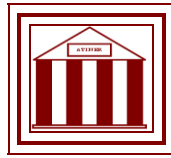


**Athens Institute for Education and Research
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**ATINER's Conference Paper Series
ARC2015-1768**

**The Evolution of the Fabric of Inner City in China
(1992-2012): A Case Study of the East Area of
Shabei Street, Shapingba District, Chongqing**

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**The Evolution of the Fabric of Inner City in China (1992-2012):
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Abstract

The rapid economic development ever since the reform and opening up to the outside world in 1978 has witnessed the process of fast urbanization of the cities in China. Accompanying the quick urban expansion, the inner cities have undergone renewal and renovation, which resulted in great changes of the urban fabric. With the sample of the east area of Shabei Street, Shapingba District, Chongqing in China, the research unit of plots, the means of Google Earth and field survey, the timeline of 1992, 2002 and 2012 as well as the map at the corresponding time, the article qualitatively and quantitatively analyzes the urban fabric from six aspects of land use, figure-ground relationship, street pattern, building density, block-plan, and a building and space scale. The following findings are drawn: some plots have experienced intense transformation, while others have minor ones; the building density enjoys the trend of being lower; some buildings change from being closely connected into being relatively sparse; the building and space scale is increasingly large. Finally, some discussions are made concerning the link between the change of urban fabric and politics, economy and culture in China in hope of revealing the dynamics behind the transformation.

Keywords: Chongqing, evolution, inner city, urban fabric

Introduction

The research on urban fabric forms an important part of the science of urban planning. In a broader sense, the urban fabric reflects the impact of political, economic and cultural factors on the urban space under certain geographical environments and at certain stages of social and economic development. In 1978, in China, the policy of reform and its opening up to the outside world was implemented and the old system of planned economy was gradually replaced by that of market economy. After 1990, the reform of the market economy system was deepened, the process of urbanization enjoyed obvious increase and the internal structure of the inner city was frequently restructured. As a consequence, the urban fabric of the inner city underwent recurrent transformations, one that is different from that of the planned economy period. The fact that cities at different times have different urban forms is in accordance with the Conzen's theory of the "morphological period" (Conzen, 1960). According to the Conzen School, the morphological period can be defined as the special material and cultural landscape made at a certain period of the urban development (Huo and Gu, 2005). The article, from the angle of political, economic and cultural change and with a case study of the east area of Shabei Street of the Shapingba District, attempts to justify the formation and evolution of the fabric in the inner city based on the urban morphology of the Conzen School.

Research Design

Sampling

The current research adopts a case study of the east area of Shabei Street of the Shapingba District in Chongqing in China. The research subject is located on the Jialing River of Chongqing downtown, with the inner-ring expressway on the left and Shabin Road on the north. It has the topography of being low on the north and high on the south. During the 20 years between 1992 and 2012, great changes have happened in the east area of Shabei Street in the process of urbanization. To be specific, industrial units like its northern cable factory and western electronic appliance plant went through restructuring, merging, bankruptcy or relocation. Its central educational units like Chongqing University and the Chongqing No. 7 Middle School experienced the internal readjustment and development. Also a tract of industrial enterprises and residential areas were demolished in the western area. This process illustrates an epitome of the change in the functions of the Chongqing inner cities, as well as a typical example of the evolution of the urban fabric.

Research Methods

The research methods include:

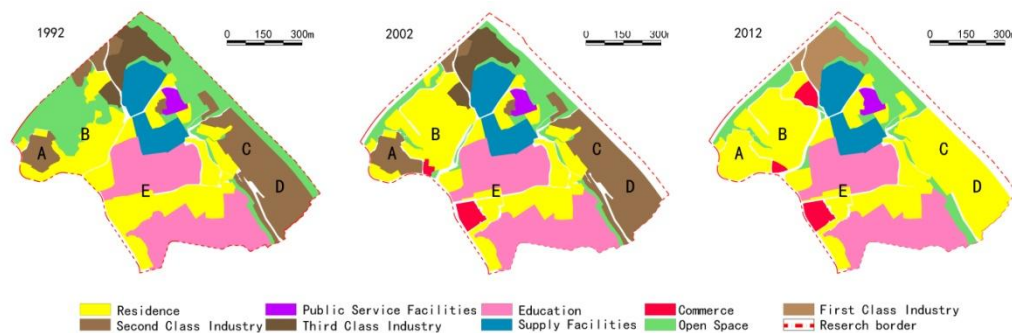
- 1) Empirical analysis. The empirical analysis mainly relies on typical instances, aiming to delve into the existing urban fabric.
- 2) Contrastive analysis. The authors resort to the longitudinal method to reveal the differences of the same sub-district in the urban fabric at different times. We further analyze its relation to and its control by politics, economy and culture.
- 3) Qualitative and quantitative analysis. A qualitative analysis is primarily applied into the research on land function, figure-ground relation, street pattern, building pattern, and building and space scale with the aim of exploring the transformation of the spatial form. In contrast, the quantitative analysis is mainly used for statistics of building coverage, and land use to demonstrate the change of the urban fabric.

