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# Evolution, Form and Public Use of Central Pedestrian Districts in Large Chinese Cities

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# Abstract

Along with the transition of major Western cities from production bases to consumption places over recent decades, urban public spaces have been increasingly manipulated by urban governments and developers as an effective 'tool' to promote commercial activities and events, and to attract more consumers, investment and developments. In the face of this trend, on the one hand the positive contributions of consumerist culture to the revitalisation of city life have been recognised and credited; while on the other hand, critics have discussed the negative effects of consumption powers in the shaping of public space, arguing that the 'publicness' of many contemporary public spaces is likely to diminish in the interest of mass consumerist culture (i.e., 'the critique of loss').

Chinese cities have experienced great transformations since the late 1970s. The central areas of many large cities have been developed into Central Pedestrian Districts (CPDs) which are public spaces of the city but with strong consumption and development pursuits. Similar to their Western counterparts, these CPDs receive 'the critique of loss' which discusses the predominant role of commercial and managerial considerations in the shaping of these places, largely discovering the 'negative effects' of mass consumerist culture on public space and public life. On the other hand, however, many of the Western critics seem to ignore the 'positive contributions' of consumerist culture to urban life, imposing a generalised and over-pessimistic verdict on contemporary Chinese public space, while without fully examining the complexities and varieties in the history and reality of China's central urban spaces (e.g., their extent of publicness in earlier periods, their current detailed physical forms and social uses, etc.). This thus creates the doubt about the applicability of the Western critiques in Chinese urban contexts, particularly on China's CPDs.

With this inquiry, this thesis presents a comprehensive survey of China's four leading CPDs (*Wang Fujing* in Beijing, *Nanjing Road* in Shanghai, *Central Street* in Harbin, and *Xin Jiekou* in Nanjing) and a detailed case study on the largest CPD of China (*Jie Fangbei* in Chongqing). By so doing, the thesis tests both the consistency and discrepancy between Western theoretical critiques and the actual conditions of these CPDs. In particular, the thesis explores how these five CPDs have historically developed, and how they are physically constituted and socially used today. Attention focuses upon the political-economic aspects in their development, and also upon users' daily behaviours in public spaces. The main theoretical bases underpinning these examinations and discussions come from urban-design domain, but embrace political-economic and environmental and behavioural design perspectives. In the final analysis, the thesis tries to establish a more comprehensive and socially and culturally specific evaluation on the public nature of these CPDs, and it provides a series of recommendations regarding the design and management of CPDs, in order to enhance their future performance in sustaining better public uses.

# List of publications

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1-1 Research background

Much of the research interest in urban design has focused on the design, management, and use of urban public places, insomuch that academically urban design is often termed as the 'process of place-making' (Carmona *et al.* 2003; Lang 1994, 2005). In practice, however, the urban-design rationale of place-making is usually determined by the major political-economic requirements of cities (Cuthbert 2006; Madanipour 1999, 2007). In the early Western industrial period when the state was both manager and builder of towns and cities, urban design was used as a prior 'urban image bank' upon which state power relied to upgrade the production-based, physical restructuring of urban space (Cuthbert 2006). When cities were transformed from production bases to consumption places, however, 'neo-corporate capital' began to dominate the planning and design of the city. Urban governments have recognised that consumption vitality, economic efficiency, and an improved built environment are synergistic and good for both their business and quality of life. Urban design has thus been recognised as an effective approach to producing 'alluring places' that aim to advance the competitiveness of cities in the consumerist era (Frampton 2005; Gospodini 2002; Hubbard 1996; King 1996).

Beneath this change lurks the question as to what extent contemporary urban design can create 'exceptional public spaces' to serve not just commercial purposes but also wider social needs. There are numerous instances where commercial success and strong social vitality effectively co-exist and interact in well-designed and well-managed urban places. It has been observed that lots of new commercial developments such as cultural quarters, commercial squares and streets, urban marketplaces and waterfronts, currently contribute to the social-economic regeneration of cities, bringing people back to cities to celebrate public life and helping promote cultural mix and social integration. It is therefore on these occasions that consumerist culture with its 'urban design agency' proves to be a positive contributor to public realm and its good effects should be credited (see Tiesdell *et al.* 1996; Colquhoun 1995; Gehl and Gemzoe 2001). On the other hand, however, there are also considerable cases in which public authorities and private developers advertise themselves as responsible 'place-makers' aiming at 'versatile' urban environments,

while eventually delivering monotonous places which are dominated by pure commercial aims, failing to cover broader social considerations. Worse, extreme planning and urban design and management strategies (such as radical relocation of the local community, physical fortification and social exclusion in public space) are often exercised to deliberately segregate urban spaces and destroy the diversity of public life for the ultimate aim of enhancing commercial activities. These phenomena have been observed across the cities of the world so that some authors argue that contemporary public realm has been largely 'lost' under the influence of mass consumerist culture (Mitchell 1995; Sennett 1976; and see Sorkin *ed.* 1992).

Both these positives and negatives of consumerist culture in the shaping of urban public spaces have been discussed in Western literature, and these discussions have frequently provoked counter debates on issues such as how to understand the nature of the contemporary public realm, how to positively manipulate the impact of consumerist culture on the public realm, and how public spaces dominated by commercial pursuits should be designed and managed for wider public benefits, etc. (see Carmona *et al.* 2003 and 2008; Saunders *ed.* 2005; Sorkin *ed.* 1994; Zukin 1998; more discussions unfolded in *Chapter 2*). Furthermore, such debates and critiques have also spread to the less developed or developing countries (see Miao *ed.* 2001; Rowe 2005). In particular, numbers of authors have noticed that China provides a unique case through which to study the impacts of consumerist culture on the making of urban spaces. Indeed, China has undergone tremendous political and economic transformations during recent decades: the country began to develop a 'workable' economic system in the late 1970s after the long period of Maoist dominance; the 1980s witnessed the embryonic rise of 'marketisation'; while since the 1990s the government has boldly adopted consumerism as part of its official ideology (Wu and Ma 2005). During recent decades, the production of consumption spaces has increasingly become the central theme of place-making in many Chinese cities. Considerable new spaces are created, with old ones refreshed and reinvented, to accommodate commerist demands. They include central business districts, special financial zones, commercial streets, suburban outlets, business parks, and shopping malls. Simultaneously urban design has been widely employed by city governments to 'glamorise' these spaces, promoting their visual attractiveness and commercial possibilities. Arguably, there are two sides to the nature of these spaces: they are designed and managed with strong commercial aims which are often based on private/capital benefits; while many of them still can be claimed as public places because they are owned and managed by the public sector, open to the public, and the majority of the people in the city are entitled to use them (Wu and Ma 2005).

On the face of it, these spaces can be interrogated with the similar questions drawn from the Western debates, such as how to weigh the potential positive and negative effects of these places upon public life, how to measure their extent of being public, whether a 'loss' of publicness has largely occurred within them, whether the quality of public realm has been compromised by commercial interests, to what extent their design and management are functioning to integrate their commercial functions and public uses, etc. In existing Western literature, there are sporadic discussions responding to these issues; but surprisingly a strongly pessimistic manner has been underlying these discussions - compared to their Western counterparts, China's new commercial spaces seem to have received more negative critiques while positive perspectives not often seen, so that 'the critique of loss' has become the most dominant theme in the evaluation of these spaces (to be further discussed in *Chapter 2*). This creates comparison to the understanding of Western commercial space in Western literature where both 'pros and cons' are well identified and debated (see above). As will be revealed in later chapters, arguably the reason behind this is that the introduced Western theoretical debates are not well combined with a deep account of the unique complexity and character of China's urban spaces (such as their history, development trajectory, physical and social manifestations, etc.). This consequently prevents the Western critics from presenting more systematic and comprehensive discussions on the nature of China's contemporary commercial spaces. And this results in a reasonable doubt about the applicability of Western theoretical critiques within Chinese urban context. This research therefore attempts to solve this doubt through examining a specific type of built form, China's *central pedestrian districts*, particularly to investigate their evolution, form, and public use.

## 1-2 Research relevance

On the face of it, this research relates to the 'study of pedestrianisation'. In retrospect, many Western cities also made great efforts to create pedestrian streets or malls in their city centres during the 20th century. Lots of literature documents this process. Hass-Klau (1990) notes that European cities began to largely close central streets to wheeled vehicles because these narrow medieval streets did not have the capacity to handle the rising motor traffic after the World War II. For example, Germany had its first generation of central pedestrian malls during the late 1940s and 1950s; in Denmark, Aalborg and Copenhagen became the first Danish cities to make downtown pedestrian streets in 1962; while in Britain, Coventry rebuilt its city centre which included several traffic-free precincts (Robertson 1994: 17-23). Although initiated from the

traffic (non-commercial) requirement, these pedestrianised streets have been then effectively developed into retail and property-development based avenues - in Britain, the pedestrian shopping streets in old city centres seem to have become one of the most 'basic elements' of the city, and simultaneously the 'high-street strategy' has been recognised by city councils as an important approach to facilitating urban regeneration (Evens 1997; Hass-Klau *et al.* 1999). While in America, cities combined more explicit commercial aims with their pedestrianisation schemes from the very beginning. According to Robertson (1994: 24), the direct reason for American cities to initiate pedestrian downtown streets was to compete with suburban shopping centres - '...*downtown revitalization, particularly focusing on the retail sector, was the underlying objective for the construction of most early pedestrian malls in the United States.*' And during recent decades, in addition to stimulating retailing and improving the quality of the downtown environment, American cities have also increasingly used their pedestrian streets as an approach to enhancing the image of the city and to bolstering civic pride (Robertson 1994).

Despite the widespread application of pedestrian shopping streets in Western cities, they have been subject to some criticisms. Both Hass-Klau (1990) and Robertson (1994) argue that the increasing rents for commercial space in pedestrian streets are forcing many small independent shops to leave in favour of large retail chains who can afford the higher rates, and consequently many central shopping streets in Western cities are becoming 'monotonous' and 'unimaginative' places, looking pretty much like each other. These criticisms therefore reveal a potential process of gentrification or social exclusion (privileges for high-income buyers at the price of grass-root communities) and physical homogenisation happening within these places. These points are undoubtedly useful to the understanding of China's central pedestrian districts, and they will be reflected in later chapters. But overall the motivation and process of Western pedestrianisation schemes were initiated from the context of Western cities, so that it might be difficult for them to generalise in the explanation of China's pedestrian districts. Besides, current Western 'literature of pedestrianisation' is arguably more confined to 'technical' or 'design' issues, than reflecting wider arguments on public space (as raised in *1-1*). Thus this research will adopt theories and views from wider public space and urban design literature, rather than just pedestrianisation studies, and its outcomes are expected to produce broader relevance for public space making, rather than just pedestrian streets. In all, this is not a pedestrianisation study, but one essentially concerned with the nature of the public realm in the central districts of Chinese cities. In light of this perception, the following proceeds to define the concrete objective of this research.

## 1-3 Research objective, limits, questions, and significance

One of the most visually striking aspects of China's contemporary urban transformation is the intensive redevelopment of the central districts of its large cities (Gaubatz 2005). These districts are overwhelmingly dominated by commercial redevelopment schemes, including retail, finance, entertainment and office developments. During the last twenty years, many of their streets have been intensively transformed into fully pedestrianised environments (Zacharias 2002). According to *China's Commercial Walking Street Committee* (CCWSC, Source: http://www.ccwsc.org), a semi-official statistical association, there were more than 3,000 central pedestrianised streets all over the country by 2007, most of which are located within the central districts of large cities, and the gross floor-space area of buildings affiliated to these places reaches over 1,500 million $m^2$. And it seems that such popularity will continue as the CCWSC reports that many large Chinese cities are planning to develop at least 10 more new central pedestrian streets (each) within the next decade.

Some China's early pedestrianisation schemes, similar to their post-war European counterparts, appeared relatively moderate in size and incremental in development intensity, often being facilitated in traditional commercial areas of cities. One of the best known examples is the *Fuzi Temple* of Nanjing, which was developed in the late 1980s (Figure 1.1).



**Figure 1.1** The Fuzi Temple pedestrian district is structured around the ancient site of the Confucian Temple. It is along an old canal and its street pattern largely remains labyrinthine as it used to be throughout its early history. Linking the revitalisation of traditional commerce with the preservation of old architecture in the temple area, it is popular with the local people and with tourists (Source: photo taken by the author).

Since the early 1990s, however, Chinese cities have begun to enlarge their pedestrianisation plans which are no longer confined to small historical sites. Some cities have exploited their traditional commercial centres through intense pedestrianisation, significantly expanding the length of streets, and integrating local historical elements into new commercial development schemes. Examples include *Central Street* of Harbin, *Nanjing Road* of Shanghai, and *Wang Fujing* of Beijing. Meanwhile many others have reinvented new pedestrian-based environments by bringing forth bigger and more modernised redevelopment items within their existing central districts. Examples as such include *Jie Fangbei* of Chongqing, and *Xin Jiekou* of Nanjing. Some commentators point out that all these new pedestrianisation schemes are based upon the multi-fold pursuits of urban governments (Zacharias 2002; Gaubatz 2005; Xiao 2005): *first*, they are constructed to integrate existing but dispersed commercial buildings and facilities within the central districts in order to increase the current commercial performance to a higher level; *second*, they are used to produce new urban landscapes, e.g., squares, parks, and open-arcaded grounds of high-rise buildings, so that the visual images of these central districts can be dramatically improved; and *third*, they are created to accommodate a heavier volume of pedestrians, including visitors and citizens, and with more open spaces, to improve the quality of public space of the city. In general, these newly pedestrianised places are the major public environment of the city; and also, they are the focus of contemporary commercial/consumerist activity. Thus, they can be viewed as the appropriate 'objectives' for the debates raised above.

These places are termed central pedestrian districts (CPDs). As the focus of this research, a CPD is understood as the physical combination of streets, open spaces, landscapes, affiliated settings and buildings in these pedestrianised districts, all of which are accessible to and usable by the general public. This definition, however, encompasses a broad range of items that have the character of being 'public', from streets to interior environments. But as the latter items are most likely to be subject to strict private-property rights and fixed usages, they usually have a much lower intensity of public activity than the former. Thus this research is confined to the external space (streets, squares, open forecourts of buildings, and so on.) and the 'interface' elements of buildings that are likely to influence people's behaviours/activities (including building locations, contents, facades, ground-floor niches, etc.). This helps to focus attention on the areas where the real challenges exist for enhancing public space (Carmona *et al.* 2008: 5). And therefore, it sets the limits and limitations of this study, which are further limited by the precondition that this is primarily an urban-design study so that its epistemology and methodology are mostly founded on established urban-design perceptions and principles.

As stated in *1-1*, the essential aim of this research is to test the applicability of the introduced Western theoretical critiques on China's CPDs. It is reasonable to pre-assume that there are both consistencies and discrepancies between Western theoretical critiques and the status quo of these CPDs. This research therefore proposes to *firstly* review what kind of socio-spatial pattern these CPDs have now created, and then from a historically comparative perspective, how that pattern characterises the 'publicness' of public space. Through this review, the expected consistencies are to be further confirmed and more explicitly analysed, and more significantly, the potential discrepancies are to be revealed so that a more balanced evaluation on the nature of these CPDs can be discussed. *Secondly*, following the first point, this research, as an urban design study, also proposes to examine how to improve the weakness and to sustain the strength in detailed design and management practices of these CPDs, both of which are to be discovered in the review of the socio-spatial pattern of these CPDs. To embody these two proposals, three lines of questions are raised below, which are the direct objects to be tested through empirical research (also see *Chapter 3* where these questions are related to a research hypothesis and research methods):

◆ *What kind of social and political-economic factors dominated China's urban development at different historical stages, and how do the resultant urban spaces at different stages contrast with each other in terms of their physical character and public life?*

◆ *Along with the overall evolution of urban space, how particularly have the 'central districts' in large Chinese cities been transformed into consumption-based CPDs, and then how in general are they physically formed and socially used today?*

◆ *Furthermore, how have the specific spaces of contemporary CPDs been shaped by detailed design and management rationales/policies/practices over recent years, and to what extent have these spaces addressed public-use requirements, alongside their commercial functions?*

Through answering these three questions, this research expects not just to develop more viable explanations of CPDs' true roles, but also to conclude some general recommendations which may facilitate better design and management for these CPDs. Therefore this study will be of interest to the academic community, and also produce practical implications for those who are involved with China's CPD development (policy makers, developers, designers, and so on), to reinforce positive trends and avoid mistakes.

## 1-4 Thesis organisation

This thesis consists of seven chapters which can be divided into three parts. Chapters one to three constitute the first part which introduces the main research questions and the hypothesis, establishes the fundamental theoretical framework and research gaps, and develops a feasible methodology for the study as a whole. Chapters four to six constitute the second part which gathers and analyses in detail the empirical 'data' gained from both the desk-based work and fieldwork, and provides answers to the research questions. The final chapter constitutes the third part and reviews major research findings, synthesises all the conclusions in response to the central research hypothesis, and suggests possible directions for future research.

Chapter two aims to provide the theoretical foundations and essential arguments upon which this study can rest. It first raises the idea that public space is the major concern of urban design, and reviews the argument that public space has a 'changing' nature (i.e., its 'publicness') which can be only understood in relation to concrete socio-physical contexts. It briefly outlines the evolution of Western urban space, and in so doing explains the historical facts and lessons which are of significance to the debates on today's public space. Successively, it explores how contemporary consumerist culture is generally imposing new effects on public space, and introduces the central debate as to whether a public realm has been largely lost in the consumerist age (i.e., 'the critique of loss'). By examining both the pros and cons of that debate, the epistemological standpoint that this study will adopt is then established. Then the chapter proceeds to examine the application of 'the critique of loss' in China's CPDs, and identifies the research gaps in that application. Finally, in light of all these foregoing arguments, the chapter sorts out a series of urban design principles that can serve as practical criteria for measuring the physical and social virtues of China's CPDs.

Chapter three presents the research methodology. First it revisits the three research questions stated above and develops the central hypothesis of this study. Then it discusses why and how three specific research strategies, *historical analysis*, *rapid qualitative survey*, and *case study*, are set up to explore each of the three questions. In particular, this chapter looks at the theoretical underpinnings of each strategy in social science, and reviews what methods are employed to obtain the necessary data for this study.

Chapter four describes the results of the historical analysis. It identifies that China's urban

development can be divided into five general epochs, i.e., *early traditional cities, late traditional cities, Treaty-Port and Republican cities, pre-market cities,* and *contemporary cities.* Through interpreting and analysing the data from the historical review of each epoch, this chapter looks at how dominant political and socio-economic factors at different stages have had different determining impacts upon the public realm of the city, and resulted in various physical forms and social usages. In conclusion, the chapter summarises the fundamental socio-spatial characteristics of China's urban spaces throughout history, comparing their different virtues and 'publicness', and thus outlining how China's urban public space has changed over time.

Chapter five introduces the outcomes of the rapid, qualitative survey. It continues to use the epoch division that is set up in the previous chapter; but its emphasis is on the survey of China's four leading CPDs, *Central Street* in Harbin, *Nanjing Road* in Shanghai, *Wang Fujing* in Beijing, and *Xin Jiekou* in Nanjing. It examines how these four CPDs have been developed alongside the overall evolution of China's urban space, comparing their commonalities and differentiations in physical character as well as social manifestation at different historical stages. The greater weight of the narrative and analysis is allocated to the contemporary era, in which consumerist culture has become the dominant power in place-making, so that how these four CPDs are now influencing public life can be understood.

Chapter six introduces the outcomes of the case study on *Jie Fangbei* in Chongqing, the largest CPD of China. It first responds to the previous two chapters by reviewing how Jie Fangbei was initiated and developed from the nineteenth century until the early 1980s, outlining its changing public character over time. Then it introduces four stages of Jie Fangbei's recent development: *the first high-rise boom (1980s-mid 1990s), the first pedestrianisaion (1997), the second high-rise boom (1998-2001),* and *the second pedestrianisation and street refurbishment (2002-2010).* These are identified as the key four periods in Jie Fangbei's transformation into the local CPD. The chapter also analyses the changing planning concerns and approaches in Jie Fangbei's place-making during these different epochs, and in particular examines how the produced environments have impacted upon users' activities and perceptions, in order to understand their essential contribution (either positive or negative) to the overall public realm. At the end, the chapter reviews some key dimensions including land use, resting and strolling localities, public facilities, and street control and surveillance, to further reveal how some particular places of Jie Fangbei are used as 'potential sites' for public life.

Chapter seven summarises the major research findings. It tests the research hypothesis and synthesises all the answers to the research questions. It concludes with a series of design and management recommendations for the further development of these CPDs. The last part of this chapter discusses the limitations of this study, putting forward suggestions for future research.

# Chapter 2

## Literature review: public space in the age of consumption

### 2-1 Introduction

As discussed in *Chapter 1*, the concept of a Central Pedestrian District can be interpreted into two meanings: it is not just a public space, but also a consumerist environment. This chapter therefore aims to review the arguments and perceptions, mostly in urban design, which are directly relevant to 'public space in the age of consumption', so that the fundamental theoretical proposition of this study can be set up. The main body of the chapter consists of six sections. The first section emphasises the basic idea that public space is the primary concern of urban design, and looks at the argument that public space should be seen as a 'dynamic' concept with a 'changing nature' (its publicness). The second section briefly reviews the historical evolution of Western urban space, examining the historic experiences which are of significance to contemporary arguments on public space. The third section then brings forth the primary debate as to whether contemporary public space is 'lost' under the impact of consumerist culture, presenting both pros and cons of the 'critique of loss', and finally constructing the standpoint that this research will adopt. The fourth section examines the criticisms of China's CPDs which are arguably derived from the Western critique, revealing that there are potential gaps within these criticisms that need further studies. The fifth section explores the claim that practical solutions are needed to respond to these theoretical arguments, and through the examination of the proposition of 'physical possibilism', it concludes a series of normative principles of 'good public space' which are useful for the evaluation of specific places. The final section synthesises these perspectives.

### 2-2 Conceptual foundation: changing 'publicness' of public space

Lang (2005: 6) argues that public space is the primary concern of urban design research and practice. He points out: '*Almost all definitions of urban design state that it has something to do with the public realm (or the public domain or with public space) and the elements that define it*'. This notion has been widely recognised by urban design researchers, and addressed in various, but essentially similar statements about public space and urban design, such as:

'*...contemporary urban design is simultaneously concerned with the design of urban space as an aesthetic entity and as a behavioural setting. It focuses on the diversity and activity which help to create successful urban places, and, in particular, on how well the physical milieu supports the functions and activities taking place there...With this concept comes the notion of urban design as the design and management of the public realm...*'(Carmona *et al*. 2003: 7)

'*The study of urban design deals with the relationship between the physical form of the city and the social forces which produce it. It focuses, in particular, on the physical character of the public realm but is also concerned with the interaction between public and private development and the resulting impact on urban form.*' (Lloyd-Jones 1998: 5)

The term 'public space', however, is conceptually quite controversial and researchers have never agreed a specific definition of public space (Madanipour 1996a). This is mostly because the distinction between public and private easily becomes blurred - many places in cities are under private ownership and management, but they are largely open to, and used by, the majority of the people; while by contrast, there are public-owned places that however present stricter surveillance and social restriction than private domains so that their public use appears quite nominal (Madanipour 2003). On these occasions, it is hard to tell if a space is public or private. Kilian (1998) hereby argues that public and private space are meaningless terms in the absence of their interaction, and that to be considered 'public', any environment must operate under rules and exclusions that would paradoxically limit their publicness and serve the private aspirations of certain individuals or groups (such as the landowners or commercial enterprises). This is termed as the 'flexible tension' between public and private, which arguably resides in any 'public' space (Carr *et al*. 1992). This is one of the most fundamental understandings of public space in urban design: contemporary urban design tends to avoid examining a space beginning with a presumption that it is public or private; rather it considers both its public and private character (Madanipour 2003).

In light of this perception, some authors argue that an empirical approach to urban design is to value the 'publicness', the extent of being public, of urban space, rather than attempt to find an 'universal' definition of public space in vain (Akkar 2005). According to Akkar, 'publicness' can be assessed by means of some concrete criteria, including if or when people are charged for being there, if the space is publicly or privately owned and managed, if there are restrictions on how it should be used, etc. As conceptualised by Carr *et al*. (1992: 3, 23), publicness essentially

'*is a dynamic balance between public and private activities. Within this balance, different cultures place differing emphases on public space*' because '*Each culture has its own public-private profile, which emerges from a complex set of factors, the interaction of physical, social, political, and economic realities*'. In a similar vein, Madanipour (1996a: 351) argues that it is not enough to conceive a space as a fixed entity, rather it needs to be considered as '*a dynamic concept which accommodates at the same time constant change and embeddness, and that can only be understood in monitoring the way space is being made and remade, at the intersection of the development processes and everyday life*'. Carr *et al.* and Madanipour's arguments reveal that publicness changes between societies and cultures, and therefore can only be understood in relation to concrete social and physical contexts.

Zukin (1995: 44) further emphasises the significance of the 'dimension of time', as she argues that '*Many places we think of as great public spaces have become so only over time*'. To Zukin, certain spaces of cities often present progressive or inconsistent, rather than stable and inheritable, public characters at different periods, and through such their publicness becomes 'comparable' over time. Carmona *et al.* (2003:193) define three aspects of public space that can be changeable with time - first the physical setting of spaces, second users' activities within spaces, and third planning and urban design rationales and approaches to place-making. Townshend and Madanipour (2008: 321) further address the importance of 'users' experience' in public places, which to them is the key dimension of creating the meaning of public space:

'*Places go in and out of fashion, people adapt spaces to their own needs, surrounding land uses and buildings will change. This is the future history of the place, which makes it a different place from today. Moreover, as society's values change over time, new generations never experience places in the same way as previous generations, so the experience of place will inevitably be different. Through this constant change, the possibility of remaining the same is reduced, and the dynamics of diversity strengthened.*'

It can be therefore argued that it is the changes of these aspects that largely characterise the 'dynamic publicness' of space, and bring forward restless debates in today's public space discourse. In light of this perception, the following section presents a brief review of the historical evolution of Western urban space, to help better understand the contemporary debates discussed in later sections.

## 2-3 Historic experience: the changing nature of public space

### 2-3-1 Cities 'of a golden age'

The form and function of Western urban public space today has its origin in the ancient Greek and Roman civilisations that, according to many authors, fostered the *city of golden age* (Kostof 1992, 1999; Mumford 1961). The agora was considered the most important public space of the Greek towns, and it had multiple functions including commercial, religious, political activities and events. Many authors admire the 'richness' of public life in the agora as it was the place where people could meet for 'daily communications and formal and informal assembly' (Mumford 1961 in Carr *et al.* 1992: 52), so that it functioned as 'no mere public space, but the living heart of the city' (Hall 1998: 38). The Roman cities that followed were however organised around the forum which inherited the function of the Greek agora as a crucial 'assembly' place for the urban citizens. But as both the urban size and population grew, Roman cities largely disassembled this highly 'multifunctional' place by establishing 'single-functional' forums, such as social spaces, cultural spaces, shopping spaces, and spiritual spaces (Mumford 1961). Hall (1998: 625) notes that during the height of the Roman civilisation, the forum usually constituted 'a whole precinct' in large cities, incorporating 'vast spaces for walking, business and pleasure', which, according to Carmona *et al.* (2008: 25), appears quite similar to the downtown district of Western cities today.

The symbolic aesthetics of public space were a major concern of both the Greeks and Romans. Though early Greek towns '*were usually developed in a spontaneous, organic fashion*' (Carr *et al.* 1992: 53), later mature Greek and Roman cities developed a urban 'gridiron' system which was characterised by standard blocks, long wide avenues, and piazzas defined by colonnaded streets, grand civic buildings, temples, statues and monuments (Kostof 1992, 1999). Carmona *et al.* (2008: 25) note that '*While the Greeks recognised that the aesthetic qualities of space could beautify the soul and exalt the mind, Imperial Rome recognised that the design of space could have controlling influences on the population* [to impress an image on its people]'. However, Carr *et al.* (1992: 53) argue that with the pursuit of a greater spatial formality and architectural grandeur came a more 'regimented' and 'fragmented' public life in both Greek and Roman cities - while the city centres thrived, '*the main population of the city...lived in cramped, noisy, airless quarters...undergoing daily indignities and terrors that coarsened and brutalized them*' (Mumford 1961: 221).

## 2-3-2 Cities of marketplace

When the 'golden-age' declined, cities then dissolved into smaller, walled, and self-catering settlements protected against marauding tribes, which led to the emergence of the *city of marketplace* (Pirenne 2000). The marketplace was often organised in an adjacent space to the cathedral, the central institution of the middle ages city, to take advantage of the constant civic and religious activity. There was usually an intensive use of these cathedral places for public life - Madanipour (1999: 884) notes that they '*were decorated with fountains, monuments, statues, and other works of art and were used for public celebrations, state proceedings, and exchange of goods and services*'. While the medieval cities expanded and their commercial prosperity grew, individual shops were largely developed along the streets over the whole city. As Saalman (1968 in Madanipour 1999: 888) notes, commercial activities 'infinitely' expanded over the streets and alleys, and even encroached into private buildings and backyards, so that '*the entire medieval city was a market*'. Both the cathedral marketplace and the medieval city street were considered, to a certain extent, as an 'egalitarian' place that could potentially promote social integration, although clearly they were intensively commercial spaces (Carmona *et al.* 2008). This is reflected in Mumford's (1961: 370) description: '*In the medieval town, the upper classes and the lower classes had jostled together on the street, in the marketplace, as they did in the cathedral: the rich might ride on horseback, but they must wait for...the blind beggar groping with his stick to get out of the way*'.

