomes. These differences reflect a broader progression in China's policy approaches, from selective engagement in the early 2000s to more inclusive, community-based strategies in the mid-2010s.

7.1.2 Answering the questions

The Blue Roof Community and Yulin Street Regeneration exemplify two distinct phases in Chengdu's art-led urban development, reflecting broader transformations in China's governance methods and cultural policy shifts. While both case studies illustrate the local government's increasing recognition of creative communities in urban planning, they also highlight a significant transition in governance strategies—from a selective, elite-driven model in the early 2000s to a more inclusive, community-oriented approach in the mid-2010s. This evolution mirrors the broader trajectory of China's urban policy, moving from top-down control towards greater community participation and self-governance. The following sections address the research questions, drawing out the nuances of these case studies and critically examining the implications of these shifts.

1. What are the motivations and aims of the Chinese local government in engaging creative communities in urban development in the context of China's CCI-oriented development?

I argue that the Chinese local government's motivations have shifted significantly between the two case studies, reflecting a broader reorientation in governance strategies as China's economic and policy priorities have evolved.

In the early 2000s, the Blue Roof Community was developed primarily to fulfil the government's goal of leveraging cultural capital for economic growth and urban branding. At that time, the emphasis was on creating high-profile art districts that could serve as cultural landmarks to attract investment, elevate Chengdu's status as a cultural hub, and align with the national push to integrate cultural and creative industries into urban development (Keane, 2013). The government's engagement with creative communities in the Blue Roof model was instrumental and selective, focused on a small group of elite artists whose status and international connections were seen as assets for boosting the city's cultural prestige. In contrast, by the time of Yulin Street Regeneration in the mid-2010s, the motivations behind engaging creative communities had broadened to reflect new policy imperatives that emphasised social inclusion and local identity. This shift aligns with China's broader national policy shift towards "people-centred" urbanisation, which seeks to address the social and cultural side effects of rapid economic development (Shen & Wu, 2017). In Yulin, the government's motivation extended beyond economic objectives to include enhancing community well-being, supporting grassroots initiatives, and creating vibrant neighbourhoods through creative means. This broader set of goals reflects a maturing understanding of the role of creative communities, where they are seen not just as tools for economic growth but as key partners in co-producing urban spaces that are culturally sustainable and socially cohesive.

2. In governing art creative space, what governing agendas have been adopted by the Chinese local government to broaden creative community participation?

I argue that the progression from the Blue Roof model to Yulin Regeneration reveals a shift in governing agendas from a focus on elite-driven urban prestige to more inclusive and collaborative governance frameworks.

In the Blue Roof model, the local government adopted a highly selective approach, supporting a small group of established artists who could be instrumentalised to promote the state's cultural branding strategies. This model, which can be seen as a form of what scholars call artist urbanisation specific to the Chinese context, was designed to produce tangible economic benefits and generate symbolic capital for the city. However, the top-down nature of this approach limited broader community participation, with the creative community largely operating within a state-defined framework that prioritised economic outputs over social inclusion. Nevertheless, the Blue Roof project introduced certain innovations compared to previous models, such as the 798 Art District, by allowing for more formalised interactions between the state and artists. For example, the provision of legal property rights and institutionalised artist representation within the planning framework provided a structured platform for artist-government negotiations, something that was lacking in earlier projects where artists were often displaced or marginalised without recourse (Currier, 2008). Despite these innovations, the Blue Roof model ultimately reinforced a hierarchical governance structure, where participation was limited to those deemed strategically valuable by the state.

In contrast, the Yulin Regeneration project reflects a significant reorientation towards more inclusive governing agendas. Influenced by the *Micro-Community Regeneration Campaign* and the national promotion of community self-governance, the local government in Chengdu adopted policies that supported

small-scale, bottom-up initiatives, recognising the value of diverse community stakeholders (Xu & Wang, 2015). This agenda aimed to broaden participation by empowering all local residents including small businesses, and grassroots cultural organisations to contribute to the planning and execution of urban projects. In Yulin, art-led public programmes, such as community art workshops, public space design projects, and neighbourhood festivals, were encouraged as platforms for community self-expression and engagement, moving beyond the narrow focus of the Blue Roof model to encompass a wider range of actors.

3. How do these governing agendas influence the creative communities' incentives and activities of participating in the development process?

I argue that the shift in governing agendas from the Blue Roof to Yulin has fundamentally reshaped the incentives and activities of creative communities through past twenty years, leading to a diversification in how these communities engage with urban development.