Results

Land Function

The land function and the industrial structure of some areas has changed, such as the areas of A, B, C and D. The rural land use for residence has transformed into that for urban residence; the land use for industries has changed into that for residence in general with the specific change from the second and third class to the first class; the secondary industry has changed into the tertiary industry (Figure 1). To be concrete, the proportion of the residential land rose from 24.26% in 1992 to 27.05% in 2002, and then to 41.24% in 2012. However, the land use for industries kept leveling at 20% from 1992 to 2002, albeit steep reduction into 4.76% between 2002 and 2012 (Table 1).

Figure 1. *The Evolution of Land Function in East Area of Shabei Street*



Source: Based on the Map of Current Situation, 2015; Field Survey by the Author, 2015;
Drawn by the Author, 2015.

Table 1. *Changes of Land Function in East Area of Shabei Street*

Land Function		1992		2002		2012	
		Area of Land (m ²)	Proportion of the Shabei Street (%)	Area of Land (m ²)	Proportion of the Shabei Street (%)	Area of Land (m ²)	Proportion of the Shabei Street (%)
Residence		162200	24.26	180900	27.05	275800	41.24
Public Service Facilities	Public Service Facilities	7100	1.06	7200	1.08	7100	1.06
	Education	139600	20.88	137800	20.61	147100	22
	Commerce	0	0	10500	1.57	17600	2.63
	total	146700	21.94	155500	23.26	171800	25.69
Industry		154000	23.03	146400	21.89	31800	4.76
Supply Facilities		48400	7.24	48400	7.24	48400	7.24
Open Space		135900	20.32	58100	8.69	64900	9.71
Street		21600	3.23	79500	11.89	76000	11.37
Total		668700	100	668700	100	668700	100

Figure-ground Relationship

According to the *Find Lost Space: Theories of Urban Design*, the figure-ground theory is founded on the study of the relationship of land coverage of buildings as solid mass (figure) that open voids (ground). Each urban environment has an existing pattern of solids and voids, and a figure and ground approach to spatial design is an attempt to manipulate these relationships by adding to, subtracting from, or changing the physical geometry of the pattern. The objective of these manipulations is to clarify the structure of the urban space in a city or district by establishing a hierarchy of spaces of different sizes that are individually enclosed but ordered directionally in relation to each other (Trancik, 1986: 97).

Figure 2. *The Figure-ground Evolution in East Area of Shabei Street*


Source: Based on the Map of Current Situation, 2015; Field Survey by the Author, 2015; Drawn by the Author, 2015.

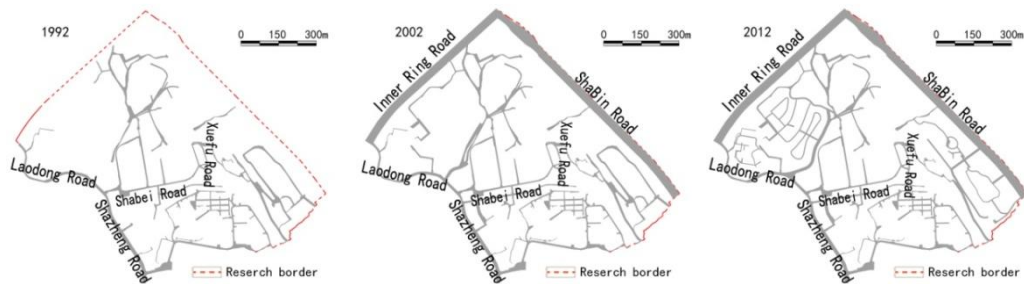
As shown in the figures of the three different time periods, the figure-ground relation of area B had great changes between 1992 and 2002; the urban fabric of areas A, C and D together with the Shapingba Water Plant enjoyed tremendous changes between 2002 and 2012, nevertheless the other areas experienced minor changes. Among them, Chongqing University and the No. 7 Chongqing Middle School saw the smallest change during the 20 years from 1992 to 2012. In sum, the major change of the areas happens to residential

land, reflected by the increasing building distance, expanding space, gradually weaker figure-ground relation, and the rising size of open space (Figure 2).

Streets Pattern

The street pattern is the skeleton of a city and has a complex interaction of mutual promotion and restriction with the urban fabric. Its appearance and evolution are intertwined with streets and alleys as well as with their transportation means. The harmony between them determines the development of a district and even of a whole city. The street pattern of the east area of Shabei Street demonstrates a layout of the regular junction of the exterior streets and the natural growth of the interior road networks. From 1992 to 2002, the density of the road network jumped from 3.23% to 11.89%, mainly due to the newly-built inner-ring roads in the western area and the Shabin Road in the north along the Jialing River. From 2002 to 2012, the density of the urban road network was almost without changes, but the internal roads of the residential areas A, B, C and D had an obvious increase (Figure 3).

