

DRAFT - NOT FOR CIRCULATION OR QUOTATION

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**Social Research and the Localization of Chinese Urban Planning Practice:
Some Ideas from Quanzhou, Fujian**

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BASIC PREMISES

In early 1984, the Chinese State Council issued the "City Planning Ordinance". Through this state directive, all municipal and county governments were required to develop master plans to guide their physical development in accordance with existing practices of local economic planning. By establishing the basic norms for urban spatial planning practice throughout the country, the promulgation of this ordinance in effect designated the official starting date for the rise or, more properly, resurrection of the field of urban planning after decades of dissolution.

In this respect the urban planning profession was not unique. The Maoist state's attack on this field was only one part of a broad dismantlement of professions that ostensibly served to elevate "common knowledge" (*chang shi*) in their place, but which in fact established the party-state's hegemony over societal information. The resurrection of professional fields in the 1980s can be interpreted as an official recognition that modernization through market reform depends on the technical knowledge of elite groups. Urban planning in its first manifestation following Reform and Opening was thus driven by the goals of modernization and economic growth. However, since under "socialism with Chinese characteristics," economic opening must be accompanied by maintenance of statist social and political controls, the revival of professions poses a problem for the state. What exactly is the relation of professions to the state, and how their activities are to be kept strictly "technical," are still open questions.

We emphasize here both the newness of the field of urban planning and its initial focus on supporting economic growth objectives in order to draw out some critical differences between the current state of Chinese urban planning practice and the norms of practice which have become established over time in the developed countries of the west. The field of planning in the west is often described as being derived from two streams or traditions, a rationalist stream flowing from the design professions (architecture, engineering, systems theory) and shaped by positivist scientific thought, and a critique coming from the social sciences that posits the lack of a true, coherent "social welfare function", stressing instead the need for articulating and negotiating trade-offs between social and institutional forces in the allocation of public or collective goods. Differences between these two intellectual traditions of western planning have prompted spirited debate over the epistemology of planning. At root is the recognition that planning problems, being socially embedded, are fundamentally "wicked problems" (to use the terminology of one early expression of this) in that social context creates a shifting milieu which cannot properly be anticipated in either problem definition or planning implementation (Rittel and Webber 1973). The implications of such debate are not merely academic; processes of public participation, stakeholder analysis and negotiation, and social empowerment have become central to local planning practice in the 1990s (Innes 1995).

In contrast, urban planning practice in China has so far followed a much narrower mandate. It is a profession with a single tradition, derived virtually in its entirety from the design professions, and especially the socialist Soviet one. In Chinese, urban planning (*guihua*), is clearly distinguished from economic planning (*jihua*). Over the history of the People's Republic, *jihua*, "the setting of economic targets", has been a fundamental role of the state and was an important

function of the government even during periods when *guihua* was utterly discredited as Soviet elitism. Under the centrally planned economy, therefore, urban planners have had little opportunity or reason to include economic or social analysis in their activities (with the occasional exception of user needs analysis), and, unlike in the west, neither theory nor practice has been fundamentally influenced by the social science critique. This is attributable in part to constraints on social discourse in the Chinese polity, but as well to the very newness of the field. For example, Burgess and Park's classic work on urban social ecology was not even available in Chinese translation until the late 1980s.

As a consequence, Chinese urban planning during both the period of Soviet influence in the 1950s and in the current Reform era, has exhibited some of the worst traits of professional elitism: an exclusive, paternalistic attitude toward determining the needs of urban dwellers, combined with a lack of real experience with average living conditions and a tendency to focus on future visions and end-products rather than on processes and implementation. Of course, these traits went hand-in-hand with the entire command economy. The fact that social analysis and critique have recently made their way into urban planning discourse in China at all is really a reflection of the extent to which markets, and particularly urban spatial markets, have eroded the planned economic system (Abramson 1997a).