In the following Renaissance period, however, specialisation of space re-occurred - '*the idea of a piazza expressing civic dignity and therefore unsuitable for commercial activities had clearly crystallised*' (Carr *et al.* 1992: 55) - so that in lots of European and New World cities, the central cathedral place was deprived of the commercial functions, becoming a site just for civic and religious activities, while separate market squares were developed elsewhere (Sitte 1898). Simultaneously, aesthetic principles, such as scale and proportion, became essential in the design of space, as the ruling class sought to 'regenerate' the medieval cities by employing artists and architects to beautify them. As a result, Baroque squares and plazas were created in Spanish and French cities (Broadbent 1990). This, according to Carmona *et al.* (2008: 26), essentially presented a process in which the urban ruling interests asserted and displayed their own 'status and wealth', which can be clearly seen in many contemporary public spaces which are '*designed to show off the power and wealth of the corporate/business sector*'.

## 2-3-3 Industrial cities

When the West entered the period of the Industrial Revolution, major technical innovations, such as steam engines and modern railways, led to the shaping of mining and harbour districts with a high concentration of labour so that industrial new towns emerged (Hall 2002). These towns continued the tradition of the marketplace: the town centre became the chief public space, with a combination of the market, the church, the town hall, and other civic institutions. Like their predecessors, these town centres were considered the space 'created for commercial reasons' but with multiple functions, which '*demonstrates the reliance of community functions on essentially commercial space*' (Carmona *et al.* 2008: 27).

In the larger cities, however, the City Beautification movement created more new spaces to radically improve the 'polluted and congested' industrial urban condition, as well as to promote the political and economic achievements of the state. These included Parisian boulevards which were produced to serve military and commercial vehicles, London's new civic squares to celebrate the war victory of the empire, New York's urban parks to 'moralise and sanitise' the citizens, the Chicago Exposition's place to advance the virtues of industrialisation, etc. (Hall 2002). Many of these places became major gathering points of the city, but social and functional dissociation still frequently occurred in them. For instance, in Paris '*with the rich driving back and forth on the boulevards in the carriages...the poor relegated to the gutter or, eventually, the sidewalk*' (Mumford 1961: 370), while in London '*The new space* [Trafalgar Square] *was to have strict rules to prevent commercialisation with a fine of 20 shillings a day for all signs...used to denote trade*', and for some times, even '[general] *assemblies were banned*' here (Carmona *et al.* 2008: 30-31). Moreover, the design of these places largely inherited the traditional aesthetic standard (space defined by symbolic structures and with artistic works), presenting the vision of the elite class, according to the architect of Trafalgar Square, '*which is so needed in public areas...to excite among the classes that respect and admire for art, so essentially necessary to the formation of a pure and well grounded national taste*' (Mace 1976 in Carmona *et al.* 2008: 31). All these herald the arguments in contemporary society as to *whose space* is public space.

Meanwhile, privatisation and commercialisation of space also occurred extensively in cities between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In England, the gated residential square emerged as a sort of 'tradable', semi-public space, which was shared by the 'payers', namely,

the property owners, but restricted non-residents' access (Girouard 1985). In Continental Europe, the interior arcade was substantially developed in cities such as Paris, which was 'a new invention of industrial luxury' to produce a comfortable, safe and quasi-street environment for people (especially the newly 'emancipated' bourgeois women) to stroll and shop (Benjamin 1999: 31). In North America, large cities otherwise further intensified the commercial potential of their central areas - New York developed the first central business district (CBD) in Western society (Hall 2002), which presented a stronger level of commercial pursuit and aesthetic symbolism (via the mushrooming of Gothic skyscrapers) in urban space (Broadbent 1990). Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee (1998: 7) thus see a shift towards a more consumption-based style in metropolitan public life: '*In the eighteenth century people gathered at the town centre to participate in civic functions or public events. One century later, people came to the CBD to conduct their business. Buying, selling, trading, and window shopping became the primary activities conducted in American city centres.*' Miles and Miles (2004: 144) argue that during the late years of Industrialisation, cities like Paris and New York had already become the 'object to be visually consumed' as a whole; while Light (1999) points out that those new spaces of the industrial cities (the gated square, the arcade, the early CBD, and so on) are evidence that the privatisation, commodification and symbolic manipulation of public space which are frequently seen today, are not new phenomena at all.

## 2-3-4 Modern cities

Initiated in the early twentieth century, modernism began to radically change cities. Modernists saw the city as a machine, with *form following function*, and treated urban public space as an 'undifferentiated whole' with functional requirements (light, ventilation, production efficiency and traffic movement) being the uppermost concern (Le Corbusier 1929). Consequently, modernists despised the traditional 'urban enclosures' characterised by streets and squares that were well defined by buildings, and were in favour of vast open spaces which could provide a free setting and flexible locations for buildings. '*What resulted*', in Madanipour's (2003: 202) words, '*was vast expanses of space which could have little or no connection with other spaces of the city and could be left under-used, only to be watched from the top of the high rise buildings or from the car windows*'. The psychological and behavioural needs of humans in public space were also generally eschewed by the modernists. Sennett (1976: 12-13) notes that streets and squares in modern cities were largely empty and isolated lands with a lack of any substantial public activity so that they were areas 'to pass through, not to use', remaining as 'dead public space'. In a similar vein, Jacobs (1961) blamed modernist planning for removing

traditional social relationships from the street, leading to not just the loss of vitality in urban public life, but also an increasing lack of safety across the city.

A more intense privatisation of urban space simultaneously emerged. In the very early 1960s, American cities adopted a new zoning regulation system that encouraged developers to offer open plazas on the ground of their corporate lands, which '*introduced a new type of space: privately owned public space, located on private property yet...physically accessible to the public at large*' (Kayden *et al*. 2000: 11). Kayden *et al*. note that many of these places were built as barren empty spaces, or, abused by the developers as loading areas or garage entries. On the other hand, the suburban shopping mall and the enclosed downtown shopping centre, both being tightly related to a private living style and a 'domestic value', came to challenge the street life of the inner city (Crawford 1992). Generally, these places '*rejected the sociability of front porches and sidewalks...looked inward, turning their back on the public street*' with their exterior walls which were often blank and entrances which were difficult to find; while inside the environment was often clean, safe, visually pleasing and plentiful with consumption choices (Crawford 1992: 21). Such an 'inward' environment was considered as a reflection of the profound distrust of the outside streets as a public arena full of bustle, dirt and traffic in the modernist period (Miles and Miles 2004). Kostof (1987 in Cowan 2005: 350) therefore considers the suburban shopping mall and the shopping centre at the time as a 'sanitized and disembodied replica of Main Street'.

## 2-3-5 Post-modern cities

From the late 1960s, as a response to an increasing dissatisfaction at the 'homogeneity and soullessness' of urban space came post-modern urbanism (Lloyd-Jones 1998). In contrast to modernists' break from the past and indifference to the qualities of the site, the principal feature of post-modern urbanism is contextualism (historical, physical, social, mass cultural, and so on) (Ellin 1996: 185). Madanipour (1996b: 194) emphasises how post-modern urban design differs in the way it treats urban space:

'*In contrast, the post-modern urban design only concentrates on parts of the city, on the visible places and on their meaning and vitality, arguing against the abstractions and totalizations of modernism...favours a mixture of land uses, to give vitality to urban places, as against the modernist desire to separate land use in rationally organized zones...is eclectic in style and borrows from various historic periods... whereas modernist design breaks its links with the past*

*and only looks to the future...encourages pedestrian movement and a degree of control on cars in the city space, as against the modernist urban design which saw the cars as central to the city and concentrated on road-building activities...argues for a return to the city of streets, squares and low-rise buildings, as against the modernist vision of high-rise buildings in the park.'*

At the same time, this conceptual shift in urban design is a product of the recent economic transformation of Western cities themselves which, during the past four decades, have largely evolved from production bases to consumption places - it is now the 'consumerist economy', rather than production process, that drives the development of cities (to be further discussed in *2-4-1*). As a result, urban space has been widely seen by urban governments as a means of marketing cities and localities to attract investment, consumers and tourists (Madanipour 1999). Consequently, Western post-industrial cities have radically reinvented their industrial districts or run-down city centres during recent decades, in the name of 'urban regeneration', to create large numbers of new shopping streets, plazas, parks, industrial museums, and waterfront areas for commercial purposes (Colquhoun 1995; Gospodini 2002).

These intense efforts to reinvent urban spaces, in association with the postmodernist claim of 'return to positive urban space', in many instances have been successful in bringing vitality back to street life (Carmona *et al.* 2008; Gehl and Gemzoe 2001), and have offered an antidote to modernism's functionalist, impersonal urban settings (Ellin 1996). On the other hand, however, many authors notice that these spaces are essentially 'enhancing settings for consumption', the main purpose of which is to attract the consumers and retain them for as long as possible, rather than to serve broad needs of civility and community (Miles and Miles 2004). Some authors further argue that contemporary urban public spaces, compared to their historic counterparts, are likely to experience a higher extent of commodification, privatisation, and symbolic manipulation, in order to serve an increasingly prevalent consumerist culture (see Sorkin *ed.* 1992). In all, these arguments raise the question as to whether contemporary public space has been revived, or on the contrary, virtually declined under the impact of consumption forces. The following section further unpacks this debate.

## 2-4 Contemporary debate: loss of public space?

### 2-4-1 Key themes of place-making in the age of consumption

As has been discussed, consumption is now considered as a potent means by which cities

compete in a national or even international urban hierarchy to secure investment, jobs, and tourists. This is essentially because the dynamics of the capitalist accumulation process have shifted from an emphasis on massive and efficient manufacturing, as happened in the industrial period, to a focus on 'profitable and quick selling'. This means that consumption becomes the principal competitive arena of capital realisation (Gottdiener 2001; Hannigan 1998; Jayne 2006; Miles and Miles 2004).

Based on this fact, cities on the one hand are creating considerable physical environments for the use of consumption, and on the other hand, are endeavouring to make these places more appealing and convenient to attract consumers and support their expenditure. This has placed an increasing pressure on urban spaces to perform as marketable commodities themselves (Frampton 2005; Urry 1995). On the face of it, three interrelated themes, *privatisation*, *commodification*, and *symbolic manipulation* of urban space, have been frequently addressed by literature of consumption and place-making, as is explored below.

#### ◆ *Privatisation*

There has been a wide spread process of privatisation of urban space in Western cities during the past three decades, which is characterised by the increasing 'corporate place' or 'malled environment' in the city, which are invested and managed by private agencies (Buchanan 1988; Punter 1990; Kayden *et al.* 2000). Several factors are addressed responsible for that process. First, the neoliberalism prevailing in the 1980s and 1990s is considered as a direct driver of that process because neoliberalist governments heavily relied on private capital to provide public amenities and social welfare (Harvey 1985). Secondly, the unsuccessful modernist planning and urban design between 1950s and 1970s largely sacrificed urban public places to car movement and dangerous 'dead spaces', and that compelled people to 'retreat' into defended, privatised territories (Ellin 1996; Newman1973). And thirdly, the recent globalisation has intensified the free flow of private capital and led to an increasing 'disjunction' between the 'process' and 'localities' of development, so that space becomes a sheer commodity and '*is stripped of its emotional and cultural value*' affiliated to the locality (Madanipour 2003: 215-216) - in such a climate, as Carmona *et al.* (2008: 50) notes, '*a safe return (the investor's primary interest) will most easily be guaranteed through responding to the needs of occupiers, whilst those needs of the wider community will be a low priority*', and as the result, privatisation is likely to become the first choice.

Carmona *et al.* (2008: 50-51) further address a absence of strong planning controls to rectify that situation, and a general unwillingness of public authorities to take on the responsibility and cost of managing spaces themselves, which makes '...*the state effectively passing aspects of their responsibility for publicly owned space to private interests*'. In a similar vein, Low (in Low and Smith 2006: 82) points out that privatisation can occur at a series of development levels:

'...*during the past 20 years, privatisation of urban public space has accelerated through the closing, redesign, and policing of public parks and plazas, the development of business improvement districts that monitor and control local streets and parks, and the transfer of public air rights for the building of corporate plazas ostensibly open to the public.*'

The business improvement districts (BIDs) strategy addressed here particularly characterises a public-private partnership model in which the local government acts as 'enabler', as opposed to 'provider', transferring the state power for the public-space management to the private boards i.e., the BID companies funded by local business and property owners (Carmona *et al.* 2008). Zukin (1995) notes that BIDs often happen through public-led urban regeneration initiatives, but practically function through private organisations, with extra levies on businesses to maintain a safe and clean 'consumption environment', which thus tends to privilege business and property owners over the general interests of community at large.

◆ *Commodification*

Commodification of public space is considered a simultaneous part of the broader process of privatisation of urban space (see Kohn 2004; Saunders *ed.* 2005; Sorkin *ed.* 1992). Jayne (2006) notes that commodification occurs if economic value is assigned to something that traditionally would not be considered in economic terms so that they can be bought and sold rather than freely exchanged. In this respect, Kohn (2004: 5) argues that commodification of space may present various forms in cities:

'*Most privately owned common spaces are part of profit-making ventures and are therefore treated as commodities; theme parks charge entrance fees and shopping malls carefully calculate how much 'public' space is necessary to draw customers into adjacent stores. But state-owned spaces can also be commodified...for example, Toronto inaugurated a new public plaza in the heart of downtown; in order to pay for two 24-hour security guards, city officials decided to rent it out for concerts and other commercial events. Big corporations have paid tens*

*of thousands of dollars to emblazon their logos on Times Square-style digital billboards while citizens were arrested for drawing peace signs in chalk on the plaza.'*

Moreover, Kayden *et al.* (2000: 57) particularly address the phenomenon of 'cafe creep' which is considered as another familiar manifestation of commodification of public space - it has been seen that restaurants and cafe shops invade streets and plazas of the city, by defining the perimeter of the dining area with moveable tables, chairs, banners, and even planters; while *'members of the public are prohibited from sitting at the tables unless they are willing to purchase food'*. Kayden *et al.* however argue that in many cases the legal basis allowing the public space to install settings of a food establishment is with the 'proviso' that the public are able to use these tables and chairs without purchase obligation; but, that proviso is often deliberately ignored, as *'Individuals are either expressly told by restaurant staff, or are led to believe by appearance - a sort of private coding by design and operation - that they must purchase food or refreshment if they want to sit at the tables or chairs.'*

It is also worth saying that the process of commodification of urban space is often accompanied by a process of gentrification at a larger socio-spatial scale (Lees *et al.* 2007). Renovated and commodified urban environments easily facilitate an increase in property values, which then results in the influx of wealthier residents or users to replace the prior communities who may not afford the new spaces any more (due to the rising property prices, rents, costs in daily living, etc.). Proponents of gentrification focus on the benefits of this process, which include renewed qualities of spaces, reductions in the crime rate, increased potentials for retail and investment activities, and so on. But critics of gentrification often emphasise the 'human cost' paid by the prior neighbourhoods during this process - the increased property values force the lower-income residents to leave and seek accommodations in less expensive areas, so that the renewed environment is likely to serve only the 'higher section' of the population (Lees *et al.* 2007). In relation to the use of public realm, areas such as regenerated city centres often tend to present a less diverse land use (more high-end residential, retail and office buildings and places, with local neighbourhoods, traditional shops and community spaces shrinking) as well as stronger restraint imposed on place users (spaces become more convenient and accessible to the wealthier class, while the replaced group may find difficulty in going back to use these renewed public spaces, due to longer distance, stricter management, etc.) (Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee 1998). These issues will be also reflected in the following discussions (see *2-4-2*).

◆ *Symbolic manipulation*

The third theme regularly discussed in literature is the symbolic manipulation of public space. As discussed in *2-3*, traditional urban spaces often used certain design approaches to reflect the 'aesthetic preference' of the urban elites, as well as to display the 'status and wealth' of the ruling classes. By contrast, contemporary consumption spaces are much more dominated by mass consumerist culture, and therefore tend to display their 'capability and potential of satisfying various consumers' (Cuthbert 2006). Saunders (2005: vii) argues that similar to other commodified cultural productions (such as music, photography, book publishing, etc.), the design of contemporary architecture and urban space *'has been increasingly engulfed in and made subservient to the goals of the capitalist economy, more specifically the luring of consumers for the purpose of gaining their money.'* Hajer and Reijindorp (2001 in Carmona *et al.* 2008: 49) point out that because there is no essential difference between the commodities displayed in different built environments, the focus of place-making is virtually to invent symbolic 'experiences' for consumers, rather than to simply accommodate items for sale: '*A phenomenon that has mushroomed in recent years concerns the desire of the ordinary citizen to have 'interesting experiences'...Where all kinds of events are offered that can excite people for a short time, from factory sales to art biennials...Cities and organisations compete with other places by producing experiences.'*

Klingmann (2007) in particular notes that in order to impose lasting 'experiences' on consumers, contemporary consumption environments tend to become more and more 'multifunctional', along with an increasing use of international brands. Taking Times Square and Potsdamer Platz as examples, Klingmann (2007: 83-86) illustrates how a 'coverall' space meets every element of consumers' activities (shopping, watching, playing, eating and drinking, etc.) by synthesising various 'selling milieus' (shops, cinemas, theatres, recreation sites, restaurants, etc.). She also looks at how it characterises 'an increasing exteriorization of corporate identities combined with an artificial making of place' by incorporating international brands (in retail, banking, fast-food, and entertainment) into the site, as well as adopting a 'plethora' of iconic architectural typologies. In conclusion, Klingmann argues that such space, rather than being a 'container' of brands, eventually becomes a symbolic sign or 'brand' in itself, and so that its development can be also considered as a symbolic process of 'brandscaping of space'.

## 2-4-2 Critique of loss

Ultimately, along with the increasing dominance of consumerist culture in place-making, comes

the argument that the 'publicness' of contemporary public space is diminishing. This is widely claimed by commentators in the disciplines such as human geography and sociology. They construct a 'critique of loss', or, a 'narrative of loss', which bemoans the decline of public realm in the consumption age (Banerjee 2001; Boyer 1994; Kilian 1998; Mattson 1999).

### ◆ Exclusion in public space

One of the major concerns of the critique of loss is the observed *control and social exclusion* in public space. As Mitchell (1995: 119) in *The end of public space* argues, the basic 'premise' of contemporary place-making is the 'control over the public':

*'Corporate and state planners have created environments that are based on desires for security rather than interaction, for entertainment rather than (perhaps divisive) politics...One of the results of planning has been the growth of what Sennett (1992) calls 'dead public spaces' - the barren plazas that surround so many modern office towers. A second result has been the development of festive spaces that encourage consumption - downtown redevelopment areas, malls, and festival marketplaces. Though seemingly so different, both 'dead' and 'festive' spaces are premised on a perceived need for order, surveillance, and control over the behavior of the public.'*

This premise, according to Carmona *et al.* (2008: 57), is constructed upon the reality that the owners or managers of urban public space want to ensure that their space, being an important commodity or brand, are perceived and interpreted by consumers or visitors as being attractive and safe. Madanipour (2003: 217) notes that this is essential for the sake of 'safe investment returns'. In a similar vein, Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee (1998: 280) argue that contemporary design of urban space tends to eliminate any 'undesirable' groups or social intrusions which may threaten the marketing of space:

*'Space is cut off, separated, enclosed, so that it can be easily controlled and 'protected'. This treatment succeeds in screening the unpleasant realities of everyday life: the poor, the homeless, the mentally ill, and the landscapes of fear, neglect, and deterioration.'*

Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee (1998: 183) particularly identify two means of social control in space: hard or soft controls. Hard controls use a variety of security forces, CCTV systems, and regulations prohibiting certain activities; while soft controls use a range of symbolic restrictions

to discourage 'undesirable behaviours'. Carmona *et al.* (2008: 49-51) recognise that some micro-scale design strategies can be used as symbolic (soft) controls, fostering the sense of exclusion, such as high blank walls, impenetrable street frontages, sunken plazas, hidden entrances (to new spaces), and so on. Moreover, Carmona *et al.* (2003: 127) find that many consumption spaces establish subtle 'visual cues' delivering the message that only whose with the ability to consume are welcome so that people have to conform to the 'expected behaviour and dress norms', and therefore the regulation becomes 'self-enforcing'. In the face of these, Klingmann (2007: 81) argues that public space easily '*becomes the fabricated product of a consumer-driven economy, customized to cater to the needs of selected target groups*' while declines in accommodating broader community.

#### ◆ *Homogenisation of public space*

Another main argument in the critique of loss concentrates on the discussion of whether public space is becoming increasingly *homogenised* in terms of both its social usage and physical appearance. Hartley (1992 in Mitchell 1995: 116) describes an 'ideal' public space, by using the Greek agora as an analogous example, which is '*the place of citizenship, an open space where public affairs and legal disputes were conducted...it was also a marketplace, a place of pleasurable jostling, where citizens' bodies, words, actions, and produce were all literally on mutual display, and where judgments, decisions, and bargains were made.*' Clearly, to Hartley public space should be used as a place where democracy, politics, commerce, and spectacle can be juxtaposed and intermingled. Similar arguments are made by authors like Boyer (1994) and Sorkin *et al.* (1992) who argue that public space by its nature should serve as a venue for political debates and civic behaviours.

In contemporary consumption space, however, the political dimension of public space is seen in many cases being discouraged and shrinking. As Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee (1998: 291) note '*Owners and developers want their space to be 'apolitical'. They separate users from unnecessary social or political distractions, and put users into the mood consistent with their purposes* [to consume]'. Light and Smith (1998: 5) otherwise suggest that people's attitude towards public life has simultaneously changed when being enveloped in consumerist culture. For instance, they notice that today's Americans tend to 'consume' public space as French fries, 'thoughtlessly and without ceremony', as '*Most Americans today seem to view public space as a source of entertainment, not as a site of civic duty, political ferment, or social education. They consequently evaluate public spaces against other forms of experience manufactured by the*

*entertainment industry, such as movies, televisions, or the World Wide Web.'*

Sorkin *et al.* (1992: xiii-xv) in *Variations on a theme park* argue that today's consumerist culture is developing a standard, 'departicularised' urbanism where the main function of public space is for consumption rather than for anything else. Sorkin describes the contemporary metropolis as an 'incorporate city' which is characterised by considerable shopping malls, redeveloped downtowns, theme parks, pseudo-historic marketplaces, and many other consumption-based environments, arguing that these 'monofunctional' places are together 'heralding an end to traditional public space'.

On the other hand, homogenisation is observed not merely occurring in the use of public space, but perhaps more evidently in its visible appearance. It is argued that urban spaces across the world largely tend to adopt international architectural styles with similar aesthetics as well as similar, often 'delocalised', shops, brands and settings in retailing (King 2004; Townshend and Madanipour 2008). Moreover, urban spaces tend to borrow techniques from theme parks or shopping malls, copying and combining elements from different societies and cultures to create a 'pastiche', 'hyperreal' environment (Ellin 1996). These two approaches to place-making, according to Carmona *et al.* (2008: 54), are all driven by the combination of consumerist culture with the globalisation of capital, which '*involves the deliberate creation of sameness, copying a successful formula that has worked elsewhere*'. Klingmann (2007) argues that place-making now symbolically equals the 'brandscaping' of daily businesses such as KFC and Starbucks, and the purpose of which is to create 'standardisation' or 'familiarity', for the convenience of both investors and consumers. Sorkin *et al.* (1992: xiii) again argue that today's consumerism is creating an 'artificial city' which is increasingly replacing 'genuine places' with 'urbane disguises', and in so doing the variety and authenticity of space are being mocked by commercial signs and brands.

## 2-4-3 Counter arguments

* *Understand the changing 'publicness'*

On the face of it, the critique of loss is 'damming' of contemporary public space. Despite this, however, some authors argue that the reported decline in public space is much exaggerated (Carmona *et al.* 2008: 58). One problem is that, as Crawford (1999: 23) notes, there is a deeply rooted nostalgic intention in many of these critiques because they usually use contemporary or new spaces to 'frame a pervasive narrative of loss' which is contrasted with a 'romanticised'

history of public space. But in fact, public space was never as inclusive and democratic as these commentators would have us believe. For instance, the Greek agora is usually assumed to be more inclusive and democratic than public spaces in the modern city; but, as Mumford (1961: 138-139) notes, the agora was merely fully open to the citizens, which even during the height of Greek civilisation only accounted for one-seventh of the population of Greek cities,. Mitchell (1995: 116) gives further description:

*'The public that met in these spaces was carefully selected and homogenous in composition. It consisted of those with power, standing, and respectability...In Greek democracy, for example, citizenship was a right that was awarded to free, non-foreign men and denied to slaves, women, and foreigners. The latter had no standing in the public spaces of Greek cities; they were not included in 'the public'. Although women, slaves, and foreigners may have worked in the agora, they were formally excluded from the political activities of this public space.'*

Some authors (Fraser 1990 and Hartley 1992, in Mitchell 1995: 116) point out that not just the Greek agora, but also Roman forums, European marketplaces and squares, and eventually American parks, were never simply places of free and 'unmediated interaction'. Instead they were often places of exclusion, and *'Inclusion of more and varied groups of people into the public sphere has only been won through constant social struggle.'*

Carmona *et al.* (2008: 24) thus point out that issues of social exclusion, a criticism frequently placed on contemporary public space, are nothing new. Having recognised that, Mitchell (1995: 121) criticises the erroneous desire of some commentators to forge an 'artificial' past as well as to construct an 'idealised' conceptualisation of public space:

*'Public spaces are, for these writers, an artifact of a past age, an age with different sensibilities and different ideas about public order and safety, when public spaces were stable, well defined, and accessible to all. But these images of past public spaces and past public spheres are highly idealized; as we have seen, the public sphere in the American past was anything but inclusive - and public space was always a site for and a source of conflict. Definitions of public space and 'the public' are not universal and enduring; they are produced rather through constant struggle in the past and in the present.'*

Bhabha (1997) concludes that public space are not something always fixed or inherited, but

rather constantly evolving into new forms with new uses (i.e., the changing 'publicness', see 2-2). Thus, the dynamic publicness cannot be fairly assessed until a 'bona fide' understanding of history, rather than an 'idealised image', is achieved.

♦ *The value of consumption and people's experiences*

The critique of loss or decline is also regarded sometimes as over pessimistic as its evaluation on public space tends to present a strong dichotomy between the merits and the demerits of consumption space. The latter is seen in many writings largely overwhelming the former. Thus, the value of consumption - its creativity in place-making and in offering diverse public life - is likely to be under-estimated. In this respect, Hajer and Reijndorp (2001: 41) argue that:

*'The way in which 'the market' - the economy, globalisation, 'new-liberal hyper-capitalism' - threatens or even destroys the 'authenticity' of the historic meaning of local 'places' has often been a topic of discussion. These viewpoints have little consideration for the creation of scores of valuable new places. The possibility of these being created by 'the market' seems to be peremptorily dismissed. Privatization and commercialization are considered irreconcilable with the concept of public domain, but that discrepancy is less absolute than it might seem.'*

Hajer and Reijndorp's argument is supported by numbers of authors. For instance, Zukin (1998: 830) notices that contemporary 'malled' spaces (shopping malls, outlets, bus stops, department store and supermarket coffee shops, etc.) have developed a particular 'social culture': they have been increasingly used by many as places for meeting and socialisation, rather than sheer shopping, and thus '*a more fluid network of friends and ages demonstrates mall's usefulness as public spaces*'. Mean and Tims (2005: 29) continue this observation, finding that there are emerging 'mall walkers' (including elderly groups, young mums, and unemployed people) who '*feel most comfortable in commercial space because it acts as a guardian in terms of providing services (toilets) and protection (from the weather and other people) and because it makes few demands on them*', while '*Other types of space such as the library or the park may be free, but require a more complex set of behaviours, commitments and permissions that they may not want to negotiate.*' In a similar vein, Oldenburg (1999) discusses the concept of the 'third place', the 'social' space in contrast to 'domestic' and 'work' spaces, which includes cafes, pubs, taverns, etc. According to Oldenburg, a third place, despite its commercialised or privatised nature, usually performs as an inclusive place for it expands possibilities of social interaction, offers easy accommodation for the majority of people, and creates 'playful moods' which are

indispensable in public life.

Kaliski (1999: 95) further points out that it is also important to understand that public space not only supports civic functions such as demonstration and debate, but also contains mundane usages to catalyse individual imagination and joy. He therefore argues that some of the loss critiques too quickly label 'civic space' as good urbanism, while exaggeratedly denouncing the existence and popularity of consumption and entertainment spaces. Banerjee (2001: 14-15) continues the argument, claiming that an important function of public space is enjoyment:

'*The sense of loss associated with the perceived decline of public space assumes that effective public life is linked to a viable public realm...where the affairs of the public are discussed and debated in public places...But there is another concept of public that is derived from our desire for relaxation, social contact, entertainment, leisure, and simply having a good time.*'

Gottdiener (2001) particularly describes how a themed environment such as a Disneyland or a festival marketplace can meet people's desire for relaxation and fun - it provides people with valuable 'urban' experiences of being pedestrians and being in communion with the crowd; it enables people to buy food at any time and at almost any location, and they can eat when walking, which is 'a classical joy of city living'; and furthermore, it can transform family relations because it is often the kids that define the routine of the visit and guide their families while in everyday life usually adults set the agenda of family activities.