Under the Blue Roof model, where participation was limited to elite artists, the main incentive for these actors was to align with government-defined cultural agendas to secure visibility and access to resources. This alignment led to the prioritisation of activities that were commercially viable and artistically prestigious, but often disconnected from broader community needs. The focus was on producing art that reinforced the state's cultural branding, rather than experimenting with socially inclusive or community-based projects. By contrast, the Yulin project's community-centred governance agenda created a different set of incentives. With the promotion of self-governance and broader participation, creative communities were encouraged to engage in projects that had tangible benefits for local residents, such as art education for the public, collaborative workshops, and heritage preservation initiatives. This shift expanded the range of

creative activities from cultural production to include community engagement, and participatory planning. The new governance framework thus incentivised creative communities to adopt a more holistic approach, viewing themselves not just as cultural producers but as key agents in shaping the social fabric of the neighbourhood.

4. How do we understand and conceptualise the government-society relationship in Chinese urban governance and Chinese creative communities' role in CCI-oriented urbanisation?

I argue that the evolving government-society relationship in Chinese urban governance can be understood as a transition from a hierarchical, state-centric model to a more complex and negotiated form of collaboration that reflects ongoing changes in China's governance methods.

The Blue Roof model, while allowing some room for negotiation, ultimately maintained a clear power asymmetry between the government and creative communities, with the government retaining decisive control over development outcomes. This relationship, characterised by a selective inclusion of elite voices, represents a form of "conditional partnership", where creative communities had some influence but operated within strict parameters set by the state. The Yulin Regeneration, on the other hand, represents a more collaborative government-society relationship, where creative communities have taken on a co-governance role. The local government's shift towards promoting community self-governance and inclusive participation reflects an attempt to decentralise power and distribute agency more equitably. This transition suggests the emergence of new governance forms that support community-led urban regeneration, but careful examination is needed to assess the authenticity of these collaborations. While creative communities appear to be more visible in China's urban planning, it is essential to

critically evaluate the extent to which this agency is genuinely transformative or if it remains limited by the government's broader economic and political objectives.

Thus, I argue that while creative communities have gained more visibility and influence, the government-society relationship remains complex, marked by both opportunities for genuine collaboration and ongoing risks of co-option. The careful examination of these dynamics is crucial in determining whether art-led urban regeneration in China can truly achieve authentic collaborative governance, where all stakeholders can shape outcomes meaningfully, or whether it remains a government-directed process with superficial elements of public participation.

7.2 Integrating creative communities into urban development strategies

The integration of creative communities into urban development strategies in China marks a notable shift towards more inclusive and collaborative urban governance models. In cities like Chengdu, collaborative governance has emerged as a key model for urban planning, involving the active participation of multiple stakeholders, including government bodies and creative communities. This approach aims to foster more participatory and inclusive development processes. For instance, in the case of the Blue Roof Art District, the local government contracted with the artist community to integrate the district into the city's broader cultural and economic strategies. This partnership is in line with Healey's (1997) concept of collaborative planning, which advocates for reproductive urban outcomes through inclusive governance frameworks. The Blue Roof Art District initially started as an informal gathering of artists, lacking formal recognition or support. Its transformation into a formally recognised creative hub was achieved

through strategic partnerships with local authorities, who provided essential infrastructure and promotional backing. This development aligns with Abramson's (2011) notion of “heteropraxy”, where informal practices are incorporated into formal governance structures, allowing creative communities to exert significant influence on urban development.

However, the collaborative governance model also raises critical questions about power dynamics and the extent of genuine stakeholder participation. Arnstein's (1969) “ladder of participation” suggests that while these processes are intended to include diverse parties, they often fall short of true empowerment, particularly when economic and political interests dominate decision-making. In the Blue Roof case, although artists were involved in the planning process, the degree to which they influenced final decisions remains ambiguous, highlighting a potential gap between the inclusive rhetoric of collaboration and the actual distribution of power.

The agency of creative communities, as exemplified by the Blue Roof Art District, challenges the traditional view of these groups as passive recipients of development. The community leveraged its cultural capital to negotiate support and recognition from local authorities, embodying the concept of local state corporatism, where local governments and communities engage in mutually beneficial arrangements. Despite their proactive role, creative communities face significant constraints, as discussed by Pratt (2008) and Harvey (2005), including the risks of co-optation and commercialisation, which can compromise cultural and artistic values. The increasing visibility and integration of the Blue Roof Art District into the city’s branding strategies led to perhaps rising property values and a shift towards more commercialised forms of space production, risking the

alienation of the original artist community and diluting the district's cultural authenticity, as Zukin (1987) warns about the commodification of culture.