A second critical concern in the comparison between Chinese and western planning arises from the problematic question of administrative or political decentralization. In the liberal democratic polities of the west, planning as a social endeavor originated precisely as a vehicle for the articulation of local needs. In contrast, the socialist Chinese state in the pre-reform period was notable for its emphasis on democratic centralism and the strength of its centralized planned economy. The historic Chinese political culture of local autonomy, as expressed in the oft-quoted aphorism, "the sky is high and the emperor is far away", was largely kept in check throughout this period by the machinery of state in Beijing. In administrative terms, decentralization has been the most profound impact of the reform period, although there is a good case built for this being a transition to a "decentralized command economy" when looked at nationally. Reforms have greatly strengthened the local state and prompted the articulation of regional and sub-regional differences throughout China.

The diversification which is inherent in China's momentous changes since the early 1980s is expressed not only in the varied practices at the level of the local state, but in the broad opening up of roles for new social and economic actors. In consideration of the historically unprecedented waves of growth and change that are now shaping China's cities, it is becoming clear to practicing planners and local officials that new processes of urbanization and development have emerged. These are processes that have different correspondences to state policies and actions than in the past, and therefore new strategies or new modes of planning thought are necessary in response. Our argument here is that these changes occasion the introduction and promotion of a second stream of thought for Chinese urban planning practice, a stream derived from social science research and analysis. In developing a research agenda for the 21st century, Chinese social scientists can play a major role by taking an explicit orientation toward applied research in support of the evolving field of urban planning.

In this paper we examine the trends of urbanization and urban planning in the city of Quanzhou, a medium sized city in Fujian province, in order to explore the potential for utilizing social science research practices in support of urban planning in China. In the following sections, we will review the characteristics of Quanzhou's urbanization processes and examine how the

city's approach to urban planning has been changing over the course of the 1990s. We will then discuss the findings of a recent research exercise in three neighborhoods of the city, looking in particular at how these findings might further the trend toward localization of planning practice which we have observed in Quanzhou. Our point here is that the articulation of the diversity of development processes that are now shaping the city of Quanzhou can help to inform the city government's approach to planning.

URBAN CHANGE IN QUANZHOU

Like every city, Quanzhou is a unique place, with its uniqueness growing out of its historic and geographic roots and intertwining with the complex patterns of present-day change. As with other cities in China today, there is a great deal of ambiguity around the concept of urban in Quanzhou. The Quanzhou municipality, first of all, has been administratively defined to include the surrounding six county region, roughly equivalent to the prefecture that Quanzhou administered under previous regimes. In 1997 it had a total population of 6.5 million and a total area of 10,865 square km, although the registered non-agricultural population of the municipality - an alternative way of thinking about "urban" - was only about 850,000. Moreover, many of the built up areas that accommodate the municipality's urban population are not continuous with the administrative centre. This historic and administrative core is comprised of the Old City district of Licheng and its adjacent suburbs, which in 1994 had a population of over 185,000 (Quanzhou Municipal Government 1995). In addition to these official numbers, one must also consider the sizeable population of rural migrants from elsewhere, which is estimated to be around 200,000 people within the built-up areas of the municipality. With all these qualifications and approximations, it is reasonable to think of the urban core of Quanzhou municipality - Licheng and its surroundings - as containing around 300,000 people, about one third of whom are categorised as "temporary" migrants.

The flow of rural migrants into cities is only one of a number of defining characteristics of China's reform period (Leaf 1998; Davis, et al. 1995). Other major urban changes of this period are also evident in Quanzhou. The rapidly developing market economy has prompted accelerated economic growth, as indicated by a 22-fold increase in municipal GDP between 1980 and 1997 (Quanzhou Municipal Statistics Bureau 1998). Also, as elsewhere in the coastal regions of China, the bulk of economic growth has been in the township and village enterprises (TVEs); total production value of TVEs increased 368 times during this same period. This wealth has accrued both to the local government and to the citizenry. Devolution of fiscal responsibility from the central government since the late 1980s has allowed for a greater proportion of locally retained revenues. When coupled with the introduction of new municipal financing techniques utilising land market value, this has resulted in greatly improved municipal budgets in recent years, with the budget deficit in Quanzhou dropping from 16 percent in the mid-1980s to 2 percent in 1990. Following the land market boom of the early 1990s, the municipality had achieved a 1997 budget surplus of 44 percent. At the same time, the municipality has typically been able to rely on developers to include infrastructure upgrading in project costs as a kind of tax in kind. Thus the economic boom underlies ongoing investments in physical modernization, with major programs of inner city redevelopment and rapid suburbanization.