These observations are strongly supported by a recent research conducted by Worpole and Knox (2007: 4) in the UK, which concludes that '*Contrary to conventional assumptions, public space in neighbourhoods, towns and cities is not in decline but instead expanding*'. Having observed that '*Gathering at the school gate, activities in community facilities, shopping malls, cafes and car boot sales are all arenas where people meet and create places of exchange,*' Worpole and Knox urge that we should not confine notions of public space to 'ownership and appearance' because these do not make space necessarily 'public'; rather, the value of space is largely reflected by how people use it, i.e., by the opportunities it provides for 'shared use and activity'. If this broader notion of public space is accepted, Worpole and Knox then argue, despite the tendency towards privatisation and commodification, '*almost any place regardless of its ownership or appearance offers potential as public space*'.

This notion is also addressed by Mean and Tims (2005: 10) who argue that *'public space is better understood less as a predetermined physical space, and more as an experience created by an interaction between people and a place'*. They call for a 'user-led' perspective to assess the quality of places, which is of necessity to a 'balanced' critique on public space.

Based on a range of observations of users' activities and experiences, Gehl and Gemzoe (2001: 20) therefore note an increasingly evident improvement in the quality of urban public space and an resurgence in public life, particularly across European cities (those of Germany, Netherlands and Scandinavia). For them, *'there are clear signs that the city and city spaces have been given a new and influential role as public space...'*, and in that sense, public space is being largely revived, rather than being diminished or deadened.

## 2-4-4 So to conclude: 'both constraining and enabling'

Therefore, there have emerged two ends of the spectrum in the evaluation and perception of public space in the age of consumption, which according to Ellin (1996: 188), essentially reflect 'a double-edged sword that really boils down to a critique of consumption [itself].' Miles (1998) agrees, arguing that we thus need to recognise the 'consuming paradox', by which he means that consumption plays a dual role in shaping public space and public life, by creating environments that may be criticised for being artificial, but on the other hand, arguably offering that precise quality which people like about them. Therefore, in the words of Jayne (2006), the conclusion is *'consumption is both constraining and enabling'*.

In light of this perception, some authors advocate that urban design should adopt a 'pragmatic' attitude towards contemporary place-making, rather than intend any strong value judgment. For instance, Lees (1994) argues that although many primarily commercial public spaces may lack wider civic functions, we should remember that commercial space has always been built into public space, and vice versa. Lees (1994: 448-449) further argues that we therefore should focus on the 'practical improvement' of commercial space, rather than only discussing the 'inevitability' of its 'occurring'; in her words: *'The core of city life....still has a strong grounding in space...the design, accessibility, and the quality of such urban space can and ought to be criticised, but its existence must be recognised'*. Goss (1996 in Carmona *et al.* 2008: 59) further points out that consumption space is 'ambivalent' and can not escape the fundamental cultural-economic mechanisms of contemporary society. By looking at the waterfront festival marketplaces in American cities, Goss argues that: *'...to blame festival marketplaces for failing*

*to provide equal access to all members of a mythical 'general public' - which does not and cannot exist in an ethnically and class-divided society - and for failing to provide the context for authentic public interaction and transactions - which does not exist in a mass-mediated society - is to repeat precisely the impossible bourgeois desire for a genuine public sphere that the festival market articulates.'*

In conclusion, Carmona *et al.* (2008: 55) then argue that the dominant challenge may not be to clarify whether the effect of consumption on public space is right or wrong, *'but simply to create 'good' places'*, i.e., to find out how to enlarge the 'enabling', while reducing the 'constraining' elements in public space (the creation of 'good' public space will be further discussed in *2-6*). With a similar perception, Kostof (1992 in Cowan 2005: 312) argues that despite the observed shortcomings of contemporary public space, the future, however, is not hopeless as *'We still want to be with other people, if not engaging them directly at least watching them stroll by. The public places unique to our time may be thoroughly privatized. Their motive may be no more noble than to lure us to buy. But having been drawn to the mall or boutique-up old town square for 'recreational shopping' and the obligatory stop for food, we discover each other and might remember the place when we want to stage a public event, or celebrate a private event in public'*. For Kostof, and many of the authors noted above, public space with its embedded public life will always be evolving, unlikely to become 'lost'. Based on these observations, the following section reviews how Western criticisms of public space are imposed on China's CPDs, and assesses their relevance to this study.

## 2-5 Research gaps: critique of loss in China

### 2-5-1 Critiques on China's CPDs

During recent years, the critique of loss, or decline, has been spread beyond the Western world, being constantly tested in fast developing countries. Evidence can be found in the recent urban China literature indicating that there are critiques on China's CPDs as regards their 'publicness'. Yucekus and Banerjee (1998) observe the newly pedestrianised commercial districts in Beijing, *Wang Fujing, Xidan Street*, and *Qianmen*. They point out that it is now the new consumerism, rather the old Maoist political-economic ideology, that is shaping China's urban landscape. Their descriptions imply that these commerce-based public venues are central to the interest of urban elites at the price of the exclusion of broader populations: '[Wang Fujing] *houses some international brand names like Cerruti and Georgio Armani. It is close to...the diplomatic*

*enclave in the Chaoyang district inhabited by expatriate population with higher purchasing power. Its customers are mainly upper class shoppers consisting of Hong Kong and other overseas Chinese tourists'* (1998: 91). Broudehoux (2004: 102) under the explicit rubric of her book chapter *The malling of Wang Fujing: commercial redevelopment in the selling of place*, develops a similar conclusion as she notes that Wang Fujing '*was a place where ordinary people could shop for their daily needs*'; while now it is '*an exclusive enclave catering for the Beijing bourgeoisie and the capital's foreign residents*'. In particular, Broudehoux (2004: 116) looks into the newly developed shopping malls in Wang Fujing, arguing that '*The shopping mall represents a radically new type of public space in the Chinese urban landscape...Yet far from being accessible to all, these spaces cater for the small fraction of the population...In this sense, they have become sites of exclusion, where the newly emerging social fragmentation is constructed and reproduced*'. Furthermore, Broudehoux (2004: 110) criticises the urban design of Wang Fujing: '*Renovation gave the street the sanitized air of postmodern shopping and entertainment districts now found around the world, whose sedate environment is engineered to create the best conditions for people to focus their energy on consumption...Aesthetics extended to urban design and landscaping where no effort was spared to give Wang Fujing a festive new look...These and other popular attractions turned Wang Fujing into a spectacular urban space whose kitsch ostentation fosters an urban experience that can itself be consumed*'. In sum, these critiques have effectively produced the strong impression that the public use of China's central pedestrian districts has been largely impaired by their consumption-focused pursuits, indicating that their design and management are increasingly serving a homogeneous consumption environment with a exclusion of the general public, and therefore presenting a 'loss of publicness', similar to what has been described in Western cities.

## 2-5-2 Potential gaps

Understanding that consumption can be 'constraining', it is reasonable to conclude that these criticisms contain grains of truth, i.e., they reveal the negative effects of consumerist culture on China's contemporary public space. However, based on the arguments against the critique of loss (in *2-4-3*) debates opposed to these criticisms can be also set up. Three arguments might be made.

*First*, the history of public space and public life in Chinese cities is not fully taken into account in these criticisms. The evolution of these CPDs, particularly during the Maoist period and the early years of China's Reform era, is absent. Yucekus and Banerjee barely identify these periods

at all. Broudehoux focuses much of her narrative on the traditional period of Wang Fujing, the years before the 1950s when Communists established their power in Beijing, while giving a rather brief introduction to the period between 1950s and 1980s, which was in fact of great significance to the development of China's urban space. Consequently, how these places functioned distinctively at the Maoist time and how their social uses were different from today are not revealed to the reader, and therefore, the potential change of 'publicness' cannot be assessed. Such an absence of the past then makes their criticisms somehow look fragmentary and formalised, appearing directly borrowed from the critiques on the Western cities without fully examining China's own urban contexts. Wu (2006: 477-478) in his review of Broudehoux's book points out that 'transplanting this familiar literature into a wholly different political and cultural environment' may neglect the complexity in 'the motivation and the logic of practices' of the local state (Chinese cities), which are different from that of Western cities.

*Second,* the evidence which these criticisms have presented is to some extent confined to their partial observations on some specific physical elements, such as Wang Fujing's shopping malls and beautified landscapes. However, they have not offered more comprehensive evidence to describe and explain the overall physical characteristics and social manifestations of these places. Neither have they fully examined and analysed the detailed design and management strategies that are employed by local governments to shape public spaces. These omissions may raise readers' curiosity about a more detailed comprehension of these CPDs, so they can assess their 'publicness' from broader perspectives. Again even in the examination of particular places, an awareness of the 'locality' should have been further developed in these criticisms, as in fact many Chinese urban spaces, despite their outward similarity to Western counterparts, are interpreted and used differently by the locals. For instance, Miao (2001: 14) argues that because many Asian cities historically lacked the civic autonomous tradition which was evident in Western cities, '*Residents seldom gathered in an urban setting to discuss how to run their cities*', and that partly explains why large plazas and squares in today's Asian cities are largely used as venues for organised or group events, rather than for spontaneous, individual debates. Miao (2001: 22) further notes that Chinese residents tend to use large open spaces to practice 'quiet meditation exercises' in groups such as *qigong*, while they often feel reluctant to have active, interpersonal socialisation in these spaces.

*Last but not least,* these criticisms of CPDs potentially lack careful observation and analysis of how people behave in particular places, how they feel about the offered public setting, how they

respond to detailed design and management approaches to public space, whether they can create any 'innovative' public events or activities there, etc. In short, users' experiences, as have been discussed in *2-4-3*, are not adequately addressed in these criticisms. Rather, these CPDs are portrayed as places just for 'selling and buying' which overwhelm any other public activities. This leads to an underestimate of the 'value' of consumption, i.e., its 'enabling' effects are not well addressed in these criticisms. In fact, it is reasonable to assume that there is more than mere consumption taking place in them and they have the potential of facilitating creative public uses, the same as their Western counterparts. Zacharias (2002: 15) notes that in China: '*The pedestrian mall is perceived as the prime public open space of the* [Chinese] *city. Visitors come to stroll, look at goods and people, eat ice cream and have their pictures taken. Economic activity is clearly secondary at present. Walking speeds are low with people following an itinerary that takes them from end to end of a street, sometimes repeating the circuit several times...This behaviour is much less in evident in Europe, where walking is more purposeful, itineraries more diversified, visits to shops more likely and walking speeds generally higher*'.

In sum, all these potential gaps and conflicts between these different narratives reveal that the critique of loss on China's CPDs needs to be challenged. Current research is still not sufficient for a comprehensive understanding of their real 'publicness', so that more specific researches are needed. The following section looks at the urban-design considerations in relation to the creation of 'good' public spaces, the practical response to contemporary criticisms on public space, as discussed in *2-4-4*.

## 2-6 Design response: normative measurements of good public space

### 2-6-1 Fundamental rationale of place-making in urban design

*◆ Two dimensions of public space*

The physical aspect of urban space (including its visual appearance and aesthetic experience) has been all along regarded as one of the major concerns of urban design, so that urban design used to be thought as '*architecture writ large across the whole urban fabric*', the '*art of three-dimensional city design at a scale greater than that of a single building*', and so on (Greed 1998: 4-6). These perceptions however are now deemed to overemphasise the physical dimension of urban space, while failing to acknowledge broader social usages and people's requirements in urban places (Worpole 2006). As Jacobs (1961: 386) argues '*To approach the city...or neighbourhood as if it were a larger architectural problem...is to substitute art for life*'.

Therefore, contemporary mainstream urban design has largely recognised that the physical quality of urban space has to be combined with a commitment to the public needs and social functions. The creation of a good public space is not simply a matter of the completion of its physical dimension, but also depends on the fulfilment of its social dimension (see Carmona *et al.* 2003; Gehl 1996, 2006; Lang 1994, 2005; Llewelyn-Davies 2000; Madanipour 1996b; Rowley 1994).

### ◆ *Physical possibilism*

A wide variety of theories and principles have been set up in urban design to address the issue as to what *makes* a good public space. Arguably their validity is based on the understanding of the relationship between people ('behaviour') and the environment ('space'). The controversial idea *physical determinism* assumes that design of the physical environment has a determining influence on human behaviour, namely, physical elements are necessarily playing the dominant role while people are always passive (Carmona *et al.* 2003). However, this understanding is now largely dismissed since *physical possibilism* has been deemed more persuasive, which makes the assumption that the environment provides people with behavioural opportunities, while people can also actively create a 'resultant' environment by what they actually do within the space (Bell *et al.* 1990; Gans 1968; Porteous 1977). Mean and Tims (2005: 54) argue that what makes spaces truly public is not their ownership status and physical design, rather is whether they are actively used and shared by different individuals and groups; but, '*this does not amount to saying that public space is therefore so adaptable and flexible* ' that we do not worry about how to create a wide set of 'opportunities' available to different people with different proclivities to use particular types of space. In this respect, design can be seen as an effective means of manipulating the possibilities of certain action occurring, rather than the factor determining people's behaviours. This, according to Carmona *et al.* (2003: 106), means that '*the design matters but not absolutely*'.

Contemporary place-making theories and researches are largely based on such a possibilist perspective. For example, Larice and Macdonald (*eds.* 2007: 364) argue that both William Whyte and Jan Gehl's studies show how people use public space and how the quality of places can be improved by design; but their research methods, such as direct observation, time-lapse photography and spatial mapping, are subtly directed towards people's behavioural and emotional reflections rather than physical settings themselves, and this makes their final conclusions robust and defensible - '*not in a deterministic way but in terms of likely*

*possibilities'*. The whole narrative of this thesis will be guided by this important epistemological standpoint.

◆ *Normative principles of good public space*

Based on these two propositions, during the past decades there have emerged considerable theoretical works in urban design, from which countless design principles can be generalised to measure the quality of public space (see Appleyard 1981; Alexander *et al.* 1977, 1979, 1987; Bentley *et al.* 1985; Cullen 1961; Gehl 1996, 2006; Gehl and Gemzoe 1996, 2001; Jacobs 1961; Jacobs 1995; Krier 1979; Lynch 1960, 1981; Moudon *ed.* 1991; Relph 1976; Whyte 1988; etc.). A salient feature of these principles is that they largely articulate the rationales as to what *should be* rather than what *is*, and generally they describe desired outcomes but leaving the specifics up to design practices. Therefore, if they share a same nature, it might be named '*being normative*' (Larice and Macdonald *eds.* 2007: 79). Bentley *et al.* (1985: 9) emphasise the significance of these principles, arguing that by means of them, we can vision and sequentially produce 'responsive' urban space that '*should provide its users with an essentially democratic setting, enriching their opportunities by maximising the degree of choice available to them*'. Without an intention to produce an exhaustive list, the following sections identify six groups of key urban-design principles regarding 'good' public space, arraying them into two parts according to the physical and social dimensions of urban design.

## 2-6-2 Physical dimension of good public space

◆ *Accessibility and Permeability*

Cowan (2005: 2) defines 'accessibility' as '*The ease with which a building, place or facility can be reached by people and/or goods and services*'. It has been recognised that a high degree of accessibility is a fundamental requirement of good public space (Whyte 1988). It usually means that public space should be physically accessible to the public. A low level of physical access often results from physical barriers, invisibility of entrances, problematic route configurations, lack of universal-design facilities, and so on. But it can also be produced by unreasonable management in public space such as over-limited opening time or over-strict security policies. Besides the physical access, Carr *et al.* (1992: 144-151) further define visual access and symbolic access. Visual access, or termed 'visibility', suggests that potential users can easily see the space from outside so that they know that it is a public space where they are welcome and can stay freely. Good visibility in this sense is also particularly important in judgments of the safety of a space (see *Comfort, Safety and Freedom of action*). Symbolic access involves the

presence of visible people or design elements suggesting who is, or is not, welcome in the space. The existence or manner of 'gatekeepers' can subtly affect people's consciousness of the publicness of the environment, and the physical setting and the offered productions of shops may also provide signals regarding their intended users. According to Carr *et al.*, these three types of access are frequently interrelated, presenting a strong indication of how 'public' a space is.

It is often suggested that the extent of accessibility can be effectively enhanced by increasing the 'permeability' which Cowan (2005: 287) defines as '*The degree to which an area has a choice of routes through it*'. Permeability is considered a key principle of public-space making because an appropriate number of alternative ways through a place secures the quality of access to that environment (Bentley *et al.* 1985). A variety of pleasant, convenient and safe routes is thought to make a place better suited to people on foot (Jacobs 1995). The opposite to permeability is large blocks with few 'through routes', which is often typical in large-scale developments of modern cities. But it can be also argued that permeability is not an absolute as it becomes undesirable under certain circumstances. For example, in a housing area, a high degree of permeability provides a choice of escape routes for criminals (Newman 1973), or it simply makes it hard to find one's way around. It is termed 'overpermeability' in these cases, which is suggested to be avoided in the design of public space (Cowan 2005: 277).

*◆ Adaptability and Feasible-facility provision*
Adaptability is the capacity of a building or a space to respond to changing social, technological, economic, cultural and market conditions (Cowan 2005: 4). It has been recognised as an important objective of both urban design and architecture as it is applied not just to external space but also to buildings (Brand 1994). Brand points out that in the United States now more is spent on changing buildings than building new ones due to changes in technology, use and fashion, concluding that the cost of changing buildings is higher than needed because most buildings were not designed to anticipate change in use over their life span. Crowther (2003) similarly argues that buildings that are initially designed to be more flexible in structure and construction are more sustainable. Adaptability can be also termed as 'robustness', meaning the quality in buildings or spaces of averting, avoiding or delaying the loss of vitality and functionality (Bentley *et al.* 1985).

Within urban design, a number of linked concepts also fall within the broad area of adaptability.

These may include 'flexibility', 'variety', 'resilience', 'choice', 'mixed use', 'diversity', 'fit', etc. (Carmona *et al.* 2003; Llewelyn-Davies 2000; Lynch 1981). For instance, Jacobs (1961) argues that 'mixed use' can underpin the vitality of urban communities, encouraging different users engaged with each other as well as with the city at different times. In terms of place-making, Shehayeb (1995: 208-211) finds that people interact more when they have the choice to avoid it, and that '*adaptable public space is used by more people in more diverse ways over a longer time period (day and night as well as enduring time), than spaces designed for specific (limited) functions*'. Shehayeb further identifies key attributes of adaptable public space as including: *open spaces along streets that are well defined by enclosed edges of buildings and landscapes; open spaces that are connected but not split by movement paths through the main space; generous footpath dimensions to allow for 'breathing space' where unplanned activities can occur*, and so on.

A particular element likely to secure the adaptability of public space is that they contain facilities which can be utilised by the public to meet their various needs. Whyte (1988: 110) concludes that the most basic prerequisite for a public space is that it offers facilities for people to sit because '*People tend to sit most where there are places to sit*'. According to Whyte's observation, sittable settings such as steps, benches, chairs, rails and bollards, tend to develop opportunities for the users not just to sit but also to lie down, read, watch, eat, talk, etc., thus increasing the socialisation between different individuals and groups. Carr *et al.* (1992) and Gehl (1996) identify other types of facilities that people enjoy, including water features, trees, newsstands, movable stalls, etc. All the authors suggest that in most cases the aesthetics of facilities does not necessarily contribute to the usage of the space around them; rather it is their conveniences and how these fit human behaviours that matter.

*◆ Enclosure, Continuity and Active frontage*

Traditional urban design emphasised the manner in which a space was related to its enclosing buildings. Sitte (1889) noted that good spaces should be 'enclosed entities' tightly defined by the facades of surrounding buildings. To create this sense of enclosure, Sitte advocated that buildings should be joined to one another rather than being freestanding. Zucker (1959) similarly argued that the relationship of enclosure determined whether a public space was a 'whole', or just a 'hole' in the urban fabric. This principle was largely applied to traditional cities and towns, creating large numbers of well-enclosed public spaces. However the later modernist movement challenged this principle, favouring high-rise buildings freestanding in the centre of

the plot. Fortunately, contemporary urban design again has realised that it is essential to create 'positive' spaces well-enclosed by buildings, rather than spaces 'leftover' after the construction of buildings (Alexander *et al.* 1987). Many new spaces have reflected this principle, offering 'lively public enclosures' within cities (see Gehl and Gemzoe 2001).

The principle of enclosure is usually interrelated with 'continuity'. Continuity means that within a given environment the edges of different places should be well defined but the physical connections between them should be easily perceived (Lynch 1960). According to Lynch, a continuous place edge can take various forms such as a river bank, a green belt, and even a railway lane. But in most cases, it is the 'active building frontages' that are deemed the most important element constructing good continuity of public space (White 1999). Gehl *et al.* (2006) argue that active frontages appear more inviting to the people walking alongside them and therefore are more likely to catalyse diverse social uses. Gehl *et al.* (2006: 45) identify a series of key elements that are necessary to the creation of an active frontage: 1. *many narrow shop units with a wide mix of functions and many entrances and interesting window displays*; 2. *an appropriate, human-based width of the street relative to the height of the surrounding buildings*; 3. *an appropriate transparency enabling good visual contact between inside and outside of the frontages*; 4. *good evening and night lighting inside the frontages*; 5. *no gaps in the rows of facades and keeping the facade in line with the other facades on the street*; 6. *providing rich and feasible niches such as doorsteps, edges and columns that enrich sensory impression and enhance opportunities for people's stopping and staying*; 7. *wealth of design details and quality building materials that create good sensory experiences*; 8. *responding to the local climate such as utilising good sun conditions and avoiding wind problems*; and 9. *associated with wide sidewalks that have few breaks and are accessible to all user groups*.

## 2-6-3 Social dimension of good public space

*◆ Comfort, Safety and Freedom of action*

Comfort is a basic need for good public space, but it cannot be achieved without the realisation of the previous conditions. In the first instance, it means a variety of physical needs: good enclosure and continuity for people's behavioural orientation, active frontages for people's window-shopping and socialisation needs, good accessibility and permeability for people's ease of movement, and sufficient and available facility settings for people to eat, drink and have a rest. In this respect, Carr *et al.* (1992: 94-97) particularly identifies two issues that are highly related to the comfort of space but usually receive insufficient attention. One is the *'protection*

*from the weather* '- shelter, whether from the sun, the rain, or inclement weather, is an important but frequently neglected element of public space design. Carr *et al.* see that the absence of relief from the sun especially tends to be a major source of users' discomfort and dissatisfaction in warmer climates. The other aspect is '*the need for toilets*'- it is not unusual that although public toilets are part of the designs, they are either not actualised or have been systematically removed or locked; and it is also true that corporate developments are often reluctant to offer free toilets to the public (Greed 2003).

A higher degree of comfort is achieved through the fulfilment of people's social and psychological needs (Carr *et al.* 1992). This type of comfort depends on people's self confidence about being socially included and linking their own personal identity with the physical characteristics of the space. Many authors suggest that people who feel themselves a real part of the space appear 'relaxed and fulfilled', tending to stay longer and to more actively explore the uses of the space (Gehl 1996; Oldenburg 1999; Whyte 1988). In this sense, comfort can be even termed '*a function of the length of time people are to remain in a site*' (Carr *et al.* 1992: 94). Oldenburg (1999) further suggests that a socially comfortable space usually tends to be 'low profile', often characterised by a 'playful mood' and an atmosphere of 'taken-for-granted-ness'.

A sense of safety is considered as another important element determining the extent of comfort. It is a feeling that one's person and possessions are not vulnerable (see Ellin *ed.* 1997; Oc and Tiesdell 1997). Crime is a major threat that makes people afraid of a place. But in many cases much of the phenomenon that provokes discomfort and deters people from using the public realm is not technically crime. They can be places underused or in poor condition, such as deserted streets suffering vandalism or graffiti (Carmona *et al.* 2003). This calls for better maintenance. People also tend to feel threatened by those who create anxiety, such as winos, beggars, or rowdy youths. In some cases, certain design features can ease people's fear about these behaviours by providing higher visual access into the site. However, this may also involve strict space management policies and the use of personnel to ensure the security of users. This strategy has been broadly undertaken in the environments under private management. Security guards are hired to keep out the 'undesirables'. Even in spaces under public control, there are usually regulations and policing forbidding certain actions that may disturb others.

However, it is argued that the existence of certain rules and regulations can be obstructions to

the achievement of 'freedom of action'. This principle reflects '*the right of use and action, of behaving freely in a place or using its facilities*' in public space (Lynch 1981: 205). Carr *et al.* (1992: 152) define this freedom as '*the ability to carry out the activities that one desires, to use a place as one wishes but with the recognition that a public space is a shared space*'. In reality, this can be a paradox as the freedom for one group may threaten that of others, e.g., the satisfaction and comfort of the major group are usually gained by virtue of the exclusion of the 'undesirables'. Therefore many suggest that the management of public space should be more benign and flexible, addressing a 'balanced' freedom between different social groups. For example, Lynch and Carr (1979: 415) argue that such a management may involve: 1. *Distinguishing between 'harmful' and 'harmless' activities, and controlling the former without constraining the latter. 2. Increasing general tolerance toward free use, while stabilising a broad consensus of what is permissible. 3. Separating - in time and space - the activities of those groups with a low tolerance for each other. 4. Providing 'marginal places' where free behaviour can go on with little damage.* Besides the management aspect, it is also recognised that the physical dimension of a public space also has a substantial impact on people's freedom of action. Wurman *et al.* (1972) speak of the 'specificity' of a space - if it can accommodate primarily one activity (e.g., a tennis court), a moderate range of activities (e.g., a path through the woods), or a wide variety of activities (e.g., a grassy meadow). Wurman *et al.* argue that the less specifically designed a space is, the more activities it can contain. Additionally, it has been observed that a public space that is internally differentiated into a number of subspaces is particularly well suited to a wide variety of activities, e.g., Love (1973) observes numbers of fountains in Portland, finding that although many large fountains have much in common, those having greater number and variety of pools, waterfalls and seating platforms tend to encourage more activities.


◆ *Social cohesion*

Public space has been long regarded as the main area in which people from different races, classes and cultures can be brought together and intermingle, so that social interaction and integration can be promoted. Numbers of authors have addressed this concern: '[public space is] *the common ground where people carry out the functional and ritual activities that bind a community*' (Carr *et al.* 1992: xi), '[it is the] *space we share with strangers...space for peaceful coexistence and impersonal encounter*' (Walzer 1986: 470), '*Opportunities for meetings and daily activities in the public spaces of a city or residential area enable one to be among, to see, and to hear others, to experience other people functioning in various situation*' (Gehl 1996: 17).

Many traditional public spaces, such as the medieval marketplace, were generally good contributors to the integration of urban functions and social groups. But in the modernist era, vehicles were given high dominance over pedestrians so that citizens would have to pass through urban spaces at high speeds, while little attention had been paid to the places between buildings and the provision of public facilities. As a result, the role of public space as the container of public life was negated; spaces served different, separated functions, rather than together creating a cohesive urban environment (Carr *et al.* 1992; Cousseran 2006). In contemporary cities, the privatisation and commodification of space can also diminish social cohesion as different spaces are designed and managed to serve different social groups, which often indicates an increasingly 'stratified society' (see *2-4*).

Many authors therefore advocate that public space must still act as the fundamental element in establishing the social cohesion of the city. Buchanan (1988) criticises the fact that people's movement is being separated spatially and functionally in the city, arguing that different activities need to be linked with each other within the same external space, to generate more social uses. In a similar vein, many argue that urban design must create a multi-purpose space network where different urban functions can overlap, so that people can well interact with each other (Appleyard 1981; Hass-Klau 1990; Moudon 1991). In particular, the streets of the city are once again widely supposed to function as 'social connectors', rather than 'channels for movement' (Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee 1998: 304).

Apart from the physical design of public space, the variety of users and activities is also considered to be significant in promoting the level of social cohesion in public space. Mean and Tims (2005: 63) point out that a space which accommodates limited individuals and groups is not the place where social integration can be easily facilitated, because '*People tended to feel more uneasy or even threatened when a space was dominated by one group of people engaging in one type of activity than when two or three distinct groups were engaging in different kinds of activity*'. Madanipour (2004: 279) further argues that: '*Public celebrations and group activities have been a good way to promote social integration...By setting up events that can bring the people of the area together, a sense of community and confidence is promoted...*' These arguments again highlight the significance of 'users' experiences' in public spaces, as discussed in *2-4-3*.

◆ *Sense of place*

A 'sense of place' is considered to be a basic ingredient of a quality public realm (Lynch 1981 in Larice and Macdonald *eds*. 2007: 113). According to Lynch, 'sense' can be understood as '*the degree to which the settlement can be clearly perceived and mentally differentiated and structured in time and space by its residents and the degree to which that mental structure connects with their values and concepts - the match between environment, our sensory and mental capabilities, and our cultural constructs*'. Now sense of place has been recognised as a fundamental dimension of public-space making, frequently linked to concepts such as 'context', 'character', 'personalisation of place', 'authenticity', 'local distinctiveness', and so on. Generally, a sense of place means the capacity of any given place to exhibit its history, tradition, nature, nationality and other themes that can heighten its unique identity and differentiate itself from other places (Carmona *et al*. 2003). It is considered as an essential factor linked to peoples' perceptional and psychological needs, as in the words of Clifford (in Cowan 2005: 222-223): '*People understand places and value them because they mean something to them. Little things (detail) and overlapping clues to previous lives and landscapes (patina) may be the very things which breath significance into the streets or fields*'. Thus, it can be said that in practice a sense of place can be embodied by specific inherited elements, such as preserved functional details, restored historical places and buildings (Murrain 2006; Norberg-Schulz 1976; Relph 1976).