Figure 3. *The evolution of street pattern in East Area of Shabei Street.*



Source: Based on the Map of Current Situation, 2015; Field Survey by the Author, 2015; Drawn by the Author, 2015.

Building Coverage

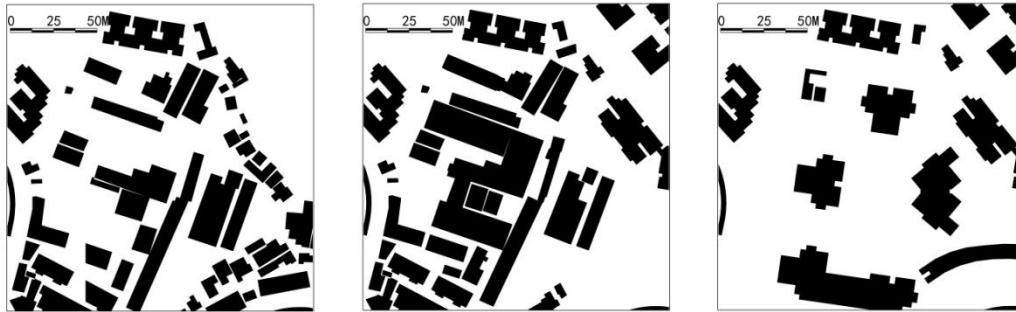
The building coverage mirrors the extent of vacant land and building intensity. The building coverage is not equivalent to the plot ratio but to the proportion of afforestation and scenery between buildings and open space. The building coverage of the east area accrued from 22.39% to 23.6% between 1992 and 2002 due to the increasing buildings in the B area, but decreased from 23.6% to 21.9% between 2002 and 2012 due to the removal of old houses in the areas A, C, D and E, and the emergence of new-style high residential apartments.

Building Pattern

Research findings demonstrate that the change of the building pattern is reflected in two kinds of plots. One is the residential land. From 1992 to 2002, the area B transformed from the free-style layout to the cluster one with the combination of rows and columns. The other is the plots of change in land use. From 2002 to 2012, areas A, C and D changed from the original industrial land to the residential land. The building pattern transformed from the strip plane

and parallel contour to the dot or cluster layout (Figure 4). Other areas only had minor changes in their building pattern.

Figure 4. *Changes of building and space scale in East Area of Shabei Street.*



Source: Based on the Map of current situation, 2015; field survey by the author, 2015; drawn by the author, 2015.

Building and Space Scale

Overall, the building and space scale of the east area of the Shabei District enjoys obvious changes, sub-districts A, B, C and D in particular. From 1992 to 2002, the single small-size bungalows in area B were replaced by large-size high buildings and commercial podiums. The scale between the building Greenland and the open space enlarged. From 2002 to 2012, strip-like small factory plants in the areas A, C and D gave way to large independent or parallel apartments. The narrow space between factory plants was transformed into open and broad space (Figure 4).

Discussion

It can be seen that the urban fabric of some research units undergoes intense changes; while that of others only has weak transformations. Based on the research findings, the paper discusses the connection between the evolution of the urban fabric of the inner cities and the aspects of politics, economy and culture.