This is not to say that municipal governments have been unhampered in achieving their development goals. Administrative and fiscal decentralization in the early 1990s extended lower than the municipal level, down to the district and subdistrict governments as well, and created

sharp internal rivalries. The object of large-scale redevelopment, for example, was understood differently at different levels of local government. Municipalities, empowered with control over enormous rural hinterlands and an array of new revenue sources outside the traditional urban center, saw redevelopment primarily as a means to achieve major infrastructure goals, particularly street-widening and traffic improvement. Inner-city district-level governments, however, which were burdened with the responsibility of maintaining other urban services without the benefits of a mature tax collection system, have viewed redevelopment more as an opportunity to raise badly needed revenue. Consequently, the scale of urban redevelopment orchestrated by district governments quickly outgrew municipal master plans (Dong 1997, Tan 1994, Wu 1999). In Quanzhou, as much as 56 percent of the city centre was slated for redevelopment by the year 2000 according to the Old City District Plan of 1992 (Quanzhou Municipal Government 1992), and further planning pushed by the Licheng District in 1993 revised this amount up to 65 percent or about 420 hectares (Tao 1995). As of the end of 1999, approximately 17 percent was actually been rebuilt. While this is far below the original goal, it still represents a significant portion of the Old City.

What we see to be the most significant aspect of current urbanization trends in China has been the rapid diversification of city-building processes, arising from the growing role of new social actors in contrast to the near-monopoly position of the state in the past. When looked at in these terms, Quanzhou can be understood to be a typical Chinese city, yet a consideration of the specific mix of new actors and new processes affecting change in Quanzhou, emphasizes how exceptional the city is. Three basic factors, derived from the city's specific historic and geographic circumstances underlie the uniqueness of Quanzhou in this regard:

(1) Southern Fujian is notable in China for its relative lack of state investment during the period of the centralized command economy, due to what was seen to be its vulnerable position on the Taiwan Straits;

(2) Quanzhou is famous both locally and internationally for its extensive *huaqiao* (Overseas Chinese) connections, as it has been a place of tremendous out-migration since the late nineteenth century; and

(3) A high degree of private property control has been maintained in the city, even during the most radically collective periods of China's recent past.

These three factors are tightly interlinked, forming the basis of a particular political economy of development which differs from what might be considered to be the Chinese urban norm. As one example, the low level of central state investment in the area translates in practical terms into a relatively smaller proportion of state sector involvement in the local economy. In 1993, only 6.78 percent of production was state-owned, and 53 percent of retail was private. The "front line" position of Quanzhou on the Taiwan Straits is thus a contributory factor to the persistence of the private economy throughout the period of state socialism.

The persistence of private ownership at the household level is linked not only to the lack of central government investment in the region, but also to the influence of *huaqiao* ties, in that city officials have always worked to maintain good relations with overseas expatriates, being careful not to implement policies which might disenfranchise those components of the local community who have external connections. The investment and development implications of the *huaqiao* connection are historically rooted (Zhuang 1996; Dai 1996), with major initiatives for development and change originating from returned expatriates in the 1920s and 1930s, and a

special district for elegant mansions (the Huaqiao Xincun) set aside in 1954 to reward the wealthiest overseas supporters of the Revolution. Indeed, this *xincun* (“new village”) was only the first of many planned housing areas laid out during the 1950s and 60s for returning Overseas Chinese; the more typical socialist apartment-style housing estates for local workers did not appear in Quanzhou until after 1978 (Quanzhou Municipal Construction Commission 1995). The continuing importance of the Overseas Chinese connection is reflected in the fact that the city’s most recent master plan states the number of Overseas Chinese who can trace their roots to Quanzhou - estimated at more than six million, including up to 45 percent of the Han population of Taiwan - even before it mentions the current population of the municipality itself (Quanzhou Municipal Government 1995, p. 2; see also Zhuang Y. et al 1991).