However, some authors argue that it is erroneous to always confine the sense of a place to its historical context. For instance, Sorkin (2002 in Cowan 2005: 223) suggests that place-making should avoid a kind of localism that has been completely wrested from its originating context of meaning. Without artistic leaps of the imagination, Sorkin feels, urban designers' evocation of local distinctiveness have little value. In the similar vein, many argue that a meaningful sense of place can be 'reinvented' as well, rather than inherited. For instance, by virtue of 'purposeful thematisation' contemporary commercial venues such as shopping malls and theme parks are still capable of creating their own distinctive 'character' (Sircus 2001). For Sircus (2001: 31), '*place is not good or bad simply because it is real versus surrogate, authentic versus pastiche. People enjoy both, whether it is a place created over centuries, or created instantly. A successful space, like a novel or a movie, engages us actively in an emotional experience orchestrated and organised to communicate purpose and story*'. Therefore, it can be argued that sense of place is not necessarily confined to one single understanding as it can not just be derived from the 'place' itself, but can also be constructed in the mind of the users (Cowan 2005: 347). Ultimately, in the face of these, Carmona *et al*. (2008: 56) argue that the challenge then may not be to

discern between 'authentic' or 'invented' places, but simply to create 'good' places which value users' experiences and hereby act as an antidote to the 'homogenised' environment in the city.

## 2-7 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that public space has been considered as the most central concern of urban design. Two important theoretical propositions have been examined: first, the tension between private and public is quite flexible so that there is no absolute 'public' space; second, the nature of public space is quite fluid so that public space should not be viewed by virtue of a single standard or any 'invariable' experience. To sum up, **public space is not necessarily fixed or inherited because 'publicness' in any places differs between societies and cultures and over time, so that it can be only understood in relation to concrete social and physical contexts.**

Through the historical review of the evolution of Western urban space, two issues have been identified: *first*, one of the major functions of public space has been always accommodating commercial events and activities, as has been seen in the Greek agora, the medieval marketplace, and contemporary urban centres; consequently, commercial space has always been part of the urban public space system. *Second*, historically, public space has been used not just as the locality fostering 'civility and community', but also frequently as a tool to display the power, status, and wealth of certain social groups. Therefore issues such as exclusion and homogenisation of space, which seem to have prevailed in contemporary cities, are nothing new but have been omnipresent.

Along with the transition of Western cities from production bases to consumption places, comes the argument as to whether public space has been 'lost' under the strong influences of contemporary consumerist culture. It is observed that urban public space is likely to have exercised a higher extent of *privatisation, commodification*, and *symbolic manipulation* to give more privileges to consumption rather than anything else, and to offer more convenience to the wealthier class rather than lower-income populations. Within this process, commentators argue, public space is becoming *exclusive* and *homogenised*, and therefore its publicness is inevitably in decline. However, the critique of loss has been criticised as being based upon a 'romanticised' past in which the inclusiveness and democracy of historic public space has been largely exaggerated, and accordingly, the publicness of today's consumption space has often not been

fairly assessed. On the other hand, it has been pointed out that the critique of loss potentially devalues the positive effects of consumerist culture in the public realm, and neglects the experiences of the users and presents a pessimistic and elitist attitude towards contemporary urban spaces. In fact, it can be argued that **consumption is both enabling and constraining**; and therefore a more balanced attitude that is needed is neither to eschew the 'illness' those critiques have described, nor to accept the arbitrary conclusion that public space is being lost. In other words, it is appropriate to consider that, as many urban design authors have argued, contemporary public space has been virtually evolving, and in many cases becoming revived, rather than simply declined or dead.

Based on these perceptions, it can be argued that although the critique of loss has been tested in China's CPDs, its compatibility with the local context and conditions appear relatively weak. Three research weaknesses have been identified: *first*, their review of the past is still depthless; *second*, they are confined to partial phenomena rather than a comprehensive examination to the overall physical and social manifestations; and *third*, they lack in-depth observations and analyses on the behavioural and sensorial dimensions of the local people, i.e., the 'users' experiences'. These are the gaps that this study aims to infill.

The chapter has emphasised the fundamental standpoint of this study as a pragmatic piece of research. No strong value judgment is intended. The central point is not that the effect of consumption on public space is either right or wrong; rather, it is about the creation of 'good' public space. The study therefore adopts a position of **physical possibilism**, i.e., the physical quality of public spaces might impact the public behaviours to a high degree, not in an absolutely deterministic way but in terms of likely possibilities. In this respect, it is possible to create good public space by implementing a set of normative urban-design principles including *Accessibility, Permeability, Adaptability, Feasible-facility provision, Enclosure, Continuity, Active frontage, Comfort, Safety, Freedom of action, Social cohesion,* and *Sense of place*. These are the criteria by which the quality of given public spaces can be comprehensively evaluated and as such they will be applied, in combination or separately, to the practical examinations on China's CPDs in *Chapters 5* and *6*.

# Chapter 3

## Methodology

This chapter aims to introduce the methodology of this study. The first section revisits the research questions and then sets out the fundamental hypothesis of this study. The second section sets up the research-strategy framework, revealing three specific research strategies, *historical analysis; rapid, qualitative survey* and *case study*, and explains how each responds to one research question. The following three sections introduce how each strategy is theoretically perceived in the social-science literature, and describe in depth how they employ different methods to acquire the necessary data.

### 3-1 Research questions and hypothesis

As stated in *1-2* of *Chapter 1*, this study has three research questions:

◆ *What kind of social and political-economic factors dominated China's urban development at different historical stages, and how do the resultant urban spaces at different stages contrast with each other in terms of their physical character and public life?*

◆ *Along with the overall evolution of urban space, how particularly have the 'central districts' in large Chinese cities been transformed into consumption-based CPDs, and then how in general are they physically formed and socially used today?*

◆ *Furthermore, how have the specific spaces of contemporary CPDs been shaped by detailed design and management rationales/policies/practices over recent years, and to what extent have these spaces addressed public-use requirements, alongside their commercial functions?*

A holistic hypothesis is tentatively set out to frame these research questions: _first_, *in comparison with their historic counterparts, particularly those in the pre-market era, CPDs have in reality provided more public spaces which are more accessible to the people and used by a wider group of public, therefore indicating a comparatively higher extent of publicness. Secondly, nonetheless,*

*these CPDs are possibly at risk of becoming consumption-overwhelmed environments and thus still presenting the negative character of homogenisation (monotonous buildings, heavily retail-based land use and dominance of consumption activity in public space) and social exclusion (featured by strict management in public space and prevalent expulsion of the socially marginal people). And thirdly, the planning, urban design and management policies and practices implemented by local governments in these CPDs are the key element of sustaining the publicness of public space, but so far they may have over-emphasised the commercial pursuits of CPDs more than wider social needs, and therefore recommendations for improvement to promote a more positive social use need to be made where necessary.*

It is hoped that through answering the three research questions, the validity of this hypothesis can be proof-tested, and the research gaps revealed in *2-5-2* of *Chapter 2* can be filled. It is worth saying again that the term publicness emphasised in the above narrative means 'the extent of being public', and according to Akkar (2005) and Madanipour (1996b), the publicness of a certain space can be understood by means of several elements including *access* (whether the space and its resources, as well as the activities occurring in it, are open to the major public), *actor* (whether it is managed and controlled by public actors, and is used by the major public), and *interest* (whether it mainly severs public interest, socially and culturally). These dimensions provide useful perceptions of 'publicness', but they largely overlap (for example, the dimension of 'interest' certainly involves the examination of 'access' and 'actor') and arguably are not practical enough to test the proposed research questions. Therefore this research avoids using these dimensions directly, but examined a series of physical and social factors through empirical observations (see *3-4-2*), which still reflect the central concerns of these three dimensions but are more specific for empirical analyses. Similarly, the employed desk-based review and interview, as will be introduced in the following, also reflected these three key concerns, explicitly or implicitly.

## 3-2 Research strategy

To find answers to the research questions and examine the hypothesis, this study firstly needs to establish a research strategy framework within which practical research methods can be allocated to address specific research questions. Generally speaking, a research strategy, or 'research design', is a way of collecting and analysing empirical evidence following a certain research logic (Groat and

Wang 2002; Yin 1994; Zeisel 2006). Five research strategies are identified by Yin (1994: 6): *experiment, survey, archival analysis, history* (historical analysis), and *case study*. These fully cover Zeisel's (2006: 91) tri-categorisation of environmental research: *case study, survey*, and *experiment*. However, these strategies do not have to be arrayed hierarchically; rather they can be used both individually and jointly. Particularly in the field of urban studies, different strategies are frequently combined to explore the increasingly complex issues of cities (Groat and Wang 2002). The goal for the researcher is to avoid gross misfits as each strategy has relative advantages on different, specific questions, e.g., case study and survey are usually considered suitable to address contemporary events while historical analysis is able to reveal the influences of the past on the present (Yin 1994). Based on these perceptions, it is considered that it will be insufficient to adopt a single strategy as the posed research questions demand materials of both 'past' and 'today'. Therefore, this study employs *historical analysis*; rapid, *qualitative survey*, and *case study* in sequence. Each research strategy is aimed at one research question, and the final synthesis of their answers will provide a comprehensive examination of the central hypothesis.

### 3-3 Historical analysis

### 3-3-1 Preliminaries

Researchers resort to historical analysis when they study historical problems or past events about which they can neither interview participants nor observe behaviours (Zeisel 2006). This strategy has been intensively used by numbers of authors in their urban-history works including Peter Hall's *Cities in civilisation* (1998) and *Cities of tomorrow* (2002), Spiro Kostof's *The city assembled* (1992) and *The city shaped* (1999), and so on. Historical analysis possesses several characteristics. *First*, in most cases the researcher has to gather various data collected by others for different purposes, adapting them for her/his own research aims (Zeisel 2006: 312); while occasionally there are physical substances that directly address the object of inquiry, such as archaeological sites and personal manuscripts. *Second*, in terms of data analysis, modest imagination is necessary. Certain historical information, such as old photographs, was not meant to be analysed as part of a systematic research project, so that the researcher has to use her/his imagination to comprehend and reveal their significance (Groat and Wang 2002: 141). But certainly, imagination can not be utilised in a fictitious sense: it has to be based on the verification of actual evidence (Zeisel 2006: 315-316). And *third*, the narrative of historical analysis has to correspond to 'the actual flow of time' so that 'the

coherent interconnectedness' in its contents can be achieved (Collingwood 1956: 246). Based on all these perceptions, historical analysis is deemed suitable for the *first question*. It is a question which demands a review and synthesis of historical evidence.

### 3-3-2 Research methods and process

As mentioned above, historical analysis is heavily based upon second-hand data. This study relied upon two approaches to second-hand data analysis: *review of existing urban China research* and *illustration analysis*.

### Review of existing urban China research

May (2001) argues that the central aim in reviewing research is to gather and reconcile different findings from different studies, to summarise and abstract the key information arising from these findings, then to develop new points which are pertinent to the proposed research question. In the area of urban China research there have emerged considerable studies over recent two decades (see Logan *ed.* 2002; Ma and Wu *eds.* 2005). At first, the researcher undertook a wide review of these studies, assembling those which are recently published and potentially relevant to the three research questions. Collected materials were categorised into two basic categories. The first comes from the 'socio-economic-political focused' literature including Friedmann (2005a), Logan (*ed.* 2002), Ma and Wu (*eds.* 2005), Rowe (2005), Stockman (2000), etc., and many journal papers. These publications are useful for the first part of the first question: *social and political-economic factors that dominated China's urban development at different historical stages*. The second body of work largely comes from those more 'physical' studies such as urban design, architecture, and planning literature with strong design elements, including Broudehoux (2004), Dutton (1998), Gaubatz (1995, 1999a, 1999b, 2005), Gu (2001), Kiang (1994), Lu (2006), Wang (2000, 2003), Zacharias (2002), and so on. This kind of publication mainly aims at the second part of the first question: *the resultant physical environments and public life*. Based on all these materials, the researcher set up the epoch framework into which China's urban development can be divided (see *4-2* of *Chapter 4*), so that the 'actual flow of time' of the historical analysis could be conceptualised.

At the second stage, the practical stage of data collection and analysis, the researcher began to distil and interpret two types of evidence from these gathered materials. One was 'determinative evidence' which leads to the direct answers to the research question, such as definite statements and

explicit conclusions drawn by the authors themselves. These are usually more concentrated on the social, political and economic factors of Chinese cities. The other was 'inferential evidence' which implies the answers but needs to be further interpreted and analysed. These largely exist in the form of general but unsystematic narratives of the physical form and street life of Chinese cities. The researcher critically synthesised these various sources, and sought to reconcile the potential conflicts between them, and then developed more inclusive and specific accounts to address the research question. Particularly, the researcher organised these accounts into the different historical epochs, to deduce the fundamental themes and conclusions.

**Illustration analysis**

An analysis of visual evidence was used to support the historical review. Illustrations reflecting the social and physical aspects of Chinese cities in the past were collected. They include photographs, paintings, maps, and planning drafts. The source includes not just academic books and journals but also newspapers, magazines, and internet databases. These collected illustrations either are direct evidence that clearly record the character of historic urban spaces and people's behaviours in these spaces, or they suggest the political and economic elements that resulted in the former two dimensions. The researcher selected those which had relevance to this study and had good visual quality, and paralleled them with the materials obtained in the historical review to construct more comprehensive evidence. These illustrations will be intensively presented in later chapters.

## 3-4 Rapid, qualitative survey

### 3-4-1 Preliminaries

There are many types of data collection and measurement processes that are called surveys. Many of them are used to produce quantitative, or numerical, descriptions about the study object (Fowler 2002). But quantitative surveys rely on rigorous statistical methods such as questionnaire, so that they can be time-consuming and expensive, and arguably are not suitable for providing in-depth understanding of a complex issue (Pretty *et al.* 1995). In contrast to these weaknesses, qualitative surveys have certain comparative advantages as in qualitative surveys 'sampling' can be treated as a set of 'informal case studies' and thus can be studied through some more 'flexible' and 'low-cost' methods, such as observation and interview (Fowler 2002; Marsland *et al.* 2007). For instance, to investigate the street activity in British cities, Hass-Klau *et al.* (1999: 39-63) selected nine 'sample

towns' (informal cases) and qualitatively observed what kind of activities took place on the streets of these cites during both daytimes and evenings. In practice, many researchers use the qualitative survey as a 'complementary' strategy in order to acquire the overall impression rather than specific details (Kjeldsen and Nielsen 2000). For instance, Jane Jacob's study (1961: 25) was concentrated on New York City, but she actually drew much of her experience in other American cities. She explained how she rationalised her research: '*I use a preponderance of examples from New York because that is where I live. But most of the basic ideas in this book come from things I first noticed or was told in other cities*'. Based on all these perceptions, a rapid, qualitative survey is considered suitable for the *second question*. That is a question exploring the common physical and social manifestations of CPDs. It requires a general evaluation rather than too much quantitative and statistical evidence.

### 3-4-2 Research methods and process

The significant prerequisite for a good survey is to choose an appropriate sample. This study did not intend an 'overall' sampling which is beyond the time and budget limits. At first, the researcher collected a wide range of introductory materials on the Central Pedestrian Districts in Chinese cities. A semi-official website, *China's Commercial Walking Street Committee* (CCWSC, Source: http://www.ccwsc.org), has compiled information on China's major CPDs, and therefore became the major source that the PhD researcher relied on to choose his 'samples'. CCWSC has ranked the five largest CPDs by the length of their pedestrian streets. They are *Jie Fangbei* of Chongqing (1,320 m), *Central Street* of Harbin (1,050 m), *Nanjing Road* of Shanghai (1,030 m), *Wang Fujing* of Beijing (840 m), and *Xin Jiekou* of Nanjing (520 m). CCWSC considers them as the representatives of China's CPDs not just because of their unparalleled street lengths, but also due to their significance to their host cities in terms of social and economic development. Geographically, they cover a relatively wide territory - Beijing and Harbin are in north China, Nanjing and Shanghai are in the Yangtze River Delta area (east China), and Chongqing is in the southwest part of China (see Appendix 1). In terms of their development history, there are subtle dissimilarities - Shanghai and Harbin were two of the first Treaty-Port cities and they used to be heavily influenced by Western colonial powers; Beijing, being the city containing the 'Forbidden Place', probably had the strongest characteristics of the traditional Chinese hierarchical society; Nanjing and Chongqing successively became the provisional capital of China from 1930s to 1940s, both having a relatively

short-term development of commercial culture in comparison with the other three cities. After the Reform of the 1980s, these five cities were given different opportunities - Beijing and Shanghai have been among the 'first group' of economically-advanced cities; Nanjing has been taking advantage of being in the developed east coastal zone; while Harbin and Chongqing have remained underdeveloped in many aspects until recent ten years. All these dissimilarities lead to the possibility that a survey of these CPDs can reflect the major facets of China's other CPDs, including their various political-economic motivations of development, physical and social manifestations, and different design and management requirements and exercises. Therefore, *Central Street* of Harbin, *Nanjing Road* of Shanghai, *Wang Fujing* of Beijing, and *Xin Jiekou* of Nanjing were chosen as the 'samples' of the rapid, qualitative survey (also as 'informal case studies' of this study), while *Jie Fangbei* of Chongqing as the target of an in-depth case study (fuller reasons given in *3-5-1*). As regards the detailed methods, the survey used three data collection approaches: *desk-based review*, *rapid site observation*, and *random interview*.

**Desk-based review**

At this stage, the data collection was necessarily overlapped with the review work of the historical analysis. Major secondary sources on the five largest CPDs' development particularly regarding their planning and architectural histories, including official documents, media reports, academic papers, and internet materials, were collected and read. Much attention was paid to the data as to how these CPDs have been generally produced, how they have been connected to the physical and social contexts of their host cities, what are their general physical morphologies and layouts, what functions they are currently accommodating, etc. Effort was largely directed at integrating these various accounts and discovering their relationship with the research question.

**Rapid site observation**

In October of 2006, the researcher visited each of these five CPDs to undertake a set of rapid site observations (the one in Jie Fangbei was also envisaged as the 'pilot' study for the later case-study work, see *3-5-2*). Armed with tourist guides, urban histories, local maps, and reference materials produced at the desk-based-review stage, the researcher spent two days in each CPD in average (but five days in Jie Fangbei). He walked at all the main streets, alleys, plazas, open arcades, and buildings of these four CPDs, compared his direct observational impression with the descriptions in written materials in order to filter out misleading or trivial information. In particular, the researcher

photographed and recorded the following five aspects that significantly reflected the physical forms and social uses of these CPDs, which are the major inquiries of the research question.

* *Scale, size and pattern*

The researcher observed the relationship of the pedestrianised districts to the existing streets to examine how the streets were scaled and sized, to look at whether these new CPDs fitted well into their surrounding environments, and assessed their general accessibility and permeability. Through rapid site measurement, the researcher also observed how the streets were spatially divided for various functions, and if these divisions worked effectively for different public activities.

* *Land use*

The researcher examined the land use typology of the streets through recording the numbers and contents of main buildings fronting the streets, in order to learn how the CPD's land was allocated to different functions, and assessing if they retained a necessary diversity and adaptability of uses.

* *Architecture with the street*

The researcher observed the major buildings fronting the streets to look at their architectural styles and frontage connections to the surrounding environments. The intention was particularly to assess if these buildings were designed to positively respond to the streets, and created continuity and enclosure of the public realm, rather than existing as self-interested entities.

* *Places, facilities and management*

The researcher observed whether these CPDs offered different levels of open space to support multiple functions and activities. It was not just the quantity of these places that were assessed, but all their public-facility provision and furnishings were carefully noted. The researcher investigated the conditions of public facilities (sittable settings, plants, landscape elements, etc.) to examine to what extent they could meet the demands of the public as well as create a sense of place, rather than exclusively contributing to commercial or private interests. Also the researcher looked at how these places were generally managed and controlled, e.g., if they were generally kept clean and safe, what were the management regulations, what behaviours were usually prohibited, if there was tight surveillance, policing or private controls over the public realm, and so on.

*• Social uses*

The researcher carefully observed and noted how these places were occupied and used, e.g. how they were used for consumption-based activities such as commercial promotions, stall sales and outdoor cafes, and how they were used for civic and communal behaviours such as welfare promotions, street performances, interpersonal socialisation, strolling and resting, etc. Attention was paid to people's behaviours as well as their 'body language', e.g., how they emotionally responded to the physical environment, if they tended to actively or creatively use the places and facilities, etc. All these observed events and activities were photographed, and their various themes and characteristics were noted by the researcher.

**Random interview**

Complementary to the rapid site observation, the method of random interview was also used. It took the form of rapid, informal chatting with people whom the researcher casually encountered on the streets, mostly users of certain places including tourists, shoppers and street hawkers. The aim was to grasp the users' instant perceptions of the public space, by virtue of which the researcher could on the one hand further learn how the physical environments of these CPDs were evaluated and viewed by the people, and on the other, test/amend the researcher's own direct observational impressions for any misunderstandings. Generally speaking, these interviews were 'opportunistic' - there were no pre-set questions; while the chatting was usually involved with two to three inquiries: how was the person related to the place (visitor or local user)? What was he/she doing here (motivation, excuse, and frequency of certain activity)? And most significantly, how did he/she like the place (in any physical or social terms)? To make these talks informal and casual the researcher did not use any recording devices; instead, he usually took instant notes after the talk. Despite that, however, many people, particularly the 'socially marginalised' group, e.g., unlicensed hawkers, beggars, street porters, etc., appeared reluctant to be approached and unwilling to chat with the researcher. Thus the researcher did not manage to achieve a very large number of interviews as such. In all, he had undertaken 31 valid random interviews (including those interviewed in the later in-depth site observation in Jie Fangbei, see *3-5-2*), six for each CPD averagely. The interviewees included tourists, shoppers, shop keepers, vendors, users from local communities, etc. The talks which effectively address the research question will be selected and mixed with the materials from

the desk-based review and site observation in later chapters.

## 3-5 Case study

### 3-5-1 Preliminaries

Generally speaking, a case-study strategy can be understood as an appropriate empirical inquiry that '*investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context*' (Yin 1994: 13). Numbers of urban-design studies are potent proofs of successful use of case studies, e.g., Whyte's work (1988) on the plazas of New York, and Gehl's work (1996) on the streets of Copenhagen. When the research scope, however, is focusing on complex urban phenomena, a major concern about case studies is often about the validity of choosing a specific case and the viability of its generalisation: '*Why do you choose this case, how typical is it and how can you generalize from it?*' is a frequently heard question (Yin 1994). To avoid potential pitfalls, a well-tried solution in urban research is to undertake some controllable, quick, and effective assistant research strategies, e.g. rapid survey or archival analysis, to provide a basis for case study selection, leaving the core data-gathering and in-depth analyses to the selected detailed cases (Yin 1994: 10). For this research, the foregoing rapid, qualitative survey in the five largest CPDs has provided the general understanding of the research object, thus making it feasible to concentrate on one of them, which is able to embody the 'replicable phenomenon' as an in-depth case, to accomplish this research.

*Jie Fangbei* of Chongqing was chosen as the principal case study. The *basic reason* is that Jie Fangbei shares lots of significant similarities with its counterparts, such as general urban size, function and land use, so that in many terms it can be treated as the typical exemplar of China's CPDs. *Secondly*, according to CCWSC, Jie Fangbei has the longest pedestrian street (1,320 m) and the most complicated street pattern (three intersected main streets forming two cross shapes) among the five CPDs, which possibly gives Jie Fangbei more variety in terms of its place-making and social-usage provision, offering richer data. *Thirdly*, as mentioned earlier, Jie Fangbei is located in a city that, unlike Shanghai and Beijing, actually lacked a very strong commercial context before the Reform era. This may offer a more characteristic case study and representative to view the development of China's CPDs as well as to test the theoretical proposition of this study (that 'consumption is both enabling and constraining', see *Chapter 2*). *Last but not least*, the researcher himself is a Chongqinger and thus able to access a relatively wide range of research resources and

contacts. Choosing Jie Fangbei as the case can thus hopefully enhance the research efficiency, access to key respondents, and convenience (such as availability of accommodation, etc.), guaranteeing the completion of this study within reasonable time and budget limits. In sum, the case study of Jie Fangbei aims at the *final research question* - it is a question that demands a deeper inquiry into the practical development process of a city as well as more microanalyses of specific places within a 'real-life context'. It is the last phase of the data collection of this study.

### 3-5-2 Research methods and process

The case study consisted of four data-collection approaches: first *desk-based review*, second *rapid site observation (pilot observation) plus random interview*, third *in-depth site observation plus random interview*, and last *semi-structured interview of 'key players'*.

### Desk-based review

As mentioned in *3-4-2*, the desk-based review was undertaken at the same time as the other four CPDs' secondary-data collection was processed. Apart from the general materials, the researcher was particularly in pursuit of the key planning/urban-design documents relating to Jie Fangbei's development which reveal the place-making rationales/policies/approaches of the government over recent years. Some important documents were provided by the local planning authority and design institutions. They include: *the 1997 Pedestrian Plan*, the instructional planning proposal for the first pedestrianisation scheme of Jie Fangbei; *the 2002 Urban Image Design on Yuzhong Peninsula*, the comprehensive urban design proposal for a whole administrative district in which Jie Fangbei was treated as its key commercial area; *the 2004 Jie Fangbei Urban Design Plan*, the specific urban design proposal intending to intensify the pedestrianisation network of Jie Fangbei and to upgrade the quality of the public space. In addition, large numbers of planning-permission notes and official meeting/discussion memos relating to specific sites or buildings were obtained. In the process of examining these documents, the researcher's analytical emphasis was laid on their potential links with the research question: how has the government's central concern/pursuit in Jie Fangbei's place-making varied over recent years? What were the major design and management approaches at different stages employed to supporting different concerns/pursuits? What were the roles of various key players in the process of Jie Fangbei's place-making? And most significantly, whether or how has the quality of the public realm (at both physical and social aspects) been effectively addressed? Through comparatively studying these documents, the researcher identified four key

stages in Jie Fangbei's recent move to the local CPD: *the first high-rise boom (1980s-mid 1990s),* *the first pedestrianisaion (1997), the second high-rise boom (1998-2001),* and *the second* *pedestrianisation and street refurbishment (2002-2010).* This division, reflecting the major changing themes in Jie Fangbei's contemporary development, guided the site selection in the observation exercise (see below).

**Rapid site observation (pilot observation) plus random interview**

The researcher started the rapid site observation in October of 2006. Generally it was similar to the observations in the other four CPDs (see *3-4-2*), but it took a longer time, five days, because it was also used as the pilot observation of the whole case study process. Three main aims were reached in this observation.

*♦ Observing the general five aspects plus random interview*

The researcher broadly looked at the general five aspects on the street that were also investigated in the other four CPDs, namely, *street scale, size and pattern, land use, architecture with the street,* *places, facilities and management,* and *social uses.* Photos reflecting these five dimensions were taken and relevant activities/events were carefully noted. And as in the other CPDs, opportunistic random interviews were undertaken on the street, involving a number of tourists and place users. In all, the purpose was to collect as much general evidence as possible to quickly comprehend the overall physical form and social ambience, as well as to enhance the potential for the later in-depth site observations.

*♦ Identifying in-depth-observation sites*

The researcher identified the spatial morphology of Jie Fangbei which could be subdivided into *one* *central square, three affiliated squares, five street segments,* and *eleven building sites.* These were successively developed through the four key periods that are identified previously, each possessing different physical and social features. Due to the time and budget limits, however, the researcher did not intend to cover them all within the later in-depth observation. Rather, he selected *four buildings* as specific cases of the first high-rise boom, *the central square and one street section* of the first pedestrianisation, *four buildings* of the second high-rise boom, and *two street sections* of the second pedestrianisation and street refurbishment (see Appendix 2). The scale and size of these places and

buildings were generally 'controllable' for daily, individual observation. Through the previous desk-based review, the researcher had assembled sufficient materials regarding their design or development process, which would aid the observational efficiency.

◆ *Identifying in-depth-observation time intervals*

The researcher also observed how the day generally unfolded in Jie Fangbei, which is arguably indispensable for a pilot study. He at first selected one major street entrance of this area, spending one day counting the in-and-out pedestrian amount. The counting lasted sixteen hours, from 7:30 to 23:30. The statistic outcome indicates that on a daily basis the pedestrian amount kept sharply increased from 7:30 to 10:30, then it became stable between 10:30 and 14:30, afterwards from 14:30 till around 18:30 it began to climb up, while after that it started to apparently drop except that between 19:30 and 22:30 it stayed relatively stable (see Appendix 3). Then the researcher spent one more day quickly looking at how a normal weekday in Jie Fangbei unfolded, observing how the street activities varied over time and when users in specific places generally tended to gather and disperse. Eventually, the combination of the one-day counting and the one-day observation suggested that five intervals, 7:30-8:30, 9:30-10:30, 13:30-14:30, 17:30-18:30, and 19:30-20:30, could basically reflect the daily pedestrian flux and activity change. They were thus selected as the typical observational intervals for the sites selected above.