The outcomes of collaboration between creative communities and local governments in Chengdu have been mixed. While these partnerships have led to significant infrastructure improvements, increased cultural tourism, and broader recognition of the arts, reflecting the potential of creative industries to drive urban regeneration and economic diversification, as discussed by Landry (2000) and Florida (2002), they also bring challenges. The Yulin Street regeneration project, another case for creative collaboration, demonstrates these dual outcomes. The local government's efforts to regenerate the area in collaboration with artists and cultural organisations have successfully attracted tourists and boosted local businesses. However, these benefits are tempered by challenges such as the displacement of lower-income residents due to rising costs, a phenomenon often referred to as cultural gentrification. This reflects broader concerns discussed by Smith (1996) about the social costs of creative-led urban regeneration, where the influx of wealthier residents and businesses can undermine the diversity and accessibility of cultural spaces.

In conclusion, the integration of creative communities into Chengdu’s urban development strategies illustrates both the opportunities and challenges inherent in collaborative governance. The experiences of the Blue Roof Art District and Yulin Street regeneration highlight the transformative potential of these communities to revitalise urban spaces, foster economic growth, and enhance cultural vibrancy. However, these cases also reveal critical tensions, such as the risk of cultural commodification and the displacement of lower-income residents, which underscore the need for nuanced governance approaches.

7.3 Research originality and limitation

This thesis makes a significant contribution to understanding the evolving role of creative communities in urban development in China, particularly through detailed case studies of Chengdu's Blue Roof Art District and Yulin Street. By examining these spaces, the research illuminates the dynamics of collaborative governance, the agency of creative communities, and the broader impacts of such collaborations on urban regeneration. Integrating theoretical frameworks such as "creative city discourse" (Landry, 2000) and "entrepreneurial urbanism" (Harvey, 1989), the work offers a nuanced critique of current urban development paradigms in China.

The originality of this thesis lies in its critical examination of the extent to which creative communities can influence urban planning and development within a predominantly state-driven framework. The study challenges the assumption that collaborative governance naturally leads to equitable and inclusive urban development, highlighting instead the complexities and potential limitations of such an approach. It emphasizes the risks associated with the commercialization and gentrification of cultural spaces, which can dilute cultural authenticity and displace original community members—a concern discussed by scholars like Pratt (2009) and Evans (2009). A key aspect of this research is its focus on the proactive role of creative communities in shaping urban environments. The findings underscore that creative communities are not merely passive recipients of policy decisions but are active agents in negotiating and co-creating urban spaces. This involvement is often seen in how these communities leverage their cultural capital and mobilize networks to influence planning processes and secure resources. This proactive stance aligns with the concept of "cultural citizenship" (Isin & Nielsen, 2008), where communities assert their right to participate in the cultural and social life of the city.

However, the research also has limitations. While focusing on Chengdu provides a rich and detailed examination of the city's unique urban dynamics, it may limit the generalizability of the findings to other Chinese cities with different cultural, economic, and political contexts. The study primarily reflects the perspectives of the involved stakeholders at a specific point in time, potentially overlooking longer-term trends and impacts. Moreover, while the thesis engages with critical discussions on commercialization and gentrification, it would benefit from more comprehensive quantitative data to better assess the socio-economic changes in these areas.

The critical discussions in the literature review highlight the need for a more nuanced understanding of the power dynamics involved in urban governance. Scholars such as Peck and Theodore (2015) and Pratt (2009) suggest that the integration of creative communities into urban development can often serve broader economic and political agendas, potentially marginalizing the communities' original cultural and social goals. The findings of this thesis reinforce these concerns, illustrating that while creative communities actively engage in shaping their urban environments, their influence is often circumscribed by overarching state and market forces.

Overall, this thesis significantly contributes to the academic discourse on urban governance and creative industries, providing valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities of integrating creative communities into urban development strategies. Future research could expand on these findings by exploring similar dynamics in other cities, employing a broader methodological approach that includes both qualitative and quantitative data, and examining the long-term sustainability of creative-led urban regeneration projects. Additionally, incorporating more diverse theoretical perspectives, including those from critical urban studies and cultural geography, could deepen the understanding of the socio-

political implications of such governance frameworks. This approach would further clarify how creative communities can maintain their agency and authenticity amidst complex urban transformations.