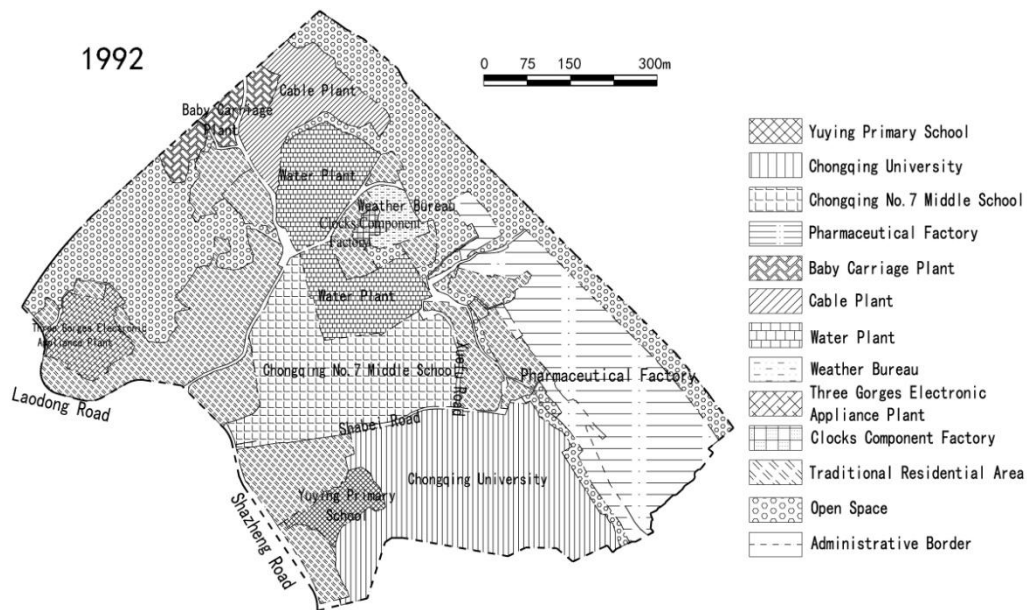
Aspects of Politics

The Reform of Land Policy

After 1949, the socialist public ownership of land was advocated in China, the policy of land use between the separation of the right to land ownership and the right to land use, and the unpaid policy of administrative appropriation was formed. Before the reform and opening up, the urban land was uniformly distributed, appropriated and disposed by the central or the local government, leaving work units or individuals unlimited time of unpaid or low-rent use without the adulteration of marketization (Chai et al., 2011). Under the highly intensive and unpaid appropriation land policy, the Unit Compound with work units as its basic element was established, such as large-size cultural and educational bases like the No. 7 Chongqing High School and Chongqing

University, and industrial bases like the Shapingba Water Plant, Clock Components Factory, Cable Plant and the Three Gorges Electronic Appliances Plant (Figure 5). However, the construction of the Unit Compound consumed the land at low or even no economic cost, resulting in the phenomenon of the waste of the land. The land is occupied but with less or even no use. This influenced the efficiency of the land use and the development of urban construction.

Figure 5. Land ownership analysis of East Area of Shabei Stree in 1992.



Source: Based on the Map of current situation, 2015; field survey by the author, 2015; drawn by the author, 2015.

After the reform and opening up, the urbanization enjoyed rapid advance and required large amounts of land. As a result, the extensive use of land brought by the unpaid appropriation of land can hardly satisfy the needs of land during rapid urbanization. Accompanying the transition from the system of planned economy to market economy, the country issued the policy of land reform and set up the paid use policy of land. In 1988, the revised Constitution of the People's Republic of China added the stipulation that the right to land use can be transferred according to the law; in November, 1988, the Land Administration Law made a corresponding revision, stipulating that the policy of paid land use to be carried out according to the law (Xu, 2010). Ever since then, the policy of unpaid land use has transformed into the policy of paid land use with limited time. The right to national land use is determined by the market and can be used at an economic cost. In this sense, the policy causes the mode of land use to change from the extensive to the intensive. This point can be testified by the change in areas A, B, C, D and E. To be specific, the building mass develops from low- to multi- and to high-storey type; due to the architectural requirements like fire separation distance and sunlight distance, tracts of old houses with the architectural density are demolished and replaced by the modern residential area with a wide distance. Although the building

density lowers, the geometric growth of the building height and the obvious surge of the plot ratio make the land use more compact than before.