Unlike most of urban China, the Quanzhou government never carried out a program of housing collectivization, even during the Cultural Revolution. By the end of the 1970s, more than 90 percent of Licheng District’s housing stock was still in private hands, and during the first decade of economic reform in the 1980s, individual households carried out the bulk of new housing construction in Licheng District. By contrast, in Beijing’s Old City, private housing ownership even now does not exceed 10 percent, and most of this is still rented out to government-designated families at government-controlled rents. Overall, it can be seen that Quanzhou’s *huaqiao* connections have long been crucial to the local economy and the provision of essential public services and housing. In the context of low levels of central state spending, this factor has provided the local government with a significant degree of leverage vis-à-vis the Beijing leadership. It may have as well provided individual households with an equally significant degree of leverage vis-à-vis the local government.

These three deeply rooted factors - low state sector investment, strong *huaqiao* connections and high levels of private ownership - intersect with the new pressures arising from the re-introduction of market forces in China to shape a locally defined new political economy of urbanization in Quanzhou. This is most clearly evident in the ongoing conflict between Quanzhou’s position as a city of historic importance and the city’s rapidly expanding urban land market. Quanzhou is officially designated as China’s third most historic city (after Beijing and Xi’an), based on the number of registered historic structures in the city and the recognition that it was China’s major seaport during the Song and Yuan dynasties (Liu G. 1997; Schinz 1989). In 1982, Quanzhou was included in China’s first lot of officially listed “Famous Historic and Cultural Cities”, and in 1991, UNESCO included the city in its study tour of the Silk Road, giving it widespread international recognition as “the origin of the maritime Silk Road”, thus linking it with a chain of historic sites stretching across South Asia and the Arab world (Liu G. 1997). Encouraged by this recognition, city conservation and tourism officials have actively courted the support of Arab states and Islamic leaders, and are pursuing UNESCO designation as a “World Heritage Site”. Planning for redevelopment and modernization has thus proceeded with an emphasis on contextual sensitivity and historic conservation. The attempt to marry conservation and modernization, however, has met with many false starts, dead ends and detours. Conventional urban planning and development standards and practices have more often hindered than helped this enterprise, and after the experiences so far, local planners are now developing local solutions that in many instances challenge the urban planning regulations promulgated from the central government.

PLANNING IN QUANZHOU

The initial listing of historic cities in 1982 and the resumption of master planning in 1984 can be seen as parts of the same resurgence of professionalism arising from the central government's overall attitude toward the urban environment and its development. Yet there was very little coordination of the new standards and methods that conservation and planning each demanded of local governments. Master planning, and its correlate, the more detailed district regulatory, or "control", planning, uniformly entailed the division of urban land parcels into standard use categories, separated by roads of standard widths deemed appropriate for any "modern" city, and occupied by buildings that are to be spaced according to detailed standards for sunlight access and the layout of typical infrastructure lines. These national standards were developed essentially for new settlements on "greenfield" sites, with no regard for the complexities of existing urban fabric or land use rights (Abramson 1997b, Dong 1997, Liu Y. 1997 and Tan 1997).

Even in the case of designated historic cities, regulatory and development planning tends to produce a literal blueprint of the future urban environment, with most existing buildings and land use boundaries wiped away and replaced by vaguely Corbusian landscapes. Such visions also tend to be only partially, if nevertheless destructively, realized. In any city, an entire host of institutions, excluded or ignored by the planning process, can ultimately subvert the master plan as they attempt to lease out the land they occupy or otherwise use their land to satisfy immediate development needs.

This is evident in Quanzhou in the many multi-story buildings built by individual households, work units, and even local government agencies, despite a general planning policy to limit new buildings to three stories throughout the Old City center. The most prominent transgressors in the early 1990s were the major extensions of two hotels owned respectively by the Municipal Government and the Licheng District Government, and the offices of the Public Security Bureau, all of which exceed nine stories. Even the Municipal Planning Institute and Planning Bureau built a five-story office building in a poorly-accessed, crowded old neighborhood of vernacular houses. Meanwhile, during the critical two years or so that the Old City's environment began to suffer most sharply from increasingly dense construction, large tracts of well-serviced open land outside the urban core were being kept from development by speculators waiting for the market to ripen even further.