**In-depth site observation plus random interview**

In June of 2007, after some preliminary data analyses and thesis drafting, the researcher returned to Chongqing to complete the in-depth site observation. The purpose was to learn how in detail public spaces were used by the community (broadly defined, including public and private sectors that used these places for particular events) or by individuals through observation of the users' behavioural patterns in the selected sites. By doing so, the researcher attempted to explore the users' 'experiences' in the environment, as well as to examine whether or how these experiences would be facilitated or prevented by certain environmental features. As has been discussed in *Chapter 2*, this is vital for the researcher's understanding of the practical merits and demerits of these places in supporting public needs, and hereby to reveal their 'publicness' at a micro-level.

These observations were undertaken in a relatively 'mechanical' way. The researcher spent two

week days on the central square because it was the most concentrated site of different types of public events. As regards the remaining three street sections, the researcher spent one weekday in each. In terms of concrete observation, the researcher located himself in 'advantageous positions' at each of these sites where he could obtain a broad, obstacle-free overview of events and people's behaviours, without apparently disturbing the observed objects. The recording technique was *time-lapse photography* which was intensively used by William Whyte and Jan Gehl in their public-space studies (see Gehl 1996; Gehl and Gemzoe 1996; Whyte 1988). Specifically, the researcher took pictures of events or people's behaviours in these places at the pre-selected equal intervals, 7:30-8:30, 9:30-10:30, 13:30-14:30, 17:30-18:30, and 19:30-20:30. During each interval, the researcher usually took one picture every 15 minutes in each of these 'advantage positions'. Therefore for each site, at least four pictures per hourly interval, and thus twenty in total per day, were obtained. Meanwhile the researcher was also recording the approximate numbers of people with different behavioural patterns (namely, their particular 'experiences' such as strolling, sitting, talking, eating, child-playing, vending, individual or group socialisation, etc.) and the rough length of time of certain activities (e.g., the length of remaining on seats) - this is because *'the length of time people remain in a site' can* reflect a place's character of being public and relaxed (see *2-6-3*).

As regards the eight buildings, based on the outcomes of the pilot observation, the researcher was trying to gain more information about their frontages, i.e., how their ground floor facades responded to the streets and users. The researcher photographed all the segments fronting the street in each of the eight building sites, and made instant notes regarding their physical and social features including scale, materials, numbers of doors and windows, edge forms (steps, arcades, etc.), the extent of transparency, and more significantly, the types of activity happening at or around these frontages, and the management and control exercised over them, etc.

The approach of random interview was again undertaken to couple with the in-depth observation: the researcher chatted with the people in these selected sites without telling them the research task (to avoid that by any chance they would amend or hide their real opinions) but deliberately leading the chat towards their perceptions and expectations of the immediate surrounding environment. And again, the researcher did not use recording devices; any useful opinions or information were immediately noted down after the talk.

## Semi-structured interview

With the completion of the site observation, the researcher had obtained the materials that directly indicated to what extent the physical environments were addressing the public-usage requirements. But clearly, there was an absence of voices from the local key players (planning officers, developers, designers, academics, etc.) without which a deep understanding to the development process and its potential problems could not be achieved. Nor could practical suggestions concerning better design and management be obtained. The researcher entered the last phase of the case study, the semi-structured interview with the key players to explore this aspect.

According to Cannell and Kahn (1968), three conditions are necessary for a successful interview: the *accessibility* of the required information to the respondents; the *cognition* or understanding by the respondents of what is required of her/him; and the *motivation* of the respondent to answer the question accurately. The researcher therefore paid particular attention to these three aspects. *First*, to ensure the 'accessibility', interviewees were carefully selected not just to offer valuable insights from different perspectives but to represent various actors who either influenced the production of Jie Fangbei, or were professionally qualified to make comments on it. They include government officers and planners in the local planning authority who were administratively responsible for the development of Jie Fangbei, developers who were directly involved in the construction of certain developments, architects and urban designers who had projects in this area, and academics who had research interests relevant to Jie Fangbei. *Second*, to guarantee the 'cognition', the researcher carefully explained the purpose of his research and what kind of information was expected from these interviewees. If necessary, the researcher showed the interviewees the proposed research questions and explained them in plain language. And *third*, to promote the 'motivation', the researcher made efforts to develop trust with the interviewees and to conduct the interviews in an informal atmosphere so that the respondents would be likely to answer questions naturally and accurately. Some respondents, especially government officers and planners, were reluctant to make comments on the 'negative side' of the development as these were 'sensitive issues'. Thus the researcher attempted to reduce their concerns by assuring them that the interview outcome was confidential and would not be used for other purposes without their further permissions.

In total, the researcher had conducted 21 interviews between June and July of 2007, including 8

government officers, 2 planners, 3 architects/urban designers, 4 academics, and 4 developers (see Appendix 4). Most of these interviews took place in the interviewees' offices, and their duration usually varied from thirty minutes to two hours. All the interviews were focused on a series of semi-structured questions including: what is the role of the interviewee in the place-making of Jie Fangbeit; what is her/his general understanding of the nature and function of Jie Fangbei; what is her/his evaluation of the quality of certain places or buildings; what is the essential reason that a specific design/management problem has been caused and what will be the appropriate solution from her/his perspective; what are her/his suggestions as to the future development of Jie Fangbei, and so on (see Appendix 5). All the interviews were recorded in a digital audio recorder and later transcribed onto the researcher's personal computer. Because all the interviews were conducted in Chinese, the data analysis involved some translation work through Word Processor.

The last interview exercise marks the completion of the case-study fieldwork in Chongqing. Effective data obtained from the desk-based review, the site observation, the random interview, and the final interview was systematically integrated to provide a full answer to the research question. The thesis now proceeds to the 'three components' of the analysis: *Chapter 4* will at first discuss the outcomes of the historical analysis, reviewing the general evolution of China's urban space; following that, *Chapter 5* will introduce the survey of China's four largest CPDs; and *Chapter 6* in the last place will introduce the case study in Jie Fangbei of Chongqing.

# Chapter 4

## Historical analysis: evolution of China's urban space

### 4-1 Introduction

During the past two decades, China's urban evolution has attracted extensive research interests. Many authors have noticed that Chinese cities, in the rapid transition to a more market-led and globalised economy, are largely turned into spectacular places central to commercial interests and pursuits (Broudehoux 2004; Friedmann 2005a; Rowe 2005). Meanwhile, many argue that China's contemporary urban landscape is not a completely new form, but rather is overlaying new types of development on 'continuing' political-economic facets and 'retained' cultural aspects of the past (Gaubatz 1999a, 1999b). Hooper (1992 in Stockman 2000: 9) particularly emphasises that in urban China study we should avoid the risk of having '*seriously overestimated the extent of change and seriously underestimated the continuities from the past*'. In the understanding of these concerns, this chapter aims to analyse the historical evolution of China's urban space in order to answer the first research question of this study, i.e., *What kind of social and political-economic factors dominated China's urban development at different historical stages, and how do the resultant urban spaces at different stages contrast with each other in terms of their physical character and public life?* In so doing this chapter intends to find out if there are any implicit 'continuities' between today's consumption-led places and past urban environments so that their relative 'publicness' can be comparatively understood. There are seven sections. The first sets up the 'epoch division' that is relevant to this study. The following five sections chronologically review the evolution of China's urban space according to these epochs. Intentionally the review is not confined to the 'central areas', or streets, of the city, but is concerned with the 'overall evolution' of 'urban space' so that a more comprehensive retrospect can be achieved (examination of the 'urban central areas' will be unfolded in *Chapter 5*). In conclusion, the last section synthesises all these reviews, summarising the preliminary answers to the research question.

## 4-2 Epoch division

In his edited work *A history of China's urban construction*, designated as an important text by many Chinese planning schools, Dong (2004) divides China's urban history into three epochs: *the ancient part* (from the primitive period to the mid-nineteenth century), *the modern part* (from the mid-nineteenth century to 1949) and *the contemporary part* (since the Chinese Communist Party gained its power in 1949). Dong's division is central to China's official standpoint which defines China's history as a consecutive sequence of five modes: primitive communal, slave, feudal, semi-feudal and semi-colonial, and socialist (Stockman 2000). But the potential problem is that it over-generalises the post-1949 period and reduces the importance of 1978 in which China started its Reform, and thus fails to convincingly address contemporary events. In contrast, Gaubatz (1999a, 1999b) identifies five epochs of China's urban transformation: *early traditional cities* (about before 618), *late traditional cities* (about 618-1842), *Treaty-Port and Republican-Era cities* (1842-1949), *the Maoist cities* (1949-1978) and *great international cities* (1978 since). Gaubatz's interest has been rooted in the research of urban morphology. Her division is thus highly biased towards the 'study of the physical characteristics of towns and cities resulting from an evolutionary process of urban activities and planning action' (Gu 2001: 125), which strongly represents the concern of urban design, but also can be related to broader social and political-economic analyses. Therefore this division has been echoed in the urban China studies with a particular focus on the physical dimension of Chinese cities (see Cody 1996; Gu 2001; Kiang 1994; Wang 2003; Whitehand and Gu 2006; Wu 1993). This chapter therefore will follow Gaubatz's division but with slight modification of the terms. First, the broadly-used term 'Maoist' will be deliberately avoided as it lacks a clear definition; the word 'pre-market' may be more appropriate to reflect the prevalent ideology of the time. Second, the term 'great international cities' will be replaced by 'contemporary cities' as the latter is considered more neutral and can safely cover more types of China's urban development since 1978.

## 4-3 Early traditional cities: representation of hierarchical social structure

During the early traditional period, the dynamics of shaping China's cities could be characterised by several factors (see Dong 2004; Friedmann 2005a; Gaubatz 1999a, 1999b; Kiang 1994; Stockman 2000). First, the prevalent social ideology of the time was deeply rooted in a strong aristocratic

power. A dominant belief was that all significant aspects of city life should be properly arranged in accordance with the division of social classes, and the layout of cities therefore should unexceptionally reflect the hierarchical social structure. Second, the whole political institution of the state was highly centralised; policies were devised by the Central Court on behalf of the Emperor and delivered to the local governments, and were theoretically beyond dispute. This means that the capacity of planning and managing cities was under the tight control of the central regime. Third, due to continuous rebellions, the regime of the state was constantly unstable and frequently replaced by new ones; thus the most important function of cities was to serve administrative and martial demands. Last but not least, the financial income of the state mainly depended upon agricultural taxes rather than any other commercial activities, so development of commerce and business was not among the central concerns of city making.

Influenced by these factors, cities of this period, particularly those which were regional capitals, shared a number of common physical features (see Dong 2004; Gaubatz 1999a, 1999b): they were organised in compact rectangular forms, confined by long and high walls standing along their four-side edges; several principal avenues, either north-south or east-west oriented, were carefully laid through the inner-cities, linking the wall gates and constituting the main spatial axes; different functional zones, e.g., imperial palaces, official institutions, aristocrats and commoners' settlements were placed at different sites in accordance with the different social status of their residents.

The city of Chang'an, the capital of both the Sui Dynasty (581-618) and the Tang Dynasty (618-906), was such a typical example (see Dai 1992; Dong 2004; He 1996; Kiang 1994). It was confined by a long, constant defensive wall with a 36 km perimeter. Within the wall there were 6 principal avenues and 19 secondary streets dividing the city land into 108 walled and gated wards with 2 designated markets (Figure 4.1). Apparently, Chang'an did not possess a dominant 'city centre' that was familiar in the Western medieval towns at the time. Its urban-space system largely consisted of these avenues and wards.
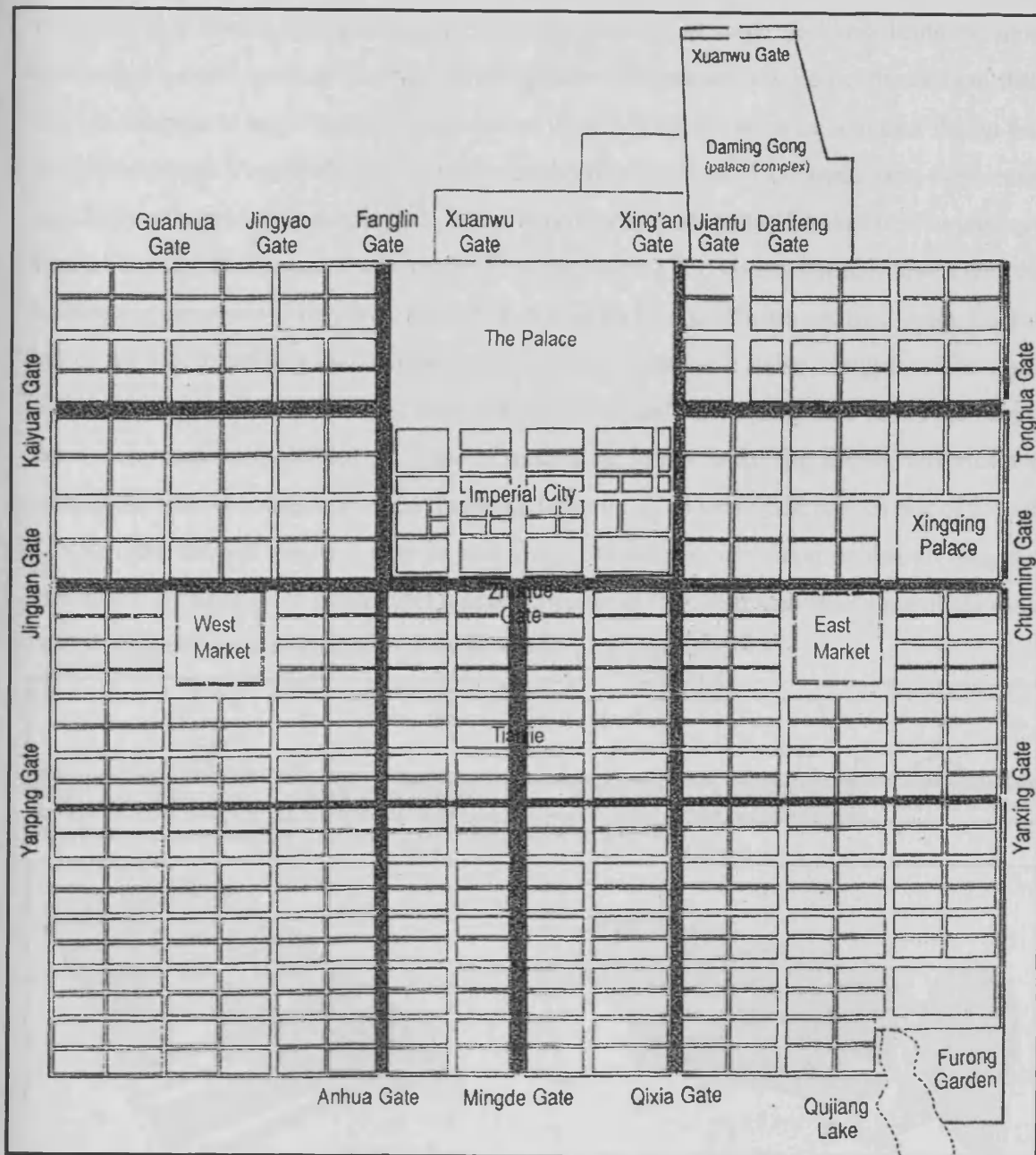
**Figure 4.1** Grid-pattern layout of Chang'an (618-906) and its 6 avenues and 108 walled wards. Generally speaking, the more functionally or socially 'significant' a ward was, the closer it could be sited to the Palace. Namely, the central and northern parts of this city were main accommodations for the 'higher' social groups, such as families of the Emperor, aristocrats and senior officers, while the rest were residences of the lower classes (Source: Kiang 1994).

In the middle of the city was the most significant avenue, called *Tianjie* (Heavenly Street), which directly led to the Palace at the northern end of the city, and simultaneously cut the city into two halves. Apart from this *Tianjie*, there were another two north-south and three east-west arteries

which together fixed a rigid grid pattern. These six avenues, although obviously being the most outstanding 'public' space of this city in their appearance, were actually very different from their later counterparts in large Western cities, such as those of Paris, in terms of both their design and designated usages. First of all, they, each measured between 120 and 155 meters wide, were much grander than the secondary streets, the width of which varied from 15 to 85 meters (still surprisingly wide). Secondly, these avenues were made of compacted earth and were not directly linked with the buildings to either side as they were flanked on both sides by open ditches and mud walls. Ditches helped not only in draining water off the slightly elevated roadways but also in irrigation. The edges of the ditches were lined with locust trees, willows, elms, and occasionally fruit trees. And behind these trees, mud walls defined the sides of rectangular wards containing houses, religious and educational establishments, and official buildings (Figure 4.2). In the middle of each side of a ward, a public gate allowed residents to enter and leave. But there were exceptions that the religious institutions or mansions of senior court officials could have their own individual gates in the walls while houses of private citizens were forbidden to do so (Figure 4.3).
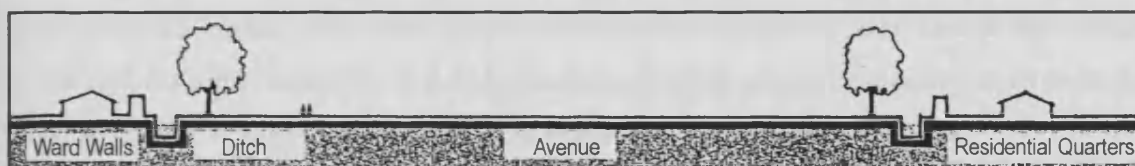


**Figure 4.2** Avenue isolated by ward walls and ditches (Source: Kiang 1994).
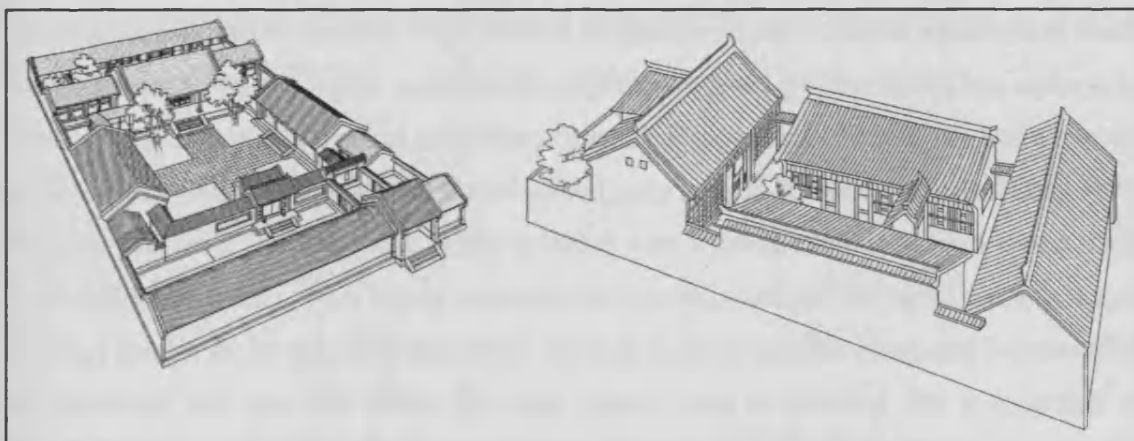


**Figure 4.3** Common patterns of ward housing highly walled and gated (Source: Knapp 2005).

The unprecedented width of these avenues was central to two functions: first, rituals of the Central Court, including grand parades, traditional sacrifice ceremonies and personal 'cruises' of the Emperor; and second, the direct patrol of guards during the night and fast access of armies in any emergency. In this respect these places were essentially not serving the 'public', rather, they were

initiated to isolate and control them with wide ditches, high mud walls, walled wards with limited gates, etc. Particularly during curfew hours at night, direct access to the avenues and many other main streets was strictly denied, and therefore '*these extraordinarily wide streets became vast expanses of a closely patrolled no man's land*' (Kiang 1994: 46). The residents who lived in the wards were subject to stringent supervision and not allowed to leave the wards at night because the keys of the gates were kept only by the ward headman and could not be used unless under some particular circumstances, such as fire, illness, or marriage.

At the junctions of these avenues stood fixed guard posts and they delivered the messages of supervision by beating drums at particular moments. According to *Xing Tangshu* (*New history of Tang*, in Kiang 1994: 47):

'*At sunset, the drums were beaten 800 times and the gates* [of wards] *were closed. From the second night watch* [9 – 11 P.M.], *mounted soldiers employed by the officers in charge of policing the streets made the rounds and shouted out the watches, while the military patrols made their rounds in silence. At the fifth watch* [3 – 5 A.M.], *the drums in all the streets were beaten so as to let the noise be heard everywhere; all the gates of the wards and markets were then opened.*'

Those secondary streets were also largely devoid of commercial activities and public events which were restricted to the two walled markets in the city. But the running of the market was under strict time control: at noon, two hundred drum beats signalled the opening of the markets; about one and three-quarters hours before sundown, three hundred gong beats indicated the closing (Kiang 1994: 47). Daily business and small-scale public activities were allowed to be undertaken within many gated residential wards, which largely catered to the everyday needs of the public and thus helped sustain a good order for this city (Dong 2004). But this isolation of public places and fragmentation of communal life over the whole city scale made Chang'an function like a collection of considerable semiautonomous 'villages' within a fortress, rather than a concentrated place for diverse communal and civic life. To a large extent, the dominant urban-space components, those avenues and wards, were means of separation, administration, and control, being a representation of the hierarchical social structure with their public appearance but non-public functions.

## 4-4 Late traditional cities: expansion of commercialisation

During the late eighth century, although free access to the principal avenues by the commoners was still forbidden, illegal usages such as private-structure building and small scale vending, began to frequently encroach onto the streets of Chang'an (Dong 2004: 53). Residents within the enclosed wards began to pierce private gates into the ward walls and even tore down wall sections for the purpose of a more convenient access to the outside streets (Kiang 1994). These practices spread so widely that local authorities often complained that it was becoming more difficult to maintain the sanitation and order of the city, and harder for the guards to apprehend the criminals (Dai 1992). Thus the Central Court repeatedly attempted to curb these acts by issuing imperial edicts, including prohibitions of punching doors in the ward walls, tearing down wall sections, and building structures beyond the street limits, or prolonging the use of markets during curfew hours (Dai 1992; He 1996). For example, orders were issued that no one except officials above the third grade was allowed to have residence doors opening directly onto the avenues; and in the year of 840 a specific decree was given to abolish the night market that had developed in violation of the curfew regulations (Kiang 1994).

However, the enforcement of official mandates turned out to be problematic and ineffective when the whole population of Chang'an eventually reached more than one million, which made it the biggest city in the world at the time (Dong 2004: 47). The mass of population resulted in considerable living demands that exceeded the sustainability of the original infrastructures. Commercial activities began to expand, at first discreetly within the residential wards, and later on a larger scale in many precincts of this capital city. This was part of a long process in which a number of significant changes took place, including the transition of many peasants from agricultural to non-agricultural occupations, the appearance of shops and workshops outside the designated market wards, the disregard of curfew, the moderate official laissez faire of the use of main streets, and in many cases, the virtual tearing down of ward walls (Gaubatz 1999a, 1999b; Kiang 1994).

Such urban changes had been not only present in the capital city but also found all over the state since the early years of the ninth century. This was particularly obvious in the regions which began to seize more and more autonomy due to the long geographic distances between them and the

weakened central authority, such as Yangzhou, Kaifang and Suzhou in the Yangtze region, or Guangzhou in the coastal region (Gaubatz 1999a, 1999b). For example, Yangzhou began to defy the stringent regulations of enclosed wards and temporal constraints by the first quarter of the ninth century. Many poems written during this period give telling descriptions of the new development in city life. In Yangzhou, the once-forbidden and now-flourishing night markets were noted by Wang Jiang (768-830, in Kiang 1994: 48) as: 'Night markets – lamps in thousands lit the azure clouds. Lofty towers – red-sleeved ladies and guests throng'. Zhang Hu (792-852, in Kiang 1994: 48) also illustrated the bustling night life beyond the designated confined markets in Yangzhou: 'The ten-li [ten-li here is a general term of distance] long street links markets to markets. On Bright Moon Bridge, I look at 'spirits and sylphs'. By then, these once-strict regulations had existed in name only, and the urban structure once central to the social hierarchy had been severely eroded by commerce. This had been particularly facilitated when the Tang Empire was besieged by frequent uprisings after 860, which left the capital constantly less ordered (Dai 1992).

In 906 Chang'an was destroyed by a rebellion, reduced to 'earth-heaps and waste-land' (Kiang 1994: 50). To a certain extent this event indicates the end of a unique city-planning ideology which was rigidly based upon social segregation and urban administration. After that cities were made on new trajectories. In the city of Luoyang, the short-lived capital of the Later Tang Dynasty (923-936), an imperial edict was eventually issued to allow citizens to use 20 per cent of the main street for their own purposes. For example, on public streets of fifty-bu (paces) wide, inhabitants on both sides of the thoroughfares could use up to five paces to plant trees, dig wells and even erect shelters. And in the case of narrower streets of twenty-five to thirty paces wide, up to three paces could be used (He 1996; Kiang 1994). By the Later Zhou Dynasty (951-960), the capital city became Kaifeng, and the master-planning approach covering every detail of the city, as the Sui and Tang rulers had made in Chang'an, was abandoned. The Emperor of the time specified only the layout of military camps, roads and alleys, granaries, and administrative bureaus, while the rest including residential and commercial facilities was basically left to the initiative of the common people; thus the walled-ward system inevitably broke down (Dong 2004; He 1996; Kiang 1994).

After the Zhou Dynasty was the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127), during the period of which significant political-economic changes continually took place, leading to an alternative city-making

in which the freer urban layout and more open streets came to play an important role. First of all, during the long period of relative peace, agricultural production had made great advancement: the adoption of new strains of early-ripening rice allowed for multiple harvests per year, which allowed a drastic increase of population. Simultaneously, surplus labour began to specialise, bringing about ample consumer goods for the growing urban population (Kiang 1994). From 976 to 984, there were 180,000 households in Kaifeng but it quickly became 335,000 households during the years 1078 to 1106 (Dong 2004: 81). Based upon 4 to 5 persons per household, the whole population was about 1.1 to 1.3 million, which did not yet include the garrison in Kaifeng, some 140,000 (Dong 2004: 81). Therefore, Kaifeng's population greatly exceeded that of Chang'an but its physical size was only half the latter. This made the city over-crowded and created potential problems of sanitation, fire, and so on. Thus the Central Court had to go a step further in compromising its city making and management. New defensive walls were constructed so that the city boundary could be expanded. And between the new and the early walls, vast lands were reclaimed to shape an outer city, in which the planning and building was largely dictated by individuals' needs except for some military camps, granaries, and administrative bureaus (Dong 2004; Gaubatz 1996b). In the previous inner city, the density of streets was unprecedentedly intensified while their widths were narrower in comparison with Chang'an: there were twenty nine principal streets through the whole urban precinct, measuring 25 to 40 meters wide, and countless secondary streets and alleys, each measuring no more than 20 meters. The street pattern became complicated instead of being in the strict form of a chessboard (Dong 2004: 78) (Figure 4.4). Shops expanded beyond the last fragments of the wards and began to line the streets. Even so, encroachment upon public streets still happened, and the restrictions from the court became very loose. On many occasions, wooden street markers were set up, beyond which all building was nominally forbidden, while many offending structures were charged a rent for the infringement of public roadways (He 1996). In that sense, the court actually '*turned an urban problem into a money-making opportunity and accepted the birth of a new urban system*' (Kiang 1994: 52).
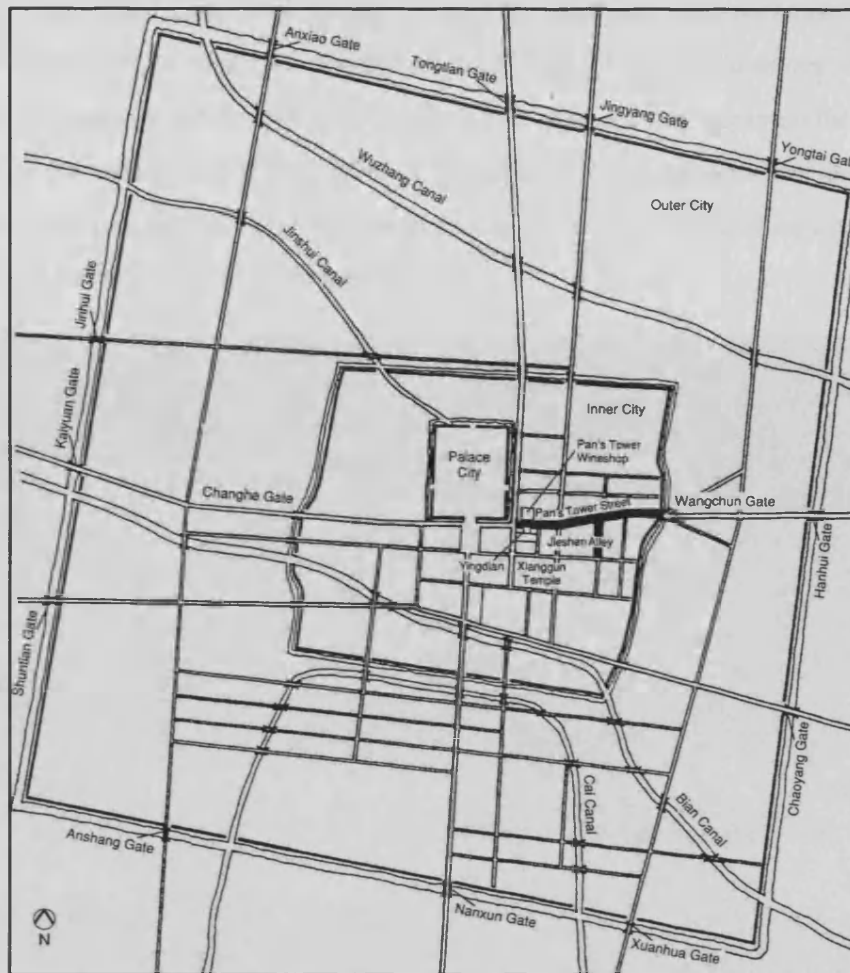
**Figure 4.4** Kaifeng (960-1127): a more complicated urban pattern with an intensified street net (Source: Kiang 1994).