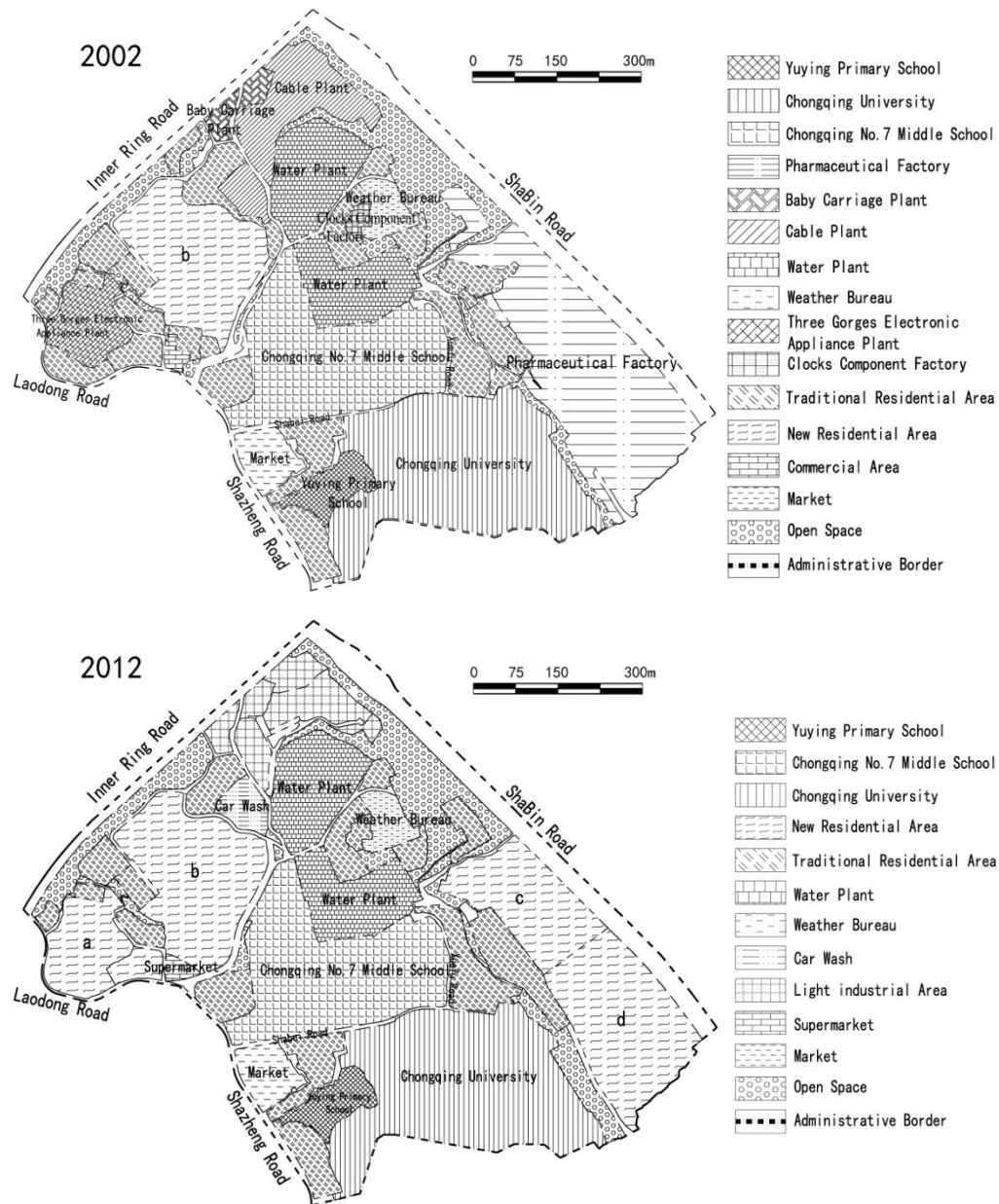
Reform of Housing Policy

During the 30 years between the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and the reform and opening up in 1978, the public housing allocation system followed the policy of the "low rent and welfare" in China. Houses were uniformly constructed by the government or work unit, which was basically out of the bound of the market. Ever since 1978, the process of urbanization has accelerated with the feature of rapid growth of the urban population and in the situation of short housing supply. Consequently, the governmental welfare housing policy cannot be implemented no more.

To tackle the dilemma, a series of housing system reforms was conducted, the most meaningful of which was the innovations of housing reform between 1994 and 1998. In July, 1994, the State Council promulgated Decisions on the Deepening Reform of Urban Housing Policy, requiring the new urban residential system adaptive to the socialist market economy to realize its commercialization and socialization. In 1998, the Notice of the Further Deepening Reform of the Urban Housing Policy and Accelerating Housing Construction was issued. Then the housing allotment entered into the market and the stage of monetization (Li, 2005). The two housing policy reforms witnessed the disappearance of physical houses and the emergence of monetization in housing distribution. The stable investment in urban residence construction gradually met the needs of the fast growth of urban population of apartments.

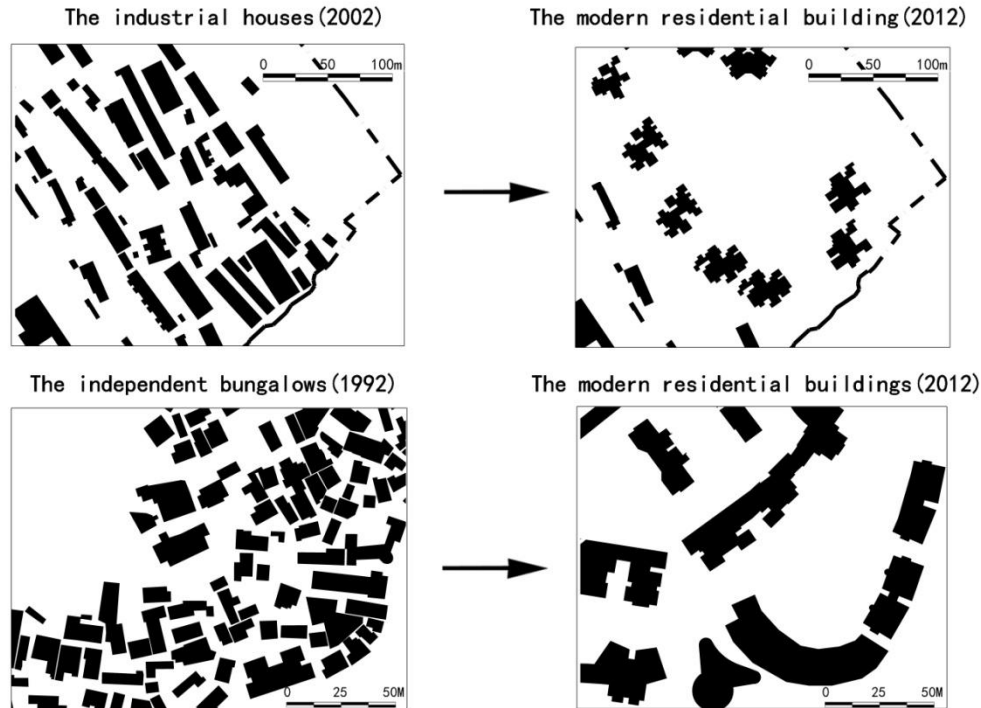
During the late 1990s, the real estate industry became prosperous and many residential areas sprang up like mushrooms. For instance, the Three Gorges Electronic Appliances in the area A and the Pharmaceutical Factory in the area C and D were transformed into the residential area. It was the same with the rural houses and vacant land in the area B (Figure 6). That was completed in 2004. The large-size and large-volume layout of modern residential buildings were radically substituted for the small-size strip-like industrial houses and independent bungalows (Figure 7).