The inability of conventional urban planning to consider and influence the development activities of individual land holders was one factor that pushed local governments to adopt a large-scale, clean-sweep approach to redevelopment; if one development agency or company took responsibility for a large parcel of the Old City, then it would be easier to provide adequate services and to control building density and appearance at least within that parcel. Redevelopment projects then became largely the result of a compromise between those factions in the government that on one side favored increased density in the interest of economic development, and those that on the other side favored lower densities in the interests of the public environment and/or historic conservation. The logic inherent in developer-provided infrastructure, however, tended to favor sharp increases in density; the more public infrastructure developers were required to include in their projects, the more existing buildings they would have to demolish, and the more buildings they demolished, the more new floor space they would have

to build to cover the costs of relocation and compensation of existing residents and work units.

In all of these respects, Quanzhou's experience is not unlike that of the rest of urban China. What is unusual about Quanzhou's experience in the Chinese context is the extent to which redevelopment projects in the Old City ultimately strove to respect the projects' historic and environmental context despite their large scale and drastic levels of demolition. The current national trend of inner-city redevelopment in China is to replace old, dense lowrise urban fabric with isolated single-use blocks in an open matrix of green space and separated by broad automobile-oriented avenues (Lu 1997; Wu 1999). The three major redevelopment projects to date in Quanzhou, however, have taken the form of more modestly widened streets and squares, continuously lined by new apartment buildings with arcaded shops on the ground floors. Densities have increased significantly, from an original gross Floor Area Ratio generally not exceeding 1:1 to a new gross density of over 1:1.6, with nearly all original buildings demolished (Lin 1997). Nevertheless, the style and materials of the new buildings have adopted elements of the local building traditions to an almost carnival extent, competing with each other in the local press for recognition as being the "most Minnan" (see, for example, Huang 1997). References to local style in Quanzhou's new buildings are seen at many scales, from the employment of traditional crafts in the finish work, all the way up to the choice of building for the articulation of public urban spaces.

This kind of architectural contextualism in Quanzhou's redevelopment derives partly from the growing professionalism of urban planning in China. Since Quanzhou is a relatively small but recently wealthy city, its planning authorities have been able to hire from prestigious units elsewhere in the country the planning expertise they lack in-house. Designers from Tianjin University, the Jiangsu Provincial Planning Institute, Dongnan University in Nanjing, and Tsinghua University in Beijing have all contributed to the city's redevelopment planning. These outside professionals, impressed by what they recognize as Quanzhou's strong local character, have more enthusiastically attempted to work that character into their new designs than they might have done in projects closer to home. Moreover, just as "the monk from far away knows better how to read the scriptures", the advice of planners from nationally-renowned institutions has carried more weight in the debates over planning policy than similar viewpoints expressed by local factions. In the case of Quanzhou, it so happened that the contextualism advocated by outside consultants met with an unusual sympathy among many influential local leaders.

Even before the completion of the city's two initial large redevelopment projects, Quanzhou's planning authorities began to look for alternatives to the unified, large-scale approach to redevelopment. Not only was this approach seen as too destructive of the Old City fabric, more importantly it was proving too expensive given the Licheng District's property structure. As a rule in China, most city center residents wish very much to remain in their central location due to the proximity of urban services. However, a major factor in the ability of most Chinese cities to redevelop inner city neighborhoods is the high proportion of government-owned housing and thus the weakness of existing residents' rights to occupy their current housing site. Typically, such residents are entitled to new housing, but only in very distant locations. Since housing in Licheng District is nearly entirely private, and has been continuously so since before 1949, nearly all residents have the right to return to their original neighborhood after redevelopment and to purchase at cost the same amount of space in the new housing that they had previously occupied. Moreover, since residents of Licheng District also tend to have rather spacious houses by Chinese urban standards (14 square meters per person on average), redevelopment projects in this city

must include large amounts of unprofitable space for returning residents.

After the softening of the luxury-end real estate market in 1994, speculators who had allowed suburban land to lie fallow began to release these tracts for development. Dense new housing estates began to spring up, taking some of the pressure off the Old City. The municipal planning authorities, more concerned now than before about the conservation of the Old City, were therefore unable to justify raising densities to the necessary level to offset the high costs of on-site relocation in redevelopment projects. Quanzhou's planners ceased using the term "old [i.e. obsolete] city redevelopment" (*jiucheng gaizao*) and instead spoke of "old [i.e. historic] city preservation and construction" (*gucheng baohu jianshe*). Treating the Old City as a unique but integral core for the entire municipality, rather than as a self-contained district that had to cover its own modernization costs, the municipal government essentially passed a moratorium on further large-scale neighborhood redevelopment. Additional street widening might be carried out, but as a public infrastructure project rather than a money-making venture.