Therefore by the tenth century commercial streets had become the dominant typology of public space of cities, whereby in most cases the place where the primary commercial streets existed in combination was considered as the 'central area' of the city (Figure 4.5). Kiang (1994: 53-54) illustrates the street life of the time:

'*Merchants displayed their wares at the front of these* [shops], *while artisans worked in the back. The many taverns, teahouses, and restaurants in the capital added gaiety and color to streets, with their large, richly decorated entrance scaffoldings...Many of these food and wine establishments had an upper level; some were even three stories high. Huge pleasure precincts with numerous theatres, shops, and restaurants provided entertainment venues for the populace. Nearby, food*

*hawkers set up tables and stands selling all sorts of snacks to tease the appetites of passerby.*
*Corner eateries boasted tables and benches set outside, under light mat awnings or huge parasols.*
*At the busier junctions and bridgeheads, peddlers, one after another, displayed their goods on low*
*tables or on the ground. Local inhabitants on foot and on horseback, itinerant merchants, animal*
*trains, mule and bullock carts, and palanquins crowed the narrow streets. Business went on all day,*
*and in busier localities continued through the night.'*



**Figure 4.5** *Qing Ming Shang He Tu,* Chinese genre painting, Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127): a telling illustration of the dynamic street life of the time (Source: http://img109.icxo.com).

## 4-5 Treaty-Port and Republican-Era cities: emergence of new Western landscapes

In sum, after the late Tang Dynasty, commercial streets had been the dominant public realm of Chinese cities. In the following centuries up to the late Qing Dynasty in the 1800s, streets not just developed spontaneously in the central areas of cities, but were deliberately planned and constructed by local governments in places where population and activities were concentrated, such as the sites around temples, ports, or canals. Similar to their tenth-century precedents, these streets featured the bustle of intermingled commercial and social behaviours (Dong 2004: 121).

During the middle of the nineteenth century, the physical and social differentiation in streets became quite obvious. In the central areas of large cities, the main streets were kept clean, well paved with

flat stones, and had covered sewers (Figure 4.6).They featured magnificent, busy shops crowded with shoppers, and the frontages of these shops were decorated with traditional Chinese architectural components and *Caishen* (Wealthy God) symbols (Figure 4.7). In many cases main streets came to further specialise in certain goods, becoming noted for selling pre-categorised products such as fish, salt, vegetables, cotton, fruits, flowers and pottery, or offering specific services including ironsmith, locksmith, carpenter and so on. This specialisation is even reflected in the street names still in use. For instance, in Chengdu, the former biggest city in west China, there remain *Yanshi Kou* (Salt Market Corner), *Zhushi Jie* (Jewelry Market Street), *Eshi Xiang* (Geese Market Alley), *Luoma Shi* (Mule and Horse Market) and *Mianhua Jie* (Cotton Street) (Wang 1998).



**Figure 4.6** Fuxing Street, Chengdu, 1920s: a local well-maintained commercial street (Source: Wang 2003).

**Figure 4.7** Nanjing Road, Shanghai, 1907: heavily-decorated shop frontages (Source: Denison and Ren 2006).

In contrast, the streetscape in the remote areas or in many small cities could be very different. The backstreets and small alleys of them could be dirty, narrow, unpaved and lined with open ditches. Particularly in the poor residential areas, people lived in shabby rooms that were so small that daily activities such as meals, handicraft work, and hobbies had to be conducted outside (Wang 2000) (Figure 4.8). Occasionally there were '*children, chickens, and pigs playing in the streets*' and thus no 'decent people' were willing to linger around these places (Wang 2003: 32). Despite these, the positive side was that many of the backstreets were still crowded with stalls, peddlers, tables and makeshift stands, and wheelbarrow traffic often moved across a row of stones down the middle. And therefore the entire milieu was inevitably intertwined with the everyday experience of the locals (Wang 1998, 2003). In other words, these 'secondary', relatively undeveloped places had barely changed in the past millennium.

**Figure 4.8** A woman spinning in doorway, Chengdu, 1905: many 'secondary' streets staged lots of everyday activities of the locals (Source: Wang 2003).

The year 1842, however, abruptly broke the developing trajectory of many Chinese cities, proclaiming a forthcoming period in which foreign powers influenced deeply not only China's economic growth but also the ideology and methods of its city planning and design (Whitehand and Gu 2006; Wu 1993). In this year, the first Opium War (1840-1842) led to a conclusion, the Treaty of Nanjing, that permitted foreigners to live and carry out business in certain concession areas, named Treaty Ports, which were extra-territorial enclaves adjacent to, or even within, old Chinese cities. In fact, foreigners had already lived and traded in some coastal cities, such as Guangzhou, for centuries by the time of the Opium War. But they had not been permitted to do that within the city walls for more than one century, and from 1720 onwards, their business had been mainly limited to some Chinese-run trading companies (*hang*) (Dong 2004; Gaubatz 1999b). The first Treaty Ports were established at Shanghai, Ningbo and Fuzhou. Foreign merchants, entrepreneurs, and missionaries then flocked to the Treaty Ports and re-made sections of these cities in Western styles. These areas also attracted considerable immigration of labour so that by the end of nineteenth century all of the Treaty Ports had grown substantially beyond their set size and scope. As a result, on the one hand foreign powers began to expand the boundaries of their concession areas into the remaining structure of cities (Whitehand and Gu 2006); and on the other more than twenty other cities were required to establish new Treaty-Port areas, including Nanjing, Zhenjiang, Jiujiang, Hankou, Yichang, Changsha, Chongqing, Wenzhou, Guangzhou, Yantai, Tianjin, Shenyang, Harbin and so on (Dai 1992; Dong 2004; Friedmann 2005a).

The establishment of Treaty Ports introduced Western planning ideology based upon modern industrialisation. A number of new industrial districts were constructed in the set areas and their close locations were usually allocated to some important traffic arteries, e.g. railway junctions and canals (Wu 1993). Such an industry-central deployment simultaneously led to the functional zoning of peripheral urban lands for the purpose of the spatial separation of production, circulation and residential activities. Therefore the grid-pattern approach, which had been gradually diminished for centuries, was reintroduced into Chinese cities under the rubric of industrialisation by foreigners, rather than social differentiation by the emperors. For example, Shamian Island in Guangzhou, the shared Treaty-Port area by France and Britain, was subdivided into 109 plots of almost equal size, four fifths belonging to the British and the rest to the French (Liang and Sun 2007: 102) (Figure 4.9). Apart from manufactories, commercial and residential districts were also developed 'along Western lines' in Treaty-Port areas. There were lots of brick-and-stone commercial structures, arcaded shopping districts, sidewalks, leafy neighbourhoods of single-family homes and club buildings set within Western-style gardens (Gaubatz 1999b) (Figure 4.10). The foreigners also introduced infrastructures such as gas and telegraph lines, improved pavements, and updated public transport (Dong 2004). All these attempts made the concession areas such alien and novel places that they constructed a sharp contrast with their immediate environments, in both visual and sensory terms: '*Western-style structures stood square and solid within carefully manicured grounds along quiet tree-lined avenues devoid of the bustle of the Chinese commercial district just a few meters away*' (Gaubatz 1999b: 255), where '*the traditional streets* [were] *lined with shop-houses, along narrow-fronted buildings, which were often inadequately serviced, badly ventilated, ill-lit and over-crowded*' (Wu 1993: 35).

**Figure 4.9** Shamian Island featured the resurgence of the grid-pattern approach in China's city making: it was divided between the French (53 *mu* on the eastern half of the island) and the British (211 *mu* on the western half of the island) in 1861 (the *mu* is a traditional Chinese measurement of area, equal to 0.0667 ha). Two main streets were laid out running east-west, with five lesser streets running north-south. The east first north-south street served as the boundary between the French and British concessions, and their respective manufactories were set up within adjacent grid-confined zones (Source: Liang and Sun 2007).



**Figure 4.10** Westernised streetcape in Shanghai, 1870s (Source: Balfour and Zheng 2002).

Treaty-Port areas were granted autonomy on many aspects such as taxation, education, planning, policing and sanitation; thus to an extent they excluded ordinary Chinese, and were only accessible to some local political-economic elites and internal labourers (Dai 1992; Dong 2004). However, as

stated previously, due to their increasing population and expanding functions, they on many occasions had grown into polycentric forms and therefore led to a certain proliferation of Western place-making over many other urban precincts. For example, the Bund Area, *Waitan*, along the west bank of Huangpu River in Shanghai was designated as a central business district in 1844, additional to the British early Treaty Port. By the end of the nineteenth century this area had already become a concentration site of over 30 large banks from different Western countries, with plentiful other commercial facilities such as business offices, department stores, clubs and a civic park; in the 1920s this area was officially open to the Chinese (Balfour and Zheng 2002) (Figure 4.11). What is more, the Western conception and approach of place-making also began to inspire some local government officers, planners and architects so that, with an intention of 'grafting of a western bud onto a Chinese tree' (Cody 1996: 341), they tried to modify or reinvent urban space of Chinese cities in line with the Western standards, particularly during the years between 1911 and 1949, otherwise known as the Republican Era (Cody 1996; Gaubatz 1999a, 1999b).

For example, the planning of Jiangwan Civic Centre of Shanghai (1929) envisaged a new hybrid urban form which consisted of patterns of both traditional street-grids and ring and radial roads. The 'grand' design of its central district particularly resembled its Western City-Beautiful-Movement counterparts (Balfour and Zheng 2002: 73-74) (Figure 4.12). In Nanjing, local authorities had been concentrating on the creation of 'modern boulevards' (Tyau 1930 in Cody 1996: 358-359); between 1918 and 1920, some old walls of this city were dismantled and the leftover materials were re-used to construct wide and macadamised roads that eased drainage and facilitated travel (Cody 1996: 343).

**Figure 4.11** Bund area, Shanghai, 1930 (Source: http://forestlife.info/Onair/137.htm).



**Figure 4.12** Jiangwan Civic Centre Plan, Shanghai, 1929: it incorporated a square in the shape of a gigantic T, surrounded by municipal offices, public buildings and other central facilities; and approximately 69 hectares land was reserved for parks, plazas and boulevards (Source: Balfour and Zheng 2002).

Many of these attempts, however, were still tentative, such as in the case of Shanghai where the 1929 Jiangwan master plan was never entirely implemented. And their influence upon the

hinterland regions remained weak because these practices were only confined to existing Treaty-Port cities, or more specifically, to certain precincts of these cities. Therefore by the end of 1940s 'a dual pattern of Chinese cities developed' (Murphey 1974: 71): the majority still stuck to the traditional and indigenous public-realm creation and usage, while certain areas were integrated into the ideology of modern planning and urban design, therefore partially presenting certain similarities to their Western counterparts in terms of streetscapes (Dong 2004; Friedmann 2005a; Wu 1993).

## 4-6 Pre-market cities: spatial generalisation based on production

Despite their tentative achievements, China's westernised planners and architects in the Republican Era did not have enough time to make their ideas fully operative, due to the long and desperate unrest subsequently occurring in China, including the twenty-year war-lordist period, the eight-year Japanese invasion, and the four-year civil war (Dong 2004). And eventually, in 1949 all this 'came to a halt with the accession to power of the Chinese Communist Party' (Friedmann 2005a: 102). Beginning to reshape China's city-making to realise and consolidate its own political-economic ideology, the Party's starting point was to accept Marxist theory as the official philosophy, which advocated that it was production and people's relationship to the means of production that determined social structures and therefore facilitated its progress (Lu 2006). The Party furthermore recognised that the over-concentration and spatial specialisation of economic, administrative, culture, educational and recreational activities in cities on the one hand caused the socio-spatial division between urban and rural life, and on the other hand, was an obstruction to the improvement of 'the worst living conditions for the proletariat' (Wu 1993: 39). These political-economic concerns were then enacted into planning and urban-design appeals which aimed to establish a highly productive and convenient living environment for the labouring masses and to reduce the social differentiation between different urban classes, so that 'a new socialist city with 'classless' and 'uniform socio-economic' characteristics could be established (Wu 1993: 40). In sum, the ideal urban organisation was supposed to be that of both 'self-reliance' and 'spatial equity' (see Esherick ed. 1999; Ma 1981). Correspondingly, soon after the establishment of the socialist regime, two major political-economic transformations took place, which institutionally ensured the nation's planning and urban design to be directed at these preferred values during the following three decades (see Dong 2004; Friedmann 2005a; Gaubatz 1995, 1999a, 1999b; Sit 1995; Wu 1993 and

so on). First, the administrative structure was once again reshaped into a highly centralised bureaucracy and thus city-making was put under strict control of the central government. Second, the land and housing markets were thoroughly nationalised for the purpose that the deployment and usage of resources could be better 'planned' and contributing to the set aims of urban development.

Therefore from the mid 1950s, to achieve high quality of industrial production, Chinese cities began to either concentrate and enhance heavy industries in existing major industrial bases, or to locate and develop ranges of new productive centres in urban peripheral areas. In both cases, in order to achieve self-sufficiency and spatial non-distinction, a Soviet model of urban unit, the *mikrorayon*, was introduced, which advocated that the residential district should be developed near the workplace, usually within a distance of up to forty minutes on public transportation, offering its residents all or most general functions such as housing, the provision of subsistence goods and services (Bater 1980; Gaubatz 1995; 1999b) (Figure 4.13). Based on this model, the peripheral districts of many Chinese cities were developed into large amounts of 'generalisable' spatial organisations which integrated residential and manufacturing places to accommodate skilled workers (Lu 2006). Meanwhile, many former specialised districts in the inner city also evolved into smaller but similar spatial mixtures in which productive, administrative, cultural and commercial settings were largely concentrated (Wu 1993). For instance, in the Bund Area of Shanghai that had more than 30 foreign banks before 1949, five of the sites were redeveloped into factories, sixteen for office buildings and shops, eight for administration agencies, two for hotels and two for schools (Zhang 1987: 67). Therefore, many traditional central areas gradually lost their inherited identity of place, given this 'functional generalisation' (Wu 1993: 46).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 - 4, 8 and 16 Storey Apartment Buildings |
| 2 - Children's Day Care Center |
| 3 - School |
| 4 - Home for the Aged |
| 5 - 20, and 25 Storey Buildings of Hotel Type for Youths |
| 6 - Trade and Social Center |
| 7 - Central Park |
| 8 - Parking Lots |
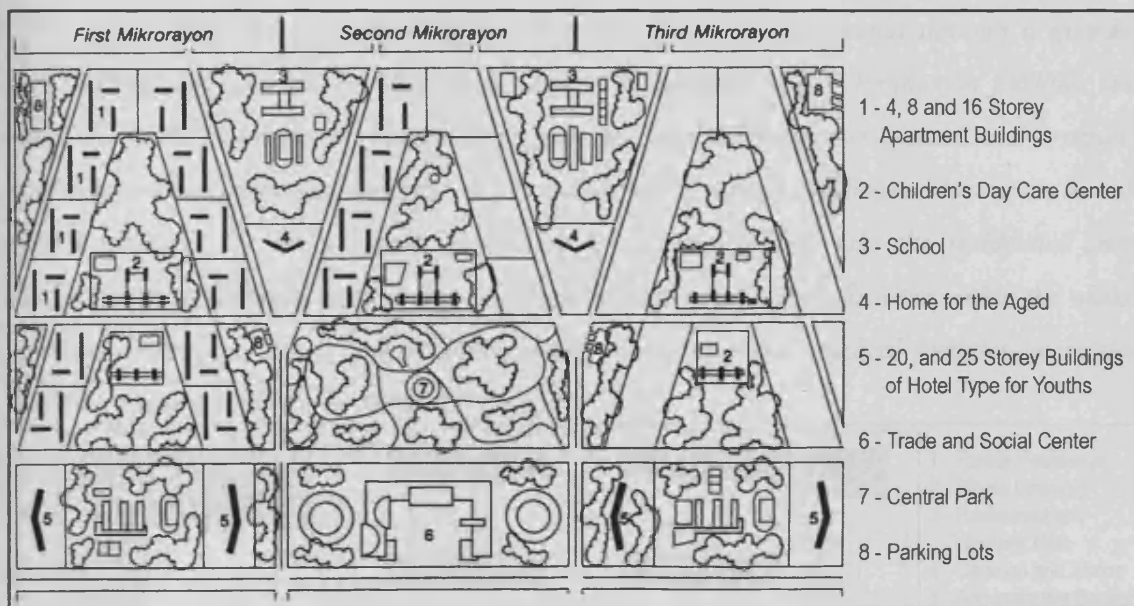
**Figure 4.13** Soviet *mikrorayon* model, 1950s: "generalisable" residential unit (Source: Bater 1980).

From 1958 onwards, however, Chinese cities went much further in their attempts to connect working and living places by introducing a new spatial organisation, work-unit compound (called as *danwei*, meaning the employer or organisation to which a citizen is assigned), into their both suburban and inner-city areas. Danwei was based on the extreme assumption that people should be closely affiliated with their production to obtain high productive efficiency, and thus had no great need to travel elsewhere in cities. It thus tightly integrated working places (such as factories and offices) with people's housing and ranges of service facilities (including restaurants, canteens, small shops, kindergartens, barber shops, libraries, etc.). By doing so danwei aimed to completely diminish the long commute from living place to workplace (which was still acceptable in the *mikrorayon* case if less than a fifty-minute distance) (Friedmann 2005a; Gaubatz 1999b; Lu 2006; Yin *et al*. 2005) (Figure 4.14).

Every daiwei was unexceptionally walled and gated for the management and control purposes so that they were 'somewhat reminiscent of the walled wards of the early traditional Chinese city' (Gaubatz 1995: 30) (Figure 4.15). But the wards were primarily residential in function while a danwei actually more resembled a miniature walled city with 'a high level of provision of social facilities', and in most occasions, with 'rationalist architectural layout and style' (Lu 2006: 52). According to Gaubatz's description (1995: 30):

'*The highly controlled environment of the work-unit compound is entered through a guarded gate...Within the gate, the architecture is utilitarian and regimented. Production facilities and residential facilities are usually housed in separate structures. Orderly rows of residential structures commonly consist of rectangular three- to five-story brick or cement buildings...These units include both apartments for families and dormitories for single workers. Like the residential units, production facilities are housed in large rectangular structures...Other facilities within the walled compound vary but ideally include dining halls, provision shops, medical facilities, recreation facilities, meeting rooms, and administrative offices.*'



| | |
|---|---|
| 1 - | Family Residence |
| 2 - | Single Domitory |
| 3 - | Restaurant and Workers' Club |
| 4 - | Canteen and Shops |
| 5 - | Adminstrative Section |
| 6 - | Workplace |
| 7 - | Guard Room |
| 8 - | Bicycle Plot |
| 9 - | Unit Walls |
| 10 - | Kindergarten |
| 11 - | Children's Playfield |
| 12 - | Common Fileld |
| 13 - | Square |
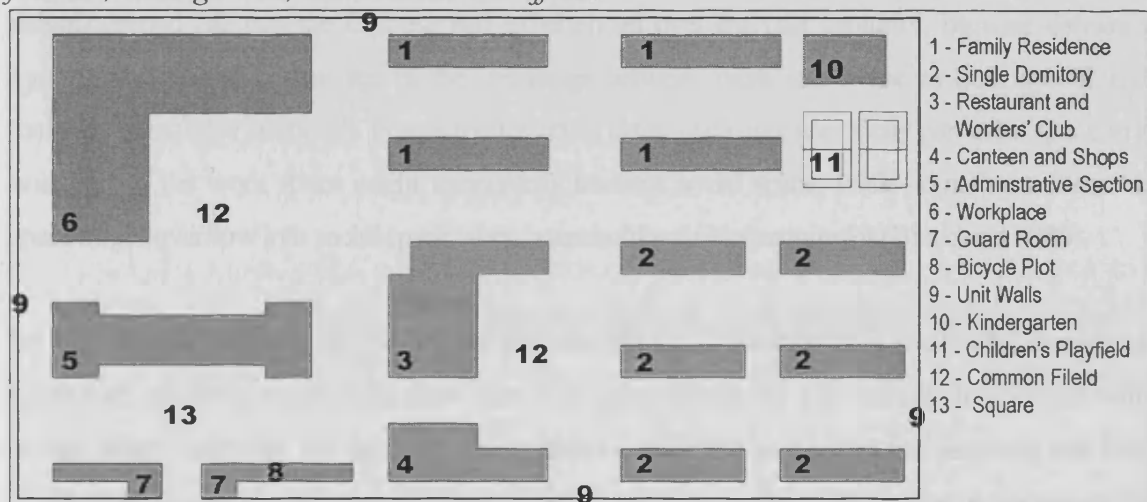
**Figure 4.14** Typical pattern of *danwei*: 'a miniature walled city'; in many cases the buildings within were largely detached from the streets by the surrounding walls so that the 'dialogue' between a work-unit compound and its close environment could be very weak (Source: adapted from the author's survey).



**Figure 4.15** The gate and high walls of a work-unit compound: 'somewhat reminiscent of the walled wards of the early traditional Chinese city'. In this case it is evident that the compound makes a negative contribution to the street and the pedestrians (Source: photo taken by the author).

Thus the work-unit compound in fact served as the locus for the organisation of many facets of urban life through offering its residents spaces for both working and living, for both home life and community life. As within the walls the residential units lacked 'private' or 'semi-private' courtyards, the common areas between buildings, i.e. the 'in-between' places, were used as multifunctional sites such as bicycle parking lots, children's play areas, group-recreation places, and even venues for collective 'political study'(Lu 2006). But if viewed more carefully, the nature of 'public' life taking place in the danwei compound was too subtle to be easily compared to any normal street life or neighbourhood life that the Chinese had experienced over the past centuries, because danwei's intermingled spatial pattern led to the 'crossings between work and home in both spatial and temporal terms' (Lu 2006: 58). Few activities could claim exclusive use of any particular space in a unit: part of the work space might temporarily become social space, while sometimes domestic space might overflow into social space when household activities required it (Bjorklund 1986).

So to a certain extent it can be argued that the places in the danwei were hardly formal, or 'qualified', public space because there were few opportunities for the residents to socialise with people whom they were not acquainted with (those outside the walls), and few surprises that they could create and even expect through their everyday experiences due to the routine procedure of life, and there were too many occasions in which the public affairs invaded private realm so that the balance between public and private was actually very weak. In this sense, the public life in a danwei unit was perhaps essentially homogeneous, rather than diverse. Despite this, however, it was certain that the danwei in fact had supplanted the traditional streets, becoming 'the principal unit of newly constructed urban space during the Maoist period' (Gaubatz 1995: 30). In many cases, the 'entire areas of the city consisted of nothing but multiple danwei' (Gaubatz 1999b: 257). Between 1950s and 1970s, the functionally and visually homogenous landscape of compounds, in low-rise and standardised forms and sprawling across vast urban areas, became the typical scene of Chinese cities (Lu 2006) (Figure 4.16).

**Figure 4.16** Work-unit compounds sprawling across vast urban areas, Shanghai: they became the principal urban space unit during the Maoist period (Denison and Ren 2005).

Along with this trend, many traditional commercial centres of the city were dismantled and supplanted by newly developed work units since it was assumed that people had not much need to undertake individual consumption outside their danwei. Lu (2006: 69) notes that '...*strict limits were imposed upon private commercial establishments under Mao, urban residents bought most of their daily essentials from cooperative shops run by the work unit. The streets* [thus] *had fewer shops, restaurants, advertisements, recreational centres and other urban facilities*'. But meanwhile, in some major cities, following the Soviet modernist model, 'broad monumental avenues' lined by work-unit blocks were developed in the central areas.. These avenues functionally linked different major districts of cities, but being deeply rooted within modernist ideologies they were designed to primarily sustain transport vehicles, rather than for any pedestrian use. But ironically, given the social-economic order imposed by the danwei-based city and the lack of private motor vehicles, traffic of all types - even bicycles - was sparse (Gaubatz 1999b: 257). Thus, the streetscape of many of these avenues appeared dull and uniform: they were flooded with political propaganda, long blank walls and standardised grey slabs of different work-units, and devoid of vivid and meaningful street life (Figure 4.17). Even for traditional streets, political propaganda also frequently became a significant element (Figure 4.18) (more examples are presented in *Chapter 5*).

There were still efforts to create parks and large squares. However, although open to the public for a nominal fee, many parks were surrounded by walls and controlled through guarded gateways

(Gaubatz 1999b). Besides, as the Party stuck to the Marxist ideology that urban living should be a progressive force encouraging collective rather than individual identity (Smith 1996), people were often organised in groups to go to parks to participate in 'active' and 'healthy' public activities, e.g. team sports and planting (Wang 1995), rather than enjoyment-led leisure activities as expressions of personal preferences. Lu's (2006: 69) comment in particular addresses this issue: '*The social environment...encouraged socialist collectivism while discouraging social heterogeneity...there was a high level of homogeneity in terms of* [urban] *life style*'. As for squares, either constructed at the centre of old cities, as in the case of Beijing's Tian Anmen Square, or at the meeting points of old and new urban districts, they were provided mainly for political purposes, namely mass parades, demonstrations and ceremonies; while open places designated with 'mundane' functions were quite absent (Gaubatz 1999b) (Figure 4.19). In sum, for nearly thirteen years Chinese cities, like their counterparts in many other socialist countries, appeared 'less of an urban place' (Szelenyi 1996). According to Szelenyi (1996: 300), there was less urban diversity in public realm of the city as urban spaces in the pre-market era were constructed mainly to achieve 'productive and political' uses while at the expense of real 'urbanism as a way of life'.



**Figure 4.17** Grey street with colourful political propaganda, Beijing, 1970s: the streetscape appeared dull and uniform while a meaningful street life was arguably devoid (Source: www.dz.dyedu.net).

**Figure 4.18** Political propaganda in the traditional area of Beijing, 1970s: streets became the stage of collective political events (Source: www. popyard.org).



**Figure 4.19** Political demonstration in Tian Anmen Square, Beijing, 1970s: a politicised and monumentalised space rather than a place for 'mundane', communal public uses (Source: www. popyard.org).

## 4-7 Contemporary cities: re-specialisation led by consumption

Since the announcement of China's economic reforms at the end of 1978, however, Chinese cities have undergone rapid transformations. Considerable literature documents the most fundamental social-spatial changes of Chinese cities: the 1980s witnessed the embryonic rise of 'marketisation' while the 1990s saw the rapid promotion and adoption of consumerism as part of the official ideology intensively dictating current place-making and urban lifestyles (see Friedmann 2005a; Gaubatz 1995, 1999a, 1999b; Logan *ed.* 2002; Ma and Wu *eds.* 2005 and so on).

During the 1980s, several significant socio-economic factors contributed to the gradual rise of market forces in city-making (see Friedmann 2005a; Gaubatz 1995, 1999a, 1999b; Gu 2001; Logan *ed.* 2002; Ma and Wu *eds.* 2005; Shen 2002; Tang 1997; Yeh and Wu 1999; and so on). First, the incremental but deliberate decentralisation of governance took place, demonstrated by the establishment of four Special Economic Zones in 1980, Xiamen, Shenzhen, Shantou and Zhuhai, which were allowed to have a certain municipal autonomy in terms of political-institutional innovation and relatively radical economic reforms. Second, the transition from strict nationalisation of resource and production to the present mixed system of state, collective, and individual ownership and management of resource and production was achieved. Third, an increasing trend toward export-oriented and foreign-investment-reliance development due to the low internal financial capacity was evident. And fourth, significant changes in the mobility of individuals at all scales were also evident given the needs of these developing economic zones and export-oriented industries for amounts of both primary workers and intellectual experts. All these factors enabled, and also compelled, Chinese cities to strive to upgrade their inefficient physical infrastructures that were the 'legacy of earlier planning practice' (Gaubatz 1995: 34).