Figure 6. Land ownership analysis of East Area of Shabei Street in 2002, 2012.



Source: Based on the Map of current situation, 2015; field survey by the author, 2015; drawn by the author, 2015.

Figure 7. *The Transition from the Industrial Houses and Independent Bungalows to the Modern Residential Buildings in East Area of Shabei Street*



Source: Based on the Map of Current Situation, 2015; Field Survey by the Author, 2015; Drawn by the Author, 2015.

Secondary-to-Tertiary Policy

Ever since the direct jurisdiction of the central government in 1997, Chongqing has stepped into a fast lane. The Chongqing municipal government has consciously adjusted the industrial structure of the downtown, proposed the secondary-to-tertiary strategy and removed most industries of the downtown with the typical example of leaving tracts of land through the integral moving of the industries and enterprises (Zheng, 2008). This practice has not only improved the environment, but also made room for the urban development and accelerated the urbanization. The original industrial land use of area A, C and D in 1992 has transformed into the current residential or commercial land use owing to the integral removal of industries (Figure 6). In terms of the architectural type, small-size strip-like factories have been replaced by large-size independent or parallel residential or commercial buildings. In terms of the spatial size, the narrow corridor-like production space between factory plants has evolved into broad and open consumption space for relaxation.

In general, the above-mentioned three policies have facilitated the urban modernization, pushed forward the renewal and replacement of the urban land use and further produced a profound effect on the evolution of the urban fabric since the 1990s. The marketization policy of land and housing has enabled the land use to be compact, high in plot ratio, massive in volume and large-size and open in space rather than otherwise. With the promotion of the secondary-to-tertiary policy, industries, small-size strip-like factory plants have become

outdated and replaced by the layout of large-size independent or parallel residential or commercial buildings.

Aspects of Economy

The Planned Economy

In the early period of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the planned economy system was established and the policy of "emphasis on production but neglect of consumption" was adopted in economic development. As the system deepened, the functions of governmental administration were increasingly expanded by allocating the funds and materials in the plan. Therefore, the city of Chongqing transformed from the consumptive type to the industrial one and the downtown from living consumption to manufacturing activities. At this time, the government should strive to exploit industries and singly allocate production factors; thus, the vast land use changes into administration, education and culture, residence, industry and warehousing (Liang and Sun, 2006).

During the period of the planned economy, industries and enterprises, and educational and cultural units that were established, gradually grew stronger and developed on their own in the east area of Shabei Street. All these comprised the urban fabric of 1992. Nevertheless, the fabric, containing all functions in the Unit Compound, was incomplete. The overall consumption ability was weak and relevant large public service facilities were inadequate. In the east area of Shabei Street, apart from some necessary roads for transportation, some were narrow streets and alleys separated with walls having the line layout like feudal neighborhood. Others were the external space connected by individual rural residence, that of small but appropriate size, rich spatial layers and open space.

The Market Economy

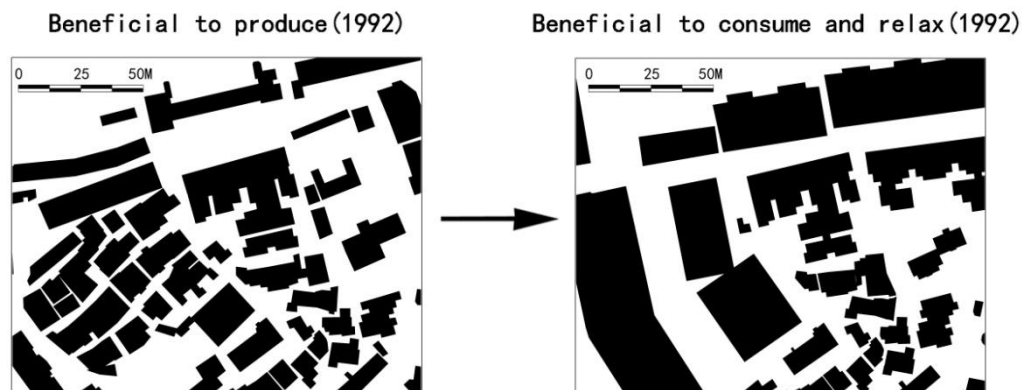
After the reform and opening up in 1978, the central government proposed the establishment of the socialist market economy system with special Chinese characteristics, turned the policy of "emphasis on production but neglect of consumption" and stipulated a series of policies and laws aiming to break the administrative block and smooth the flow of production factors. With the disintegration of the planned economy system and the establishment and improvement of the market economy system, the urban economy went into a highly liberal era of commercial market economy, and the commercialization of the economic resources and the openness of the economic system enabled the Chongqing economy to maintain the continuously rapid advance, especially after its direct jurisdiction in 1997 (Deng, 2014).