A number of factors - the continuity of traditional cultural and social activities within the community, the persistence of private property at the household level, the collapse of a nationwide boom in luxury real estate, cosmopolitan professionalism among both local and outside planners, and a locally-rooted but globally sophisticated political leadership - have combined to create a powerful constituency in favor of a form of redevelopment that respects local environmental conditions, and, by extension, local cultural and social conditions. Contextualism in the rebuilding of urban space in Quanzhou over the course of the 1990s was an expression of an emerging localization of the entire planning process, even though it required the engagement of national-level professionals and international exchanges to give it official momentum. Ultimately, the entire large-scale approach to redevelopment had to be reconsidered.

The question thus remains: how should the government plan and provide for improvements in the public urban environment? If the threat that large-scale redevelopment posed to the historic city has been removed, what should be done about the threat posed by widespread, incremental demolition and densification by individual households? The Municipal Planning Bureau, the agency responsible for enforcing the city's plans and building regulations, has recognized that the answer to these questions must lie partly with individual households themselves, and with the community-level organizations that represent and communicate with residents directly. The financial strength of average households in Quanzhou is well known to city officials. Likewise, the willingness of residents to pool their resources to achieve communal goals has also not gone unnoticed. In the absence of a system of property taxation, how can these resources be drawn upon to improve the urban environment more generally? These questions, critical as they are for formulating the future approach to urban planning in Quanzhou, underscore the necessity of understanding the diverse patterns of urban change in Quanzhou today. In so doing, they provide a basic rationale for incorporating social research into the practice of urban planning.

SOCIAL RESEARCH AND THE LOCALIZATION OF URBAN PLANNING

From our collaboration with planners from the Quanzhou Municipal Planning Bureau and other officials of local government, it is clear that localization of planning practice is now a high priority in Quanzhou. “Localization” here can mean a variety of things. Prominent on the city’s agenda is the resolution of tensions between two separate sets of pressures coming down from above. The first, as previously discussed, are the nationally promulgated standards for urban upgrading and modernization, standards which are tending to produce a high degree of uniformity across the urban landscapes of China. Simultaneously, as a nationally designated historic city, Quanzhou is also under pressure to devise a heritage conservation approach to planning, an approach which of necessity emphasizes the historic uniqueness of place in the city.

But resolution of the conflicts between these two sets of directives from above must also be cognizant of the specific local processes of change. In Quanzhou, this means the conscious search for a balance between local household desires and broader collective visions of the future city, in that so many of the ongoing changes in the city are the aggregate results of initiatives by households and other non-state actors. As a result, one seeming oddity which has emerged in recent years (an oddity relative to the situations elsewhere in urban China) has been what can best be described as a preservationist local government, which is increasingly taking a hard line in the restriction of physical change in the built fabric of the Old City. Thus new tensions are emerging, forcing local planners to more carefully consider the diversity of urbanization processes ongoing in the city.

These pragmatic concerns provide the context for our research on neighborhood change in Quanzhou.ⁱ In this work, we examined three sites in the city of Quanzhou, two in the historic urban core, including a previously redeveloped neighborhood, and one site on the rapidly changing periphery of the city. Our goal in undertaking this work was, first of all, to articulate the range of building typologies which now constitute the residential fabric of the city, and, second, to investigate the processes by which these different typologies have emerged. In all, we identified eleven different types of construction, which are distinguished as much by differing social processes as by distinct building forms (Abramson, et al. 2000). The initial characterization of these processes was between what we termed “developer-built” and “self-built” construction. Our survey identified five different developer-built types, with three in the inner city and two on the periphery, three of which are exclusively residential, the other two with mixed uses; and six different types of self-built housing, one in the inner city, two on the periphery and three in both places, with all six exhibiting a mix of uses other than exclusively residential. Distinguishing characteristics of these six types may be seen in terms of the sources of capital for construction,

ⁱ. This research was developed on the basis of a long-standing working relationship between the School of Community and Regional Planning at UBC, the Department of Urban Design and Planning of Tsinghua University and the Quanzhou Municipal Planning Bureau. Initial work was carried out in 1994 in the form of a joint field studio project carried out by faculty and students from Tsinghua and UBC (see Leaf, et al. 1995). This working relationship has also been bolstered over the years by a series of design projects undertaken by Tsinghua faculty in Quanzhou. We are grateful for support at various times by the Canadian International Development Agency, UBC Continuing Studies, and the Governance and Civil Society Unit of the Ford Foundation, China.

intentions of use by those who built them, socio-economic characteristics of the builders and residents, and the resulting environmental conditions.