The most fundamental spatial change was a rising trend toward the re-separation of housing from the workplace. Most of the housing built in the early reform era in Chinese cities was in new areas incorporating retail and some service functions, but with productive districts at a moderate remove. Instead of placing workers on site, danwei now purchased or leased housing within these off-site housing complexes that in most cases were still state-owned but provided a much higher capacity to accommodate more workers than did those former separated compounds (Gaubatz 1995, 1999a,

1999b; Wu 2005; Yin et al. 2005). This change led to the phenomenon that people gained higher mobility as they were now continually commuting between their living and working places, and freer to fill their private time with various social activities since they were not necessarily confined to their work-unit organisations (Li 2005; Yin 2005; Wang 1995).The second fundamental change was the re-establishment of specialised commercial and business districts, particularly in the central districts which were functionally generalised during the pre-market period (Gaubatz 1995, 1999a, 1999b; 2005). Numbers of work-unit compounds had their walls torn down and replaced by shop frontages (Figure 4.20); while in some cases, the whole structure of a compound would be totally dismantled with its entire area taken over by brand-new commercial buildings such as department stores (Figure 4.21) (Lu 2006; Yin et al. 2005). Pedestrianisation schemes were undertaken by local governments in the traditional commercial centres to revive the old commercial streets that had severely declined during the past decades (e.g., in the case of *Fuzi Temple* of Nanjing stated in *Chapter 1*). All these schemes revived the concentration of commercial activities in urban central areas. In the mid 1980s, there were already 65 per cent of commercial activities taking place in the centre of cities of under 200,000 people; the corresponding figure was 38-45 per cent in cities of 200,000 to 500,000; and 20-35 per cent in cities of over 500,000 (Ministry of Chinese Urban and Rural Construction 1984 in Wu 1993: 46). It was clear that the city centre once again began to play a dominant role in generating local urban life. However, during almost the whole first decade of the Reform, the role of market forces in urban change was relatively weak so that the legacies of the pre-market planning were still evident in city centres, in coexistence with those newly emerging commercial landscapes (Figure 4.22). This could be reflected in the fact that in many cities the industrial function still shared a high proportion of the land use in the city centre. For example, in Suzhou, the historically notable trade and tourist city, in 1983 industry accounted 12.6 per cent of the central urban land while the share of commerce was only 11.3 per cent (Wu 1993: 47).

**Figure 4.20** Some 80's danwei compounds still remain in the city. But usually the 'wall' has been supplanted by shops fronting the outside street (Source: photo taken by Miao Xu).



**Figure 4.21** Beijing's new department store, 1984, taking over the whole site of the previous danwei compound (Source: Xu 2005).

**Figure 4.22** Coexistence of pre-market legacy and new urban landscape: considerable danwei compounds and traditional residential housing in the front, new commercial items in the rear, Shanghai (Source: Burtynsky 2005).

When China entered the 1990s, however, it became more and more obvious that marketisation was overwhelmingly influencing the values and expectations in life style and consequent urban change (Broudehoux 2004; Ma and Wu 2005). Materialism, self-enrichment, competitiveness and individualism have gradually replaced the Maoist principles such as egalitarianism, collectivism, altruism and cooperation, which were still credible in the 1980s. Following Deng Xiaoping's declaration that '*it is glorious to be rich*', many emerging economic elites have '*began to flaunt their new found wealth through the conspicuous consumption*' (Broudehoux 2004: 9). Within less than two decades, tens of millions of Chinese people have gained access to new forms of communication, new consumer goods, and novel forms of leisure, in a true 'revolution of consumption' (see Davis *ed*. 2000).

'*In the process*', as Dutton (1998: 223) notes, urban spaces and their embedded social ideologies have considerably been transformed into 'seductive feasts', whereby '*everything is made 'for sale'...Classical depictions of the nation, captured in palace architecture that locate the emperor in the epicentre, give way to theme parks that make the ticket buyer the focus of activity...The changing space of the city becomes the changing face of nation. The physical ordering of city life taps into deeper psychological changes taking place. Even the socialist revolution is enchanted and seduced. In 1995, in Mao's home village of Shaoshan, a massive new theme park of the revolution opened, enabling one to walk through history and through class struggle for the price of an entry*

*ticket. Outside the park, Mao is the logo on every product. The great helmsman had become the great gimmick demonstrating, once again, the power of consumption to mimetically reconfigure the world as market opportunity.'*

On the other hand, marketisation has involved more and more Chinese cities into a fierce capital competition with their national, or even international, counterparts (Gaubatz 2005). For example, in the early 1990s Beijing's development orientation was redefined from a political and cultural city to a centre for politics, culture, tourism and international affairs and finance (Zhang 2003). This re-conceptualisation was particularly intensified during the late 1990s with the campaign for entry into the World Trade Organisation and bids for hosting international sports events and conferences (Wu 2000). All these factors together have contributed to the constant evolution of the urban landscape in Chinese cities since the 1990s. For example, the housing supply has been ultimately commodified and therefore not only the work-unit residential structures have further diminished but those state-owned residential neighbourhoods built in the 1980s have gradually been supplanted by privatised gated communities (Wu 2005).

But what is particularly relevant to this study is the persistent specialisation and concentration of commercial functions in the central areas of cities. Local governments have recognised that the development of new 'central business districts' designed to cater for the consumerist culture and to house the capital industry is a key strategy in promoting the city's economic and symbolic roles in the global/national urban hierarchy, and 'conforming to the expectation that major cities should have a downtown' (Gaubatz 2005: 99). Work-unit compounds remaining in central areas have been fully dismantled, leaving space for new real-estate development and civic projects; special planning strategies, such as CBD plans, have re-regulated the land use to completely remove industrial functions from city centres so that commercial development can be better accommodated. Pedestrianisation has been adopted as a master approach, but in a more intensive way than it was in the case of historical-street restoration, to upgrading the existing infrastructures and shaping new public spaces in these central areas. Nearly all major Chinese cities, e.g., Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Chongqing, Harbin, Tianjin, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, etc., have initiated their respective Central-Pedestranisation-District scheme over recent one decade (Gaubatz 2005; Xiao 2005; Yucekus and Banerjee 1998; Zacharias 2002). These newly developing districts, as stated in

*Chapter 1*, have now become one of the most significant economic and social symbols of large Chinese cities, displaying a profuse mix of architecture and urban design, perceived as the prime public open space for both citizens and tourists. They will be explored in detail in the following *Chapter 5*.

## 4-8 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the evolution of China's urban space over the span of five periods. During the early traditional period cities were built for administrative and military purposes with their 'public' space isolated from the commoners by walled wards and rigid regulations. During the late traditional era prevalent commercial activities became the significant force shaping cities; ward walls were torn down and flourishing commercial streets were the ubiquitous form of public space. In the era of Treaty Port and Republic, a 'dual system' developed: traditional street patterns largely existed in inland, remote areas, tightly related to the daily public needs; while urban landscapes 'in the Western line' were built in major cities, arguably mainly serving the social-economic elites. After 1949 the Communist Party broadly produced the danwei model in the city, re-establishing walled and gated physical environments based on production and inward communal life. Streets were then largely reduced to either traffic corridors or politicised areas. Since the late 1970s, with ranges of early-forbidden ideologies such as marketisation and commercialisation again approved to be legitimised and necessary, walls of danwei compounds have been considerably torn down and their within fields been reinvented into new commercial spaces which have attracted the public back to streets to retrieve cheerful public life. Particularly since the early 1990s, pedestrianisation has been drastically intensified as an effective strategy of promoting consumption and shaping city images, and thus resulted in the emergence of huge CPDs in the central areas of large cities, which now become perhaps the most recognisable form of central public space of Chinese cities.

In sum, if there has been an implicit continuity in this long evolution, three pairs of dual terms can be perhaps suggested: **power politics/commercial society, control/disengagement, and wall/street**. When Chinese cities were under the domination of power politics with extremely strong political-economic ideologies such as the centralised feudal governments or the early Communist regime, they tended to put both the spatial form of the city and behavioural patterns of citizens under strict organisation and control. The 'wall' became a significant element dividing and

confining urban spaces; people were walled and gated with their socialisation usually happening within fortress-like environments more than in outside open places; streets were isolated from neighbourhoods and commercial activities were discouraged so that the quality of public life was hardly satisfactory. In contrast, when the power politics were weakened and decentralised, or its strong political-economic ideologies were amended according to realistic desires of both the state and the public, commercial pursuits usually became the most powerful force reshaping urban space. Walls were torn down with the inside environments supplanted by commercial milieus with higher public accessibility. People were then disengaged from their tightly-adhered social and physical organisations, and the streets returned to become the locus of public place with more usage potentials. Such a repetition, broadly interpreted, has composed the central theme of the evolution of China's urban space. However, this conclusion does not suggest that the streets led by contemporary commercialisation are problem-free. On the contrary, when they have evolved into today's CPDs which are so bound up with strong consumption desires, it is hard for them to avoid the contemporary debate about the public use of consumption-based public space (see *Chapter 2*). With this inquiry, the next chapter will further discuss China's four largest CPDs, to investigate their historical development and present social and physical manifestations.

# Chapter 5

## Survey: a rapid review of China's four largest CPDs

### 5-1 Introduction

*Chapter 4* highlights how China's urban space has changed over the centuries and why. With this overall understanding, this chapter looks at how the 'central districts' of cities have developed historically. As discussed in *Chapter 2*, in the Western context, traditional city/town centres were a key part of the public domain as they offered public buildings, open squares and streets which contained both civic and festival events. In the contemporary period, they however strongly feature the 'arenas of consumption' as they are used as the concentration site of retailing, commercialised entertainment and 'corporate' development (Evans 1997: 5). Therefore, many critics are concerned about the 'loss of publicness' of the public realm in these central areas. However, many consider that change 'a transformation rather than a decline' as city centres are still largely providing universal access and public usages (Brill 1989). Some Western authors argue that the public life in city centres should be viewed always from a 'transitional' perspective (Loukaiou-Sideris and Banerjee 1998, Madanipour 1996b). In the light of these perceptions, this chapter introduces the rapid, qualitative survey in China's four largest CPDs (i.e., *Central Street* in Harbin, *Nanjing Road* in Shanghai, *Wang Fujing* in Beijing, and *Xin Jiekou* in Nanjing; for localities, see Appendix 1) to answer the second research question - *Along with the overall evolution of urban space, how particularly have the 'central districts' in large Chinese cities been transformed into consumption-based CPDs, and then how in general are they physically formed and socially used today?* There are five sections. The first four sections follow the epoch division that is set up in *Chapter 4*, respectively examining these four CPDs over four different stages: the *traditional period* (as none of them were initiated in early traditional cities, the early and the late traditional periods are merged here), the *Treaty-Port and Republican period*, the *pre-market period*, and the *contemporary period*. Different periods reveal different 'development themes' that present the basic socio-spatial similarities shared by these CPDs. These themes are suggested in the subtitles of the periodisation (see below). Meanwhile, these CPDs exhibit diverse socio-physical characteristics that represent the subtle differences between them during each historic period, and these are presented as a series of

subtitles within every section. These themes and characteristics construct a fundamental 'comparative framework' which helps to comprehend the transition of these central districts and their dynamic 'publicness'. In the final section, this framework is fully analysed to provide concrete answers to the research question.

## 5-2 Traditional period: exclusion and marginalisation of public space

*Chapter 4* concludes that during the traditional period major Chinese cities were heavily dominated by power politics. The following discussion will show that this was particularly the case in Wang Fujing because Beijing was the host city for the emperor's administrative court for centuries. Shanghai was otherwise among the cities which were influenced by the Western colonist culture (another type of power politics) quite earlier than others. This inevitably gave Nanjing Road different characteristics. Central Street and Xin Jiekou, however, arguably characterised the unattractive side of the 'dual system' of urban environments at the time (see *Chapter 4*) as they had remained 'marginal' places of the city up to the early twentieth century.

### 5-2-1 Potential exclusion of general public uses, Wang Fujing and Nanjing Road

The Wang Fujing district is located within the central area of Beijing and just two blocks east of the Forbidden Palace. Initiated in the fifteenth century, it was originally designated as the residence district of the highest ranking princes and nobles due to its proximity to the Palace. Ten princes' mansions were built up along one main street of this district and a public well was placed on the west side, which gave this street its current name: *Wang Fujing*, 'the Well of the Princely Mansion' (Xu 2005). Up to the late nineteenth century, the streets of Wang Fujing were lined with courtyard houses of imperial families and high nobles in many parts (Broudehoux 2004). Many of these houses were enclaves with high walls and limited entrances to the outside environment so that the whole area became 'a sea of walls' (Zhu 2004). Mundane public uses were not largely encouraged in these places except that from the nineteenth century onwards imperial edicts/announcements were posted along the street walls for the public to read.

In Shanghai, Nanjing Road was not developed until the middle nineteenth century. Initiated in the Bund Area, one of the British settlements after the first Opium War (1840-1842), the earliest part of the Nanjing Road was termed Park Lane. In 1840s it was a narrow alley linking a Western

horse-racing track and the surrounding foreigners' terrace or detached houses to the eastern quay (He and Wang 1998). The most common scene on the street was the leisurely horse riding of the foreigners rather than general activities of the locals. Consequently the Lane was often termed as *malu* which meant 'the path for horses', now meaning 'road' in Chinese (Shimpress 2006). In contrast to Wang Fujing, Nanjing Road appeared mainly dominated by colonial interests, rather than the emperor's commandments. But what was common in both places was the absence of civic and communal activities or events, which arguably indicated a potential exclusion of the local public.

## 5-2-2 Underdeveloped physical condition, Central Street and Xin Jiekou

Central Street and Xin Jiekou, however, in their early days faced another different problem: the physical condition of streets in many smaller or remote Chinese cities was very underdeveloped so that their capacity to contain diverse social uses appeared relatively weak. In Harbin, about 1,010 kilometres northeast of Beijing, the commercial functions and the overall sanitary infrastructures of the city's central area, later known as the Central Street, were not adequately developed until the 1850s. In Nanjing, about 300 kilometres west of Shanghai, the Xin Jiekou ('New Crossroad' in Chinese) area, which is now the central district of the city, until the early 1920s had only been featured as a narrow crossroad surrounded by 'crude and squalid' houses with wasted lands and ponds in the rear (Lu 1997: 10). Little literature records the public activities in Central Street and Xin Jiekou at their initial stages. It can be presumed that diverse, 'civilised' social uses might be difficult to create in these places at the time due to their constraining physical conditions.

## 5-3 Treaty-Port and Republican period: creating Western character in public space

As discussed in *Chapter 4*, since the early twentieth century Western commercial forces started to heavily influence many large Chinese cities. This accordingly transformed the socio-spatial pattern of the urban central district. But the following will show that the intensity of transformation varied in different places: Wang Fujing seemed to have reinvented the traditional Chinese street culture by having some shops adopting Western appearances but serving grass-roots communities; Nanjing Road and Central Street however received heavier westernisation by accommodating more foreign businesses and modern infrastructures so that they created a quasi-western 'urban ambience'; while in Xin Jiekou, westernisation was largely coupled with the political needs of the Nanjing city, the

Republican capital at the time. In all, in contrast to the traditional period, all these places began to develop higher socio-spatial varieties.

### 5-3-1 Transformed into an eclectic commercial milieu, Wang Fujing

Foreign businesses began to spread along the streets of Beijing in the 1910s. Wang Fujing was one of the earliest Beijing streets to be paved with asphalt and equipped with electricity. The shops along the street presented an eclectic mix of both Chinese and Western architectural styles. For instance, the Dong An Market (Eastern Peace Market) erected in 1912, introduced the European arcade elements such as interior streets, covered walkways and skylights; whilst it functioned as a covered, bargain market which was accessible to the local community. Arlington and Lewisohn (1935 in Broudehoux 2004: 102) noted that the Market was like '*a kind of covered-in miniature town of its own, crammed with small shops and stalls, where you can buy anything...at very reasonable prices*' (Figure 5.1). The street itself offered opportunities too for people to mingle on its sidewalks, often through commercial activities: '*Shops selling almost every imaginable article... are on each side of the big passageway, while in the center are tables or stalls on which are spread out brassware, notions, tongue scrapers, combs, chopsticks, fruit, candies. All of the tables are cleared every night, the unsold goods being carried away in big baskets*' (Gamble 1921 in Broudehoux 2004: 103). By the 1940s, Wang Fujing had been successfully transformed from an exclusive noble place to a commercialised milieu with an eclectic physical character. Popular with both the locals and the visitors, it became the public attraction of the city that nobody could afford to miss (Lin 1928 in Broudehoux 2004).

**Figure 5.1** Dong An Market in 1910s: the European-arcade style was introduced into Wang Fujing, symbolising the influence of the Western commercial culture. But unlike its Western counterparts which mainly served the high and middle-class customers, the Dong An Market functioned more like a bargain place popular with wider groups of people (Source: Broudehoux 2004).

### 5-3-2 Radical redevelopment in Western line, Nanjing Road

In Shanghai, the westernisation in urban redevelopment appeared much more radical. In 1856 the Park Lane was transformed from a narrow alley to a major artery and renamed as Nanjing Road because it extended towards the orientation of Nanjing. During the following five decades it was constantly redeveloped along a dominant Western line. Between 1905 and 1911, the street was constantly widened with 40 per cent of the lands alongside the Road transferred into real-estate properties. In 1908 the ground was repaved with ironwoods, and tramways were introduced. Foreign companies had started to set up a series of branches along the street, including the Hall Haltz, the Lane Crawford, HSBC, the Palace Hotel, the Sincere, etc. (Dalu 2006). In the 1930s, the westernisation in architecture and streetscape became very dominant so that by appearance the Road presented little differentiation from its Western counterparts. Serving the needs of modern traffic flow rather than spontaneous communal activities, the Road did not offer much consideration of the traditional Chinese street culture, which Wang Fujing had still retained to some extent (Figure 5.2).



**Figure 5.2** Nanjing Road between 1920s and 1930s: it was highly westernised in terms of its architecture and streetscape. Modern vehicles gained a certain extent of dominance over the middle of the Road, and on some particular occasions, the Road would serve as the 'parade lane' for the colonial military forces.
(Source: http://www.fotoe.com/image_detail.php?Id=10157230)

### 5-3-3 Initiative rooted from Western style, Central Street

Harbin's development lagged behind Beijing and Shanghai due to its remote locality. The Russian colonists intruded into this area in the late nineteenth century and began to transform this city into an

industrial and trading hub in north China. In 1898 a street named China Street was constructed in the central district of Harbin to function as an important trading hinge, as well as a traffic artery of the city. According to *Harbin and its suburban planning* formulated by Russian planners in 1903, the built form of the Street was intended to be developed into a 'classical European pattern'. During the following two decades, lots of Russian, Jewish, and Japanese shops opened along the street. In 1925 it was officially renamed as Central Street; whilst its length was extended to 1,450 m and its width to 21.34 m, so that it then became the longest commercial street in Asia (Sun and Fu 1998: 31). In 1930s migrants from more than 30 countries had already resided here. New buildings were introduced in diverse European architectural styles including Baroque, Classicalism, Eclecticism, Art Nouveau, etc. (Li 2003). Gradually, the street was forged into a boulevard-like place: shop frontages were decorated with Western awnings and signs, luxurious items were displayed in large-size shopwindows, wooden seats were placed along the curbs, and people were leisurely wandering over the street - in summers women were dressed in exotic skirts; while in winters Russian carriages were frequently cruising for fares. In 1930s this street was nicknamed as 'the oriental small Paris' (Song 2001) (Figure 5.3).



**Figure 5.3** Central Street in 1930s: like Nanjing Road, the Central Street was also heavily westernised; but in many respects it functioned as a 'multiway' boulevard serving well both the pedestrians and the traffic. And in contrast to Nanjing Road, these photos seem to show a more relaxing ambience of this place.
(Source:http://www.postcardxp.com/hrbfg/hrbfg10.htm,
http://www.ce.cn/newtravel/lvzt/heblyx/fgwx/200512/28/W020051228621086114742.jpg&imgrefur)

### 5-3-4 'Grafting of Western bud onto a Chinese tree', Xin Jiekou

The Western approach to place-making inspired some other secondary Chinese cities. With an intention of 'grafting of a Western bud onto a Chinese tree', they had tried to reinvent their urban spaces according to the Western standards (Cody 1996: 341). Xin Jiekou was a product of that attempt. In 1927 the Republican government designated Nanjing as the provisional national capital and soon started its 'Capital Beautification Movement'. Massive old structures in Xin Jiekou were torn down and the streets were widened into 'modern boulevards' (Cody 1996). The intersection

area of these streets (the Crossroad) was built into a circular square in memory of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, the first President of the Republic. Its form showed a direct imitation of a Western monumental pattern: the centre was a raised circular stage paved with granite, encircled by a wide flower border; and surrounding the square were laid a pitched vehicle lane and concreted walkways (Lu 1997: 10). The square began to be used for some civic and political functions, such as Dr. Sun's anniversaries and official political propagandas; whilst in general it was used as a communal place where the locals could gather and meet. High-rise buildings (banks, offices, and public institutions) were subsequently erected around the square, and shops mushroomed in the adjacent properties (Luo 2000). By the 1940s, Xin Jiekou had evolved from an underdeveloped area into the most important civic and commercial centre of Nanjing (Figure 5.4).
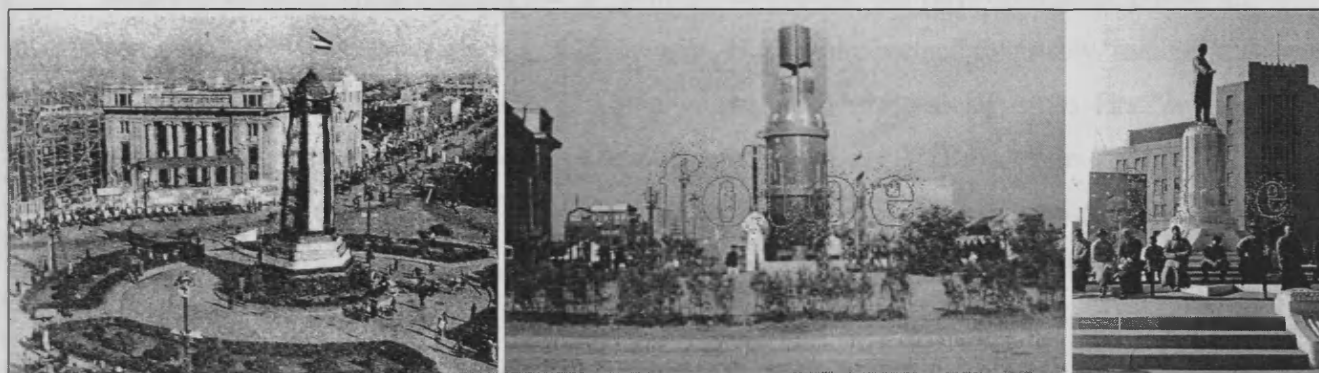


**Figure 5.4** Xin Jiekou Square presented a clear imitation of a Western monumental pattern. *Left*: in the 1930s it staged a political propaganda tower. *Middle*: in 1937 a bomb model was placed on this square reminding the citizens of the immediate danger of the Sino-Japanese war. *Right*: generally it was used as a gathering place for the locals to sit and chat, beneath the statue of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen.
(Source: http://www.fotoe.com/image_detail.php?Id=20006051,
http://www.fotoe.com/image_detail.php?Id=10151047)

## 5-4 Pre-market period: deterioration of public space

In 1949, the Communist Party came to power. As stated in *Chapter 4*, the Party sought to achieve new Chinese socialist cities with 'classless' and 'uniform socio-economic' characteristics. This first led to a radical nationalisation of land and shops in all the central districts of cities, which inevitably imposed significant influences on the 'social ambience' of these places. And then, similar to what happened in the Western cities around the same period of time (see *Chapter 2*), the Party boldly adopted modernist approaches to 'update' these areas. The consequence was that each of these places to different extent lost their 'physical distinctiveness' and 'capacity for socialisation'. And finally, as will be shown, the 'politicisation of the public realm' between the 1960s and the 1970s

further aggravated the 'deterioration' of public spaces.

## 5-4-1 Retained as public centres in a socialist way, Wang Fujing and Nanjing Road

In Wang Fujing, all shops were required to alter their Western or old Chinese characters after 1949. Famous shop signs such as 'Jelly Belly, Tailor' and 'Whole World & Co.' were removed, and many traditional Chinese shop signs bearing old names were also replaced by more 'revolutionary' ones. Foreign enterprises were forced to leave and private shops were nationalised. The Dong An Market was converted into a state-run enterprise in 1956, being required to sell only national products at fixed prices. All these led to a gradual decline of Wang Fujing's commercial atmosphere: *'famous shop windows were gradually left empty'* (Broudehoux 2004: 105). But the government did not intend to diminish Wang Fujing's role as Beijing's city centre; the physical redevelopment still constantly progressed, however, in a 'socialist way'. But the aim seemed to visually 'sanitise' and functionally 'reduce' this place, rather than otherwise to strengthen its social usages. First *'beggars were no longer visible... as they were sent back to their home towns...'* (Broudehoux 2004: 105). In order to 'clean and uniform' the 'face' of this district, numbers of 4-6 storey, state-run shops were built up along the street, replacing the traditional small shops with frontages which had similar door and window forms, grey brick walls and minimalised decorative elements. Meanwhile hundreds of old houses were hidden behind these stark 'faces' (Figure 5.5). Several 'socialist landmarks' were introduced between the 1950s and the 1970s, including the Beijing Department Store, the biggest department store of the country at the time, and the Beijing Hotel, Beijing's tallest building in the 1970s. These mega structures to some extent retained Wang Fujing's position as Beijing's major commercial district; but on the other hand, they further expelled the former bargain retailing and market niches. The 'modernisation of traffic' also prevailed in the 1960s: a motor-vehicle lane was paved in the middle of the street and trams were introduced into this area. The 1940s' streetscape crowded with spontaneous commercial activities was then largely gone; Wang Fujing gradually became a visually unimaginative and functionally simplified place (Figure 5.6).

**Figure 5.5** Wang Fujing in 1960s: the middle of the street served as a motor lane with walkways for pedestrians on either side. Large numbers of old buildings were hidden behind the 'sanitised', uniform 'socialist' shops so that the former eclectic architectural pattern was largely lost (Source: Xu 2005).



**Figure 5.6** Wang Fujing in 1980s: after thirty years of socialist redevelopment Wang Fujing became a 'mediocre' place (Source: Xu 2005).

In Shanghai, the Nanjing Road followed a similar evolution. All the shops and lands along the street were nationalised, and private real-estate development was no longer allowed. Due to the fact that Shanghai had a high concentration of colonies, the government paid particular attention to the 'street sanitation' in order to sweep out all the 'capitalist remnants'. Former shop signs and awnings were largely supplanted by political banners which awakened the public to 'the serious and

complex condition of the ruthless class battle' (He and Wang 1998; Zheng and Wang 1999) (Figure 5.7). A traffic 'update' was also undertaken. The tramlines built by foreigners in the 1910s were removed from the Road in the 1950s which, ironically, was shortly before trams were firstly introduced into Wang Fujing in Beijing. The western entrance area to the Road was redeveloped into a vast parking ground accommodating public buses. Furthermore, above the street overpasses were constructed and along the curbs hard railings were erected. All of these weakened the access of the pedestrians to the street, transforming Nanjing Road into a pure traffic corridor (Figure 5.8). By the early 1980s, Nanjing Road had been developed into an 'inefficient' environment. Although it retained its position as Shanghai's city centre, its public activities were spatially and temporally constrained. Mr. Yang (Source: random interview), an old Shanghaier, recalls that there were two busiest moments on the Road in that period: in the mornings people crowded on the sidewalks doing exercises before going to work; in the evenings people off work walked along the street, but usually it was so congested that the strolling could become extremely 'exhausting' (Figure 5.9).