The robust economic development strengthened the convergence effect of the Chongqing downtown. On the one hand, the aggregation of the population and capital injected vitality into the urban space (North, 1981). The traditional narrow streets and alleys were replaced by the broad public space, with an example of a wide and comfortable Street for the Chongqing local food formed by the link between Xuefu Road and Shazheng Street. On the other hand, however, the land price sharply soared. Consequently, industries and

enterprises in the area A, C and D were removed. Besides this, residential houses in the area B and E were demolished and rebuilt into high-value residential or commercial areas. Moreover, the real estate developers utilized the construction mode of the high storey and high plot ration to make more interests. High plot-style and parallel residential buildings in the area A, B, C and D began to appear in the urban space. In addition, the municipal government invested more on the construction of the urban road networks to accelerate the flow of commodities and people, such as the completion of the Gaojia Garden Bridge in 1998, the use of western inner-ring expressway in 2002 within the research area, the connection from Xuefu Road to Shazheng Street in 2002, the expansion from Laodong Road to the Water Plant in 2003, the entire connection between the northern Chaotian Door and Shabin Road in 2007. Plus the optimization of the residential road, the road network within the research area was gradually set up.

On the whole, during the transition from the planned economy to the market economy, they all focused on economic construction. The urban construction concentrated on the flow of commodities within and between cities. To achieve this purpose, the government rebuilt the streets and alleys from the narrow and multi-dimensional urban morphology to the large-size ones that were connected with modern main roads, minor roads and branch roads. The market economy led to higher value of the urban land, and to industries and enterprises with a low requirement of the location of the land that gave way to the residential commerce (Xing, 2007). Similarly, the narrow but long corridor-like space, beneficial for production, changed into large open spaces, beneficial for relaxation and consumption (Figure 8).

Figure 8. *The Transition from the Production Space to the Consumption Space in East Area of Shabei Street*



Source: Based on the Map of Current Situation, 2015; Field Survey by the Author, 2015; Drawn by the Author, 2015.

Aspects of Culture

Landscape culture

The Confucius once said that, the wise man likes the waters, and the benevolent one likes the mountains. Since ancient times, the Chinese people has longed for the waters and mountains; therefore, the scenic natural landscape that both meets the needs of production and living and the aesthetic

and psychological resort forms the optimal destination (Yang, 2009). The conventional housing selection of Fengshui is considered to be linked to the landscape culture, conveying the idea that cities surrounded by mountains and girdled by rivers are appropriate for residence.

The Chongqing downtown is built on the terrace formed by the Jialing River and the Yangtze River. It is surrounded by hills and mountains. The result of “the city in the mountain and the mountain in the city” relies on the harmonious development between the Chongqing people and the natural landscape. The mountain buildings in Chongqing, constructed based on the features of the wavy terrain landscape, reflect the coordination of the tangible buildings and the nature. Due to factors like topography, the mountain buildings more often appear in tracts, chunks or clusters, which can not only satisfy the functional requirement, but comprise the whole space without the loss of the relative independence of an individual object (Xu, 2011). The point can be proved by the Yinshui Village, Siyuan Village and middle and upper level Dukou Village. The exterior space of the present blocks in the east area of the Shabei Street carries the characteristics of the street space and the small-size open space, leading to the attractive scale and abundant spatial layers.

Chongqing is a “river city”, with the Jialing River wandering through the city in the northern area of the Shabei Street. The water line, coast line, road near the river and the mountain topography make the particular natural landscape within the research area (Li, 2003). As the convergent gateway of the Jialing River and the Yangtze River, Chongqing has since the ancient times worked as an important port city. During the planned economy period with poor road transportation, cities near rivers had a better location of communication and transportation for the gathering and allocation of materials. Taking all these into consideration, a vast number of industries and enterprises chose to be built along the river. Up until 1992, the layout pattern of small-size and strip-like factory plants were formed along the northern Shabei Street. Accompanying the continuous improvement of the urban roads and the market economy period of progressive secondary-to-tertiary policy, and the will to live along the scenic riverside landscape, the riverside industries were substituted by residential buildings step by step. In the end, residential yards with a large-size and high-mass plot layout appear along the river.

Work-Unit Culture

Under the special settings and the social circumstance of the planned economy, China proposed a system with work units as the basic living and production unit to realize the aim of communism and the national modernization. From the perspective of the urban operation, the work-unit system giving priority to production rather than living acted as the organization mode of management, production and residential living during the planned economy period. The fundamental internal and external properties of the work units are represented as the “basic urban element”. The birth, study, work, housing distribution, marriage and retirement of the work-unit members are closely connected with their own work units. On and off duty, living and interpersonal relationship are also centering around the work units. Thus the

“work-unit nostalgia” is shaped among its members, and creates the most significant feeling and experience in their production and living (Liu and Chai, 2012).