7.4 Recommendation for future research

Future research should deepen the analysis of creative communities' participation in urban development, addressing areas that were briefly touched upon in this thesis but require further exploration. Comparative studies across different cities can reveal how varying local contexts and governance models affect the engagement and impact of these communities. Longitudinal research is essential to assess the sustainability of creative-led urban regeneration, particularly in preserving cultural authenticity and preventing gentrification, issues highlighted but not exhaustively examined in this study. Quantitative approaches should be integrated to provide clearer insights into the socio-economic changes resulting from creative community involvement, complementing the qualitative findings. Engaging with critical urban theories can further elucidate the power dynamics at play, particularly how creative communities negotiate their roles within state-dominated frameworks.

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APPENDIX

A1: Interview details

Government Authorities	
Departments	**Date**
General office of municipal government	15th June 2018
Urban planning bureaucracy	15th June 2018
Urban planning and natural resources	31st May 2019
Shuangliu district government	1st June 2019
Wuhou district government	25th December 2019
Wuhou district government	10th April 2022
Sansheng street office	20th December 2019
Yulin street office	8th May 2022
Nijiaqiao community centre head	13th July 2022
Yuline East community centre head	14th July 2022
Creative Workers	
Positions	**Date**
Director of the Blue Roof Art Centre	24th January 2021
Director of design and craft academy	25th January 2021
Staff in the Blue Roof Art Centre	1st June 2019
Staff in design and craft studio	1st Juen 2019
Director of Xiao Jiu Guan	8th July 2022
Director of Yijie Design Company	9th July 2022
Staff in The Alley	9th July 2022
Artist in The Alley	8th July 2022
Curator in The Alley	8th July 2022

Table A1: interview details

A2: Participant Information Sheet

Research title:

Rethinking the urban governance in China's culture-led redevelopment: case of art spaces in Chengdu

You are being invited to take part in this research exploring Chinese urban governance under culture-led redevelopment strategy in the city of Chengdu. Before deciding if you would like to take part in the research, you are expected to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information sheet carefully. You can contact me if you would like more clarification on any of the following:

Who will carry out the research?

The research is conducted by postgraduate research student Mengran Zhu from the University of Westminster, the research is supervised by Dr Giulio Verdini, Dr Ilaria Pappalepore and Dr Andrew Smith from the School of Architecture and Cities of the university.

What is the aim of the research?

The overall aim of this research is to enhance the understanding of contemporary urban governance of China's culture-led urban redevelopment, by particularly looking at the role artist communities play in the planning process. This research investigates the changing status of artist communities in Chinese society during past two decades, by studying their strategic response to urban policies and participation in urban decision-making. Research is carried out in light of the following research questions:

1. What are the agendas and the underlying motivations of artist communities in art space development, in the context of China's CCI led development? How effectively they can liaise with local authorities?

2. In governing art space, what is the purpose of local governments in respect to community engagement and what government techniques have been used to

achieve this? How do these techniques impact the agendas of artist communities and how do artist communities take response?

3. How do we understand and conceptualise the changing nature of Chinese urban governance in relation to the role artist communities play in art space planning at local level? Is there a genuine move towards more collaborative practices?

Why have I been invited to take part?

You are invited to take part because your views and opinions are important for the researcher to understand the motivations and behaviours of artist communities and/or local governments in Chinese urban governance.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

This research project will involve in-depth interviews lasting between 30-60 minutes at a time and location that would suit you. The conversation will be recorded, and the researcher will take notes if needed.

What happens to the data collected?

The recorded conversation will be transcribed by the researcher. Only the interviewer and the researcher will have access to the audiotape. All information will be coded and anonymised.

The information/notes the researcher have collected as paper copies will be stored under lock and key, while the electronic data can only be accessed with a secure password. Only the researcher will have access to the data.

The data collected will be used only for the purpose of this research; if data were to be used for future studies beyond those outlined above, the researcher will

contact you to seek your consent and further Research Ethics Committee approval will be sought.

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential.

How is confidentiality maintained?

All of the typed-up notes will be given an identification number that will be kept separate from your name. Your name will not appear in the research at all and all audio recordings of the interviews will be permanently erased after research is completed to ensure confidentiality.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide not to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

Contact for further information

If you have any questions or would like to know more about the research, please contact the researcher based in the School of Architecture and Cities in the University of Westminster:

Name: Mengran Zhu

Email: w1673860@my.Westminster.ac.uk