This survey was useful as well in identifying the range of social actors in city-building, and explaining why different groups matter in different ways under different circumstances. Significant social actors identified in this work include the following:

- Local state agencies involved in the planning, administration and infrastructure provision in the city. These agencies include not only municipal level offices, but lower level administrative structures, such as neighborhood committees and village committees on the periphery of the city's built up area. In addition to the need to respond to local concerns, higher level agencies must also be cognizant of formal regulatory pressures from the central state.

- Local developers, who, although functioning in the newly emergent market economy of the city, nonetheless are not fully autonomous from the interests of the local state, as they are organized as essentially parastatal organizations, tied to one or another local state agency. The diversity of activities by developers, and how they intersect (or not) with the formal regulatory structures of the local state are indicative of the degree of fragmentation within local political structures.

- Other parastatal organizations, such as those groups organized for facilitating cooperation with Overseas Chinese. The activities of such organizations may only be tangential to the overall development processes in the city, although they help to shape the climate for interactions between local citizens and their overseas relatives.

- Local citizens of long-standing, who tend to act autonomously or through individual negotiation with regulatory agencies in shaping their residential environments. The capability for autonomous action on the part of citizens derives largely from the continuing patterns of private ownership in the residential fabric of the city (and in its surrounding villages), and is conditioned in many instances by relations with overseas relatives, many of whom have contributed capital for upgrading or rebuilding of old houses. Capacity for local citizens to act collectively is conditioned to a large degree by local administrative structures, such as neighborhood committees and village committees.

- Other autonomous or quasi-autonomous groups of new residents who originate from outside of the immediate area. One example of this is the large number of rural migrants whose presence in the villages surrounding the city has transformed the local economic base of Quanzhou's peri-urban regions areas. Another smaller although still significant example is that of the rural elites who now have sufficient resources for purchasing newly built market housing in the urban core, thus putting new pressures on inner city development.

How the interests of each of these groups intersect with local regulatory forms is a major factor in the continuing development of the city. Current practice tends to emphasize negotiated compliance (or in some cases, non-compliance) with the formal norms of development, thus creating a fair degree of unpredictability for the future planning of the city, despite the best intentions of local planners. Localization of planning practice thus argues for the development of more inclusive forms of planning, which can actively engage the various relevant interest groups in the normative process of shaping the future city. What makes this kind of survey and analysis significant from the perspective of conventional Chinese urban planning is that the social groups and processes identified in the survey were linked to specific types of built form. For planners who are trained to look at the city in primarily architectural terms, this provides a useful entry

point into the application of social research well beyond the usual user needs analysis.

The most promising initial reaction to our work has been interest from the Planning Bureau in developing participatory neighborhood planning processes in the Old City, as they understand this to be a useful step toward articulating a compromise position between residents and municipal planners regarding future upgrading strategies. An initial exercise, consisting of a series of workshops with planners and residents, has since been carried out in one inner city neighborhood with support from the China office of the Ford Foundation. Our plans for further initiatives along these lines are to work with local planners on institutionalizing participatory planning practices at neighborhood levels and to carry out further research on the potential for local organizational capacity among residents.

The positive reactions to our work to date indicate an interest and willingness on the part of local planning practitioners to incorporate particular tools of social research into urban planning at local levels. In a small way, a new stream of thinking in Chinese city planning is perhaps being opened up. Whether this is the beginning of a significantly expanded approach to urban planning in China - something more akin to the two streams of planning thought in the west - is indeed a question for the long term. It is clear from our experience that what is needed is much more than just introducing the tools of social research to planning practitioners; an institutional context within which they will be relevant is also necessary. In this, we feel that there are distinct and pragmatic roles for Chinese social scientists to play.

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