The Unit Compound, a representation of the work-unit system on the urban space, is the enclosed space of the production space and the living space with the function of labor reproduction made by walls and doors. The work-unit space is often equipped with functionally comprehensive living facilities with the purpose of meeting the daily necessities of the residents. The basic urban element is formed, such as Water Plant, Cable Plant, Pharmaceutical Factory, Three Gorges Electronic Appliances Plant, No. 7 Chongqing High School and Chongqing University. In terms of the street space, streets and alleys within the work units are independent and connected with the outside roads via several work-unit doors. In terms of the architectural layout, the buildings for production, education, culture, hygiene mix within the internal area of the Unit Compound to create a functionally diverse production and living space and the urban fabric with special work-unit features. Composed of Unit Compound without communication, cities enjoy independent and feudally separate urban fabric (Guo and Zhao, 2012).

Intrusion of Simple and Fast Western “Pragmatic Culture”

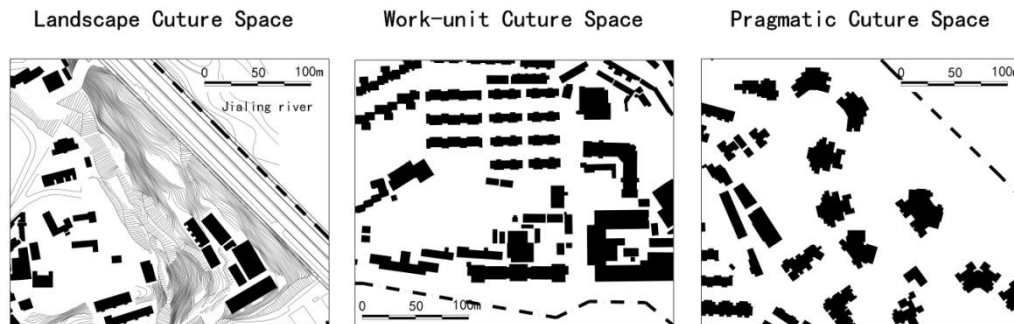
Ever since the 1990s, dramatic changes have taken place in the construction of the Shabei Street of Shapingba District in Chongqing with the procession of the reform and opening up. The traditional urban architectural culture with the landscape and work unit as the main body faces a severe challenge. People begin to attach importance to simple and fast style of production and life, and their thoughts of consumption are gradually transformed from catering for the social psychology to the material requirement. Similarly, the thoughts of the construction of the urban construction main body are changed into how to accelerate the creation of the material space. Finally the culture of “pragmatic suprematism” sets off the emergence of the social city, where the interpersonal relationship is bound with agreements.

One of the developmental features of the Shabei Street in the 1990s is to take the city as a whole, delete many details, purify and simplify urban activities, classify the typical common activities into chunks and stripes, and neglect the effect factors behind materials (Wang, 1999). For example, areas A, B, C and D are constructed according to the mountain terrace, but the excessive-size building volume actually destroys the fluctuating features of the mountains. The construction design considers the population density and the improvement of the residential conditions but not the special local landscape and the change of the interpersonal relationship due to rising population density. Consequently, the external space does not match the mountain features, and excessive external open space appears in the areas A, B, C and D. The technological- and economic- benefits of the oriented urban fabric are left.

To summarize, the landscape culture, the work-unit culture and pragmatic suprematism culture leave their traces in the urban fabric of the east of Shabei

Street. Their combination comprises the present-day fabric of the Shabei Street area (Figure 9).

Figure 9. *The Urban Fabric Caused by Landscape Culture, Work-unit Culture and “Pragmatic Suprematism” Culture in East Area of Shabei Street.*



Source: Based on the Map of Current Situation, 2015; Field Survey by the Author, 2015; Drawn by the Author, 2015.

Conclusions

Based on the longitudinal comparison of the land use, the figure-ground relationship, the system of streets and alleys, the building density, the architectural layout and the architectural and spatial scale at three different phases, the authors find that the urban fabric at the certain period is strongly relevant to politics, economy and culture. Besides, the evolution of the urban fabric reflects the impact of different politics, economy and culture on the urban form of material space. The reform of the land and housing policy and the implementation of “secondary-to-tertiary” policy cause the renewal of functions of the Shabei Street area and the transformation of the urban fabric. The transition from the planned economy to the market economy makes the urban construction interests-oriented, resulting in the appearance of the urban fabric of large-sized open space. In conclusion, the landscape culture, the work-unit culture and the culture of pragmatic suprematism affect to a certain extent the lifestyle and consumption belief, further they influence the urban construction belief and finally leave historical traces on the urban fabric of the Shabei Street area.

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