**Figure 5.7** Political slogans hung above the shops in Nanjing Road, 1960s -1970s: they were part of the 'street sanitation', adding explicit political meanings to the Road.
(Source: http://club.pchome.net/topic_2_3_60512_7__.html)

**Figure 5.8** A series of modern traffic 'updates' had been undertaken in Nanjing Road between 1950s and 1970s. *Left*: the western entrance area to the Road was redeveloped into a parking ground. *Middle* and *Right*: hard rails, specific traffic lanes, and overpasses were largely constructed on the street.
(Source: http://www.autoers.org allsun, http://club.pchome.net/topic_2_3_60512_7__.html)
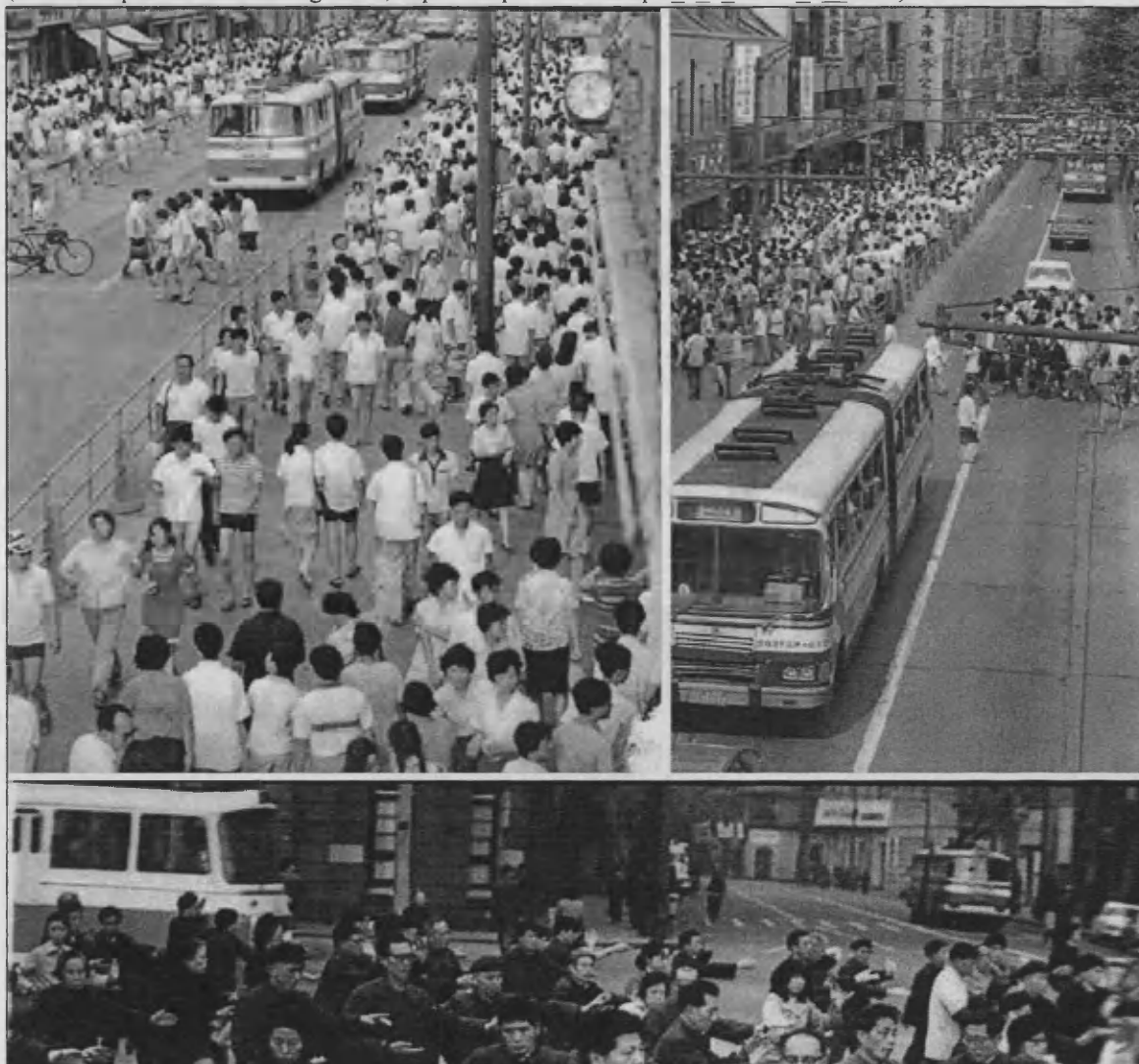


**Figure 5.9** By 1980s Nanjing Road had become inefficient in terms of its capacity of supporting healthy, diverse public uses. *Bottom*: people had to crowd on the sidewalks to do morning exercise. *Top*: the high-congestion in the street could make the evening stroll rather 'exhausting'.
(Source: http://club.pchome.net/topic_2_3_60512_7__.html)

### 5-4-2 Politicised streets with less concern for public realm, Central Street and Xin Jiekou

In Harbin, the Central Street suffered severe decline due to the civil war in the 1940s. Fortunately, its spatial pattern and buildings remained basically intact. Between the 1950s and the 1960s the Street retrieved its popularity as a public attraction of the city. The local people enjoyed meeting each other within the newly-added pavilions in the street. But on the other hand, the European-life

atmosphere that had penetrated the street in the 1930s was now largely dissolved. The foreign shops with their exotic names were supplanted by the state-run enterprises with signs made of large-scale, iron-framed red characters, 'to air the great victory and achievement of the socialist China', the old Russian carriages were replaced by modern red Soviet buses, and foreigners' strolling over the street were rarely seen. By the 1960s, no longer 'the oriental small Paris', the Street was termed 'the oriental Moscow' (Wu and Guo 2006: 102) (Figure 5.10). After the late 1960s, the trend to 'politicise' the Street became further evident. In 1968 it was renamed as the Anti-Revisionism Street. Political parades increasingly congested the Street, and often the shop frontages were pasted with fierce political slogans. As a result, the commercial activity declined and the local government appeared no longer concerned with the quality of the public realm. The *Harbin Local History Office* (2007) documents that between 1965 and 1975 the daily retail turnover of the Street had declined to the lowest rate since the 1950s, and some normal maintenance such as the street watering for cleansing had completely ceased.



**Figure 5.10** Central Street in the 1950s was still the main public attraction of the city, but it was now 'the oriental Moscow' rather than 'Paris' - note the Soviet red buses and the red political banners hung over the architraves of buildings that added political meanings to the Street.
(Source: http://www.ce.cn/newtravel/lvzt/heblyx/fgwx/200512/28/W020051228621086114742.jpg&imgrefurl)

In Nanjing, the politicised usage of the street appeared more symbolic as it was the capital of the old regime. Particularly in 1949 when the Communist Party took over the city, Xin Jiekou turned into a political-image promulgator. Several authors note how the place of Xin Jiekou was utilised to render the triumph of the communist: '*On 23rd April 1949 the People's Liberation Army conquered Nanjing. The local people crowded in Xin Jiekou, singing and dancing, greeting the entering*

*solders. The Xin Jiekou Square became a sea of happiness'* (Lu 1997: 11); whilst *'the figures of the leaders, the flying of flags, the cannons in rows, the moving parades and the population in cheering* [around the Square]...*altogether witnessed the radical historical transformation of 1949'* (Luo 2000). During the following three decades, the Xin Jiekou Square was frequently used as a demonstration site for political events: *'After the establishment of the new Chinese regime, the local government made several efforts to preserve the Square; it was still the central square of Nanjing... On National Days* [10th October] *or in other grand festivals, people came out of their houses and flowed into this area; the Square therefore was used as the reviewing stage, like the Tian Anmen Square in Beijing'* (Lu 1997: 11). On the other hand, however, very few efforts were made to sustain the Square as a normal meeting place for the people, as it was in the 1940s. On normal days it was used as a functional roundabout to organise the traffic routes, usually devoid of substantial social uses. The surrounding commercial and civic buildings built in the Republican period were dismantled, making way for further traffic-lane expansion. And the immediate streets became lined by segments of danwei-compound walls, or buildings with dull 'socialist facades'. Eventually by the early 1980s, the physical outcome of the Capital Beautification Movement of the 1930s had been largely erased. Xin Jiekou became a 'deteriorated' area with low commercial vitality and a visually less-distinctive public realm (Wang 2001) (Figure 5.11).
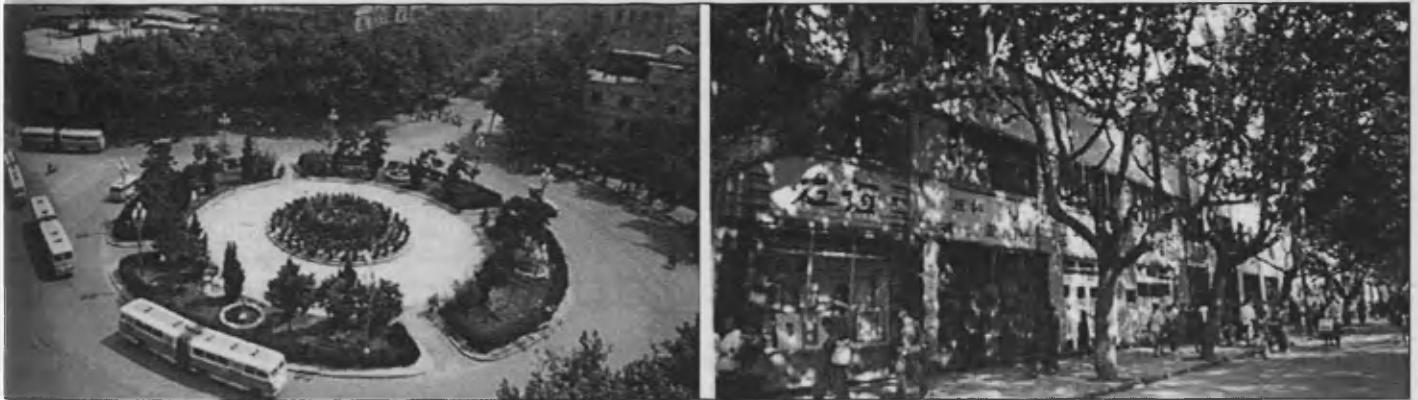


**Figure 5.11** Xin Jiekou between 1960s and 1970s. *Left*: the Square now became a roundabout which in political events was used as a reviewing stage. *Right*: lined by 'socialist frontages', the street presented a lower extent of commercial vitality than its early 'golden age' (Source: http://www.jinlinghotel.com/CN/hotel/jinling/photos.asp).

## 5-5 Contemporary period: the impacts of new consumerism on public space

As revealed in *Chapter 4*, China announced its economic reform in 1978 and this started the rapid promotion and adoption of consumerism as part of its official ideology in place-making. A new

wave of redevelopment in the central districts of cities emerged. Pedestrianisation was widely chosen by local governments as an effective approach to improving city centres. It was a substantial step for these areas to develop into the 'Central Pedestrian Districts' of cities. On the one hand, modernist impulses that prevailed between the 1950s and the 1970s began to diminish in these CPDs as they increasingly presented 'post-modern' characteristics (e.g., appearing eclectic in style, encouraging pedestrian movement, arguing for a return to streets and so on. See the discussion in *Chapter 2*). On the other hand, they also began to display the character of contemporary place-making in the 'consumption era', in that they were treated by local governments as 'enhancing settings of commercialisation' to attract more visitors and private capital. Based on the literature we have reviewed in *Chapter 2*, they presented the 'dual character' of public space used for commercial purposes, i.e., imposing both 'enabling' and 'constraining' impacts on the socio-spatial pattern of the city. Because of the complexity and variety in their respective development process, both commonalities and differences in terms of physical form and social usage will be presented in the following. And these will be synthesised in the conclusions.

## 5-5-1 Radical revival of eclectic socio-physical pattern, Wang Fujing

In Beijing, the post-1978 government was concerned with Wang Fujing's deteriorated environment which failed to act as a 'decent' commercial centre on behalf of the capital city. The total length of the Wang Fujing Street was 740 m, and its average street width was 25 m which consisted of one 9-metre motor lane and two 8-metre side sidewalks. It regularly became over-crowded during peak hours: on average each pedestrian on the street only possessed 4.03 $m^2$ walkable spaces around himself/herself, which made the street 'a corridor of movement', rather than a place for people to stay and wander (Rui 1998: 38).

In 1992 the government started its pedestrianisation scheme for Wang Fujing. Mostly completed in 2001, the scheme creates 840-metre fully-pedestrianised or semi-pedestrianised street sections in total. Wang Fujing's central part now becomes a pedestrian street with its side lands renewed into highly commerce-based sites - retail shops and food sales take the majority, and the rest are also regular 'downtown settings' such as banks, offices and shopping malls (Figure 5.12; Table 5.1). In comparison with the pre-market period, Wang Fujing is now disengaged with its 1970s' traffic function, offering more pedestrian spaces; on the other hand it shows a much higher level of

commercialisation by providing denser and more diverse consumption items.
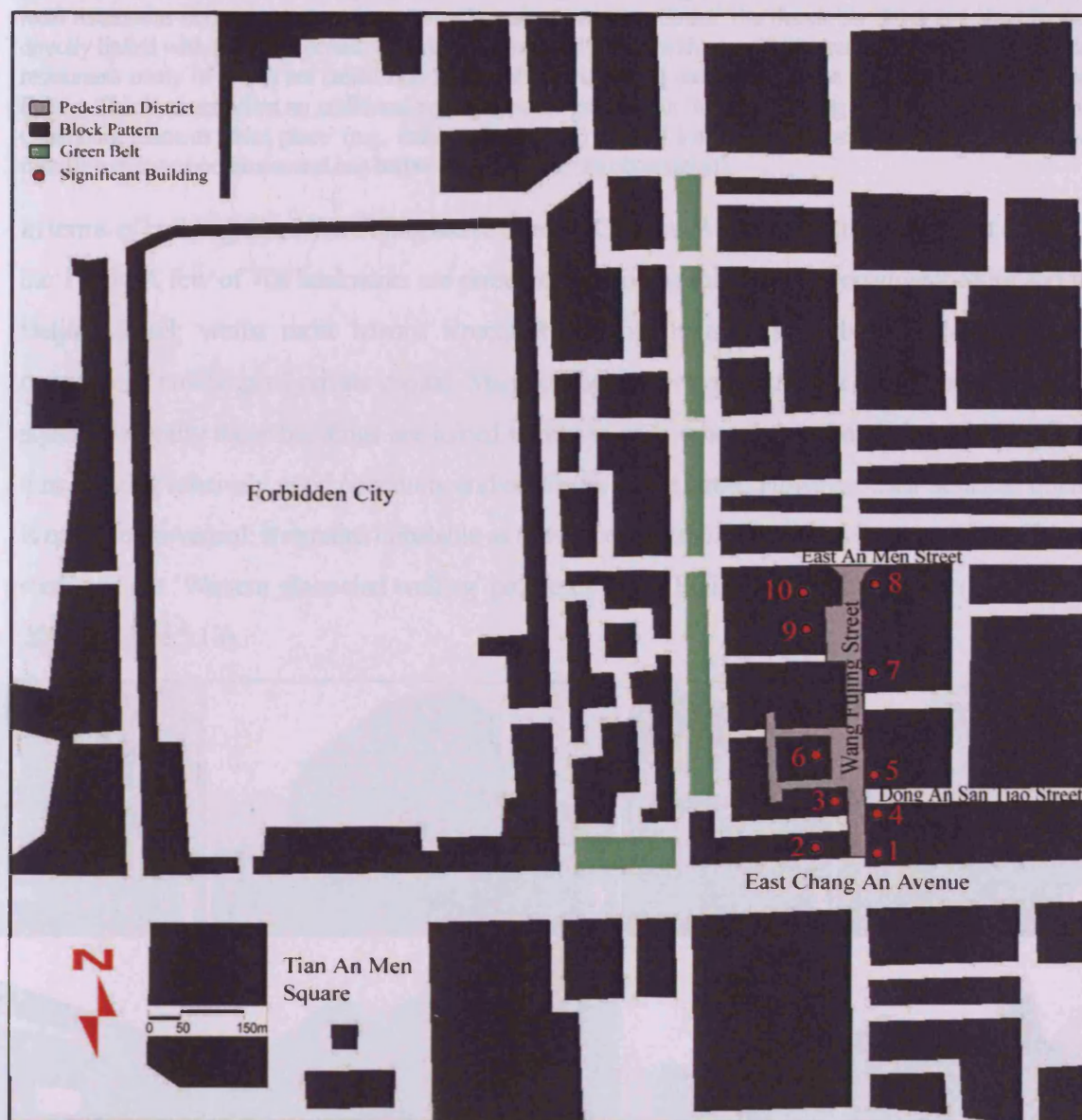


**Figure 5.12** Street pattern of Wang Fujing: linking the East Chang An Avenue at the south end with the East An Men Street at the north, Wang Fujing's central part is now a linear pedestrian street, consisting of one 600-metre fully-pedestrianised section and one adjoining 240-metre semi-pedestrianised section. Generally the renewed street has respected the existing urban fabric, establishing appropriate accessibility and permeability within its surrounding environments (Source: adapted from the author's survey; also see Appendix 2 for a bigger map of the city).

**Table 5.1**: Shop Style(s) and Number(s) of Wang Fujing

| Small Retailer(s) | Eating and Drinking | Bank(s) | Department Store(s) | Office(s) | Shopping-Mall Complex(es) | Hotel(s) | Others |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 72[1] | 11[2] | 5 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 3[3] |

Note: **1.** Wang Fujing contains an adequate number of small retailers. They provide a range of sale including clothing (30), watch (11), jewellery (10), digital item (8), native handcraft and souvenir (5), glasses (4) and

pharmacy (4). Most of these retailers are in small or middle-sized shop units. However, it is observed that they generally sell their items at relatively high prices. **2.** Eating and drinking consists of a mixture of fast-food shops (5), local restaurants (2), cafes, teas or ice-cream (3), and a Snack-bar Street. The Snack-bar Street is a short bystreet directly linked with the main pedestrian street; it is narrowly lined with some thirty traditional food stalls and tiny restaurants many of which are called *Lao Zihao* (old brand name) dated back to the traditional period of Wang Fujing. This bystreet offers an additional resting area for people; but 'informal' eating and drinking places which Oldenburg terms as 'third place' (e.g., cafes and teas, etc.) are still inadequate on the main street. **3.** The others include two large bookstores and one barber shop (Source: site observation).

In terms of building form, Wu Fujing has revived its Chinese-Western eclectic pattern that existed in the 1940s. A few of 70s landmarks are preserved, including the Beijing Department Store and the Beijing Hotel; whilst most Maoist structures and old housing have been replaced by new commercial buildings of private capital. Many of them are mega structures in various architectural styles. Generally these buildings are joined tightly to each other, rather than being 'freestanding', thus creating relatively good continuity and enclosure of the street. However, their aesthetic quality is quite controversial: it remains debatable as to what extent the mixture between the 'huge Chinese roof' and the 'Western glass-clad walling' promotes Wang Fujing's physical identity (Broudehoux 2004) (Figure 5.13).



**Figure 5.13** Building composition of Wang Fujing (for number reference, see *Figure 5.12*: 1-Oriental Plaza, 2-Beijing Hotel, 3-Ladies' Department Store, 4-Wang Fujing Bookstore, 5-Gong Mei Mansion, 6-Hao You World Mansion, 7-Dan Yao Mansion, 8-Sun Dong An Plaza, 9-Beijing Department Store, 10-Wai Wen Bookstore). The eclectic pattern that was evident in 1940s is now arguably revived, in a more radical way. These new buildings create relatively good enclosure and continuity of the street; but in terms of architectural character, their contribution to the 'sense of place' remains questionable (Source: photo taken by the author).

Effort has been also paid to the provision of public settings. Public facilities including parking-guide boards, vendor booths, post boxes and planters are placed in the street, contributing to a sense of

convenience and comfort. Particularly the Snack-bar Street, a secondary alley which is full of traditional food and souvenir stalls and connects with the main street, provides large numbers of eating and drinking areas where people can rest at an affordable price (Figure 5.14). However, seats in the main street are subject to great demand. Currently there are 45 benches together able to contain at most 360 people (Source: site observation), which means that most visitors may have to look for some 'informal' elements to sit on, e.g., borders and steps. Unfortunately, the 'adaptability' and the extent of comfort of these elements are hardly satisfactory. Besides, many landscape elements appear bland, lacking a positive relationship to this place (Figure 5.15).



**Figure 5.14** The Snack-bar Street proves to be a good place for the public to take a stroll or rest; full of open eating and drinking sites, it to some extent resembles the 'cappuccino society' in Western cities, but also it arguably revives the traditional street culture of Wang Fujing which was featured by cramming stalls and huge amounts of affordable 'street consumption' (Source: photo taken by the author).

**Figure 5.15** *Top*, *Bottom left and middle*: Seating in the main street is quite inadequate; while the 'adaptability' of other physical settings is not satisfactory - people sometimes have to sit in the flowing crowd or on an awkward border. *Bottom right*: the historical context of this place is not well integrated into the design of public settings - the *well*, the original symbol of Wang Fujing, is left in a quite remote corner (Source: photo taken by the author).

As regards the maintenance and management, the streets are generally kept clean and in order. And similar to many other public environments over the world, some activities are forbidden on the street including *unlicensed vending*, *spitting*, *littering* and *random parking*. Security guards hired by the public agency can be seen in many places. But at the time of the observation, there was no sign of over-strict surveillance or control (such as extensive CCTV monitoring or frequent policing patrolling) on the street (Figure 5.16).



**Figure 5.16** *Left*: the instruction board at the street entrance indicates that four types of activities are forbidden on the street: *unlicensed vending*, *spitting*, *littering* and *random parking*. *Right three pictures*: Security guards hired by the public agency are often seen, but there is no sign of over-strict surveillance on the street. (Source: photo taken by the author).

The renewed Wang Fujing is now popular with the people - its daily visitor level is 600,000 and on vacation days is 1,200,000 (CCWSC 2006). It is observed that people are enjoying more diverse activities than they could in the 1980s: they now wander, linger, stand, watch, talk with each other, ride bicycles and take photos on the street. And the overall adaptability of the environment is generally evident. Commercial promotions frequently happen at several fixed points, drawing much attention of passers-by, while public-welfare events, such as the call for blood donation, also have their opportunities (Figure 5.17). Several people interviewed by the researcher praised this place (Source: random interview): Mr. Lin, a retired worker, sees Wang Fujing more 'flourishing and refreshing' than the 1970s so that he enjoys 'killing the retirement hours' here; Mr. Rong says that *'Honestly I am not interested with shopping on the street. But I do enjoy the Snack-bar Street; that is definitely a resort of mine'*. However, a number of people complain that the shopping malls and department stores in Wang Fujing hardly interest them and there should be more tea houses, cafes

and 'cultural settings'. This reflects the fact that Wang Fujing's land use may rely too much on high-end shopping items while ignoring broader social and cultural requirements. Additional evidence is that only one quarter of the daily visitors spend money in Wang Fujing, while the rest '*cannot find really interesting and cost-efficient items to buy*' (CCWSC 2006).



**Figure 5.17** Wang Fujing's public uses varying from individual social behaviours to commercial and welfare promotions (Source: photo taken by the author).

## 5-5-2 New Western ideas: the 'Golden Line', Nanjing Road

In Shanghai the government began Najing Road's pedestrianisation in 1996. Based on the primary aim to upgrade the 'inefficient' environment, three 'requirements' were set out: the scheme must help Shanghai create an 'international economic and trading centre', help Shanghai keep its first place in China's internal commerce, and help enhance local tourism (Zheng and Wang 1999: 47). An urban-design competition was deployed and a French team Arte Charpentier + La Defense was selected. The central idea of the French was that the Road should enable the people to both move well and be at their ease (Source: Shanghai Urban Planning Bureau). Their approach was to provide a series of coherent 'paths and places' by laying a 4.2-meter-wide linear pavement made of dark-red granites, termed the 'Golden Line', through the whole street, while the pavements of either side of the Line were paved light and grey. The side sections were to be used as 'paths' on which people could move fast over the street, while the Line itself was to offer concentrations of seats, plants, booths, lamps, etc., so that people could linger within this area without disturbance from the moving passers-by. Moreover, the French designers suggested that the parking land at the entrance of the Road be developed into a public park, and in the middle section of the Road an open square should

be created. Furthermore, detailed guidelines for the preservation of historical buildings were also developed. After three years of construction, the fully-pedestrianised Road was opened in 1999. It became a pedestrian strip stretching from the heart of Shanghai's CBD toward the Bund area (Figure 5.18).
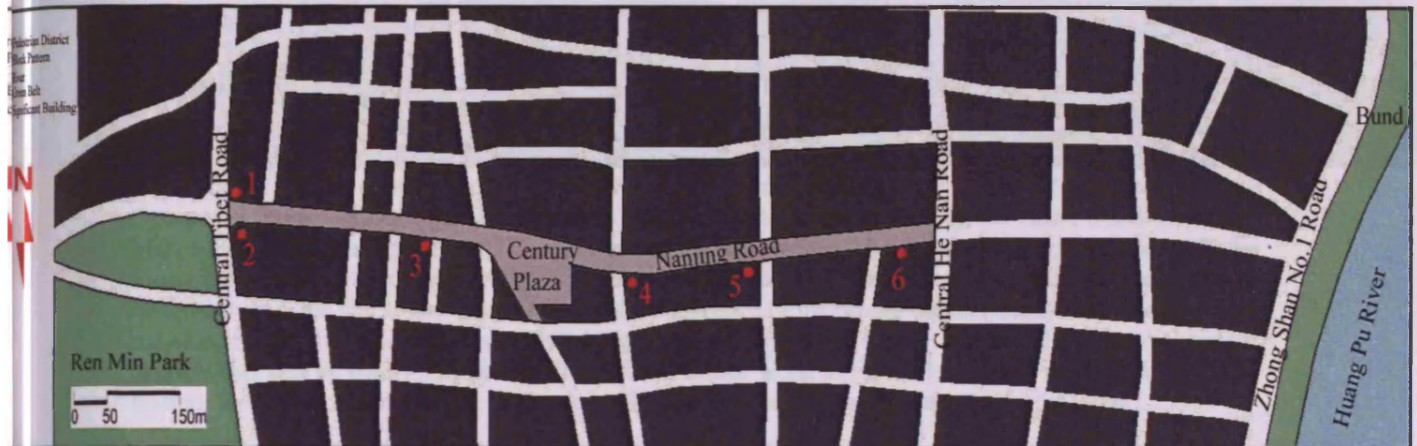


**Figure 5.18** Street pattern of Nanjing Road: the Road's length is now 1,030 m and its average street width is 28 m. Starting from the Central Tibet Road at the west and ending towards the Central He Nan Road at the east, the pedestrianised Road now links the central part of Shanghai's CBD with the Bund area, both the concentration site of population and commercial activities. Without much breach of the old urban pattern, about 15 secondary roads and streets are linked to the Road. Thus the overall accessibility and permeability of the Road is relatively well attained (Source: adapted from the author's survey; also see Appendix 3 for a bigger map of the city).

The renewed Road has since achieved a huge commercial success: its total annual turnover is 11.6 billion yuan, and its daily population flow is 800,000 and reaches 1,290,000 at weekends (Source: Shanghai Urban Planning Bureau). Meanwhile it has brought large numbers of commercial developments into this area, including China's top three department stores (by annual turnover) and considerable offices, hotels and commercial complexes. In 2004 the Royal Meridien, a 333-meter-high office-and-hotel complex tower, was erected at the western entrance of the road, which symbolically marked the final establishment of the Road's role as the 'local commercial and public centre' (Shao 2005) (Figure 5.19).
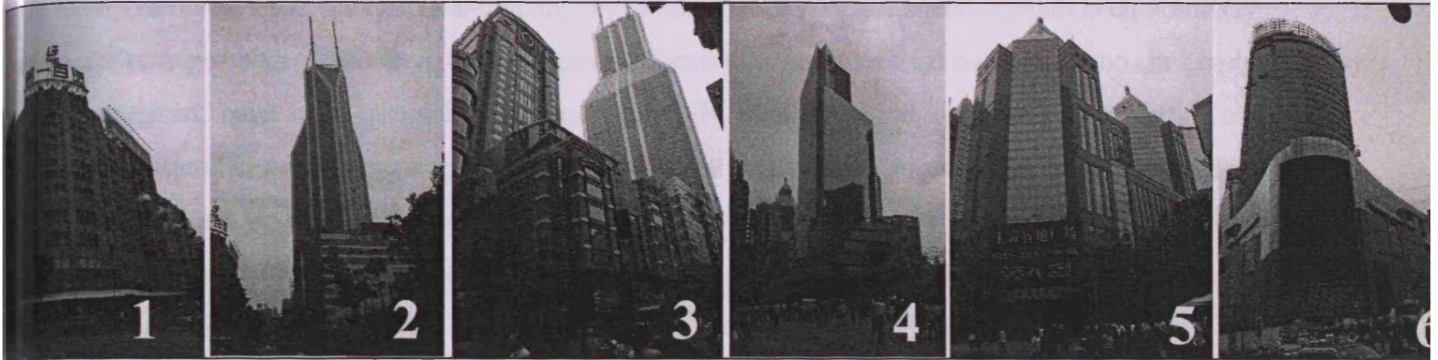
**Figure 5.19** Building composition of Nanjing Road (for number reference, see *Figure 5.18*: 1-Shanghai No.1 Department Store, 2-Royal Meridien, 3-Sunya Cantonese Restaurant, 4-Sofitel Hyland Hotel, 5-Shanghai Land Mart, 6-Hong Yi International Plaza). These are the most visually-striking high rises in Nanjing Road. Except for the Shanghai No. 1 Department Store, which is a renewed 1950s building, the rest are all new buildings that have been completed since the late 1990s. They represent the dominance of the private capital (mostly international) in the redevelopment of the Road. Architecturally they feature strong Western styles. But generally they have enclosed the public realm well by tightly juxtaposing their 'skirt structures' along the street, leaving not much 'leftover' space between them. The continuity of the street line can be clearly sensed (Source: photo taken by the author).

The pedestrianised Nanjing Road has improved many aspects of its public setting. First, numbers of open spaces with good public utilities have been created in the Road. The western entrance area to the Road, the previously wasted parking land, was converted into a well landscaped, easily accessible public park which is now frequently used as a site for social events (Figure 5.20). In the middle section of the Road a public square is also provided with a public theatre and numbers of seats. Placed at the middle point of the Road, this square serves as a good resting point for the pedestrians. But it did not come without a cost: the land price at this site was 10,000 dollars per square meter before its redevelopment and the area of this square is 9,000 m$^2$ (Source: Shanghai Urban Planning Bureau).



**Figure 5.20** The former parking land is converted into a public park. It secures a good level of access (both visually and physically) to the Road, and is often used as a site for public-art exhibitions (Source: photo taken by the author).

Secondly, under the historical-building-preservation guidelines, the streetscape has been positively reshaped. Overpasses have been completely dismantled. Early Western buildings, although largely gutted, have been externally refreshed in details. And many newly-developed properties are required to provide extra open spaces to the street for the public to use, e.g. the Royal Meridien offers a 30-meter-high colonnaded space with a 2,000 m$^2$ area on its ground floor. '*There was a long argy-bargy* [between the developer and the planning authority] *on this, but eventually the developer gave up his part of interest*', said a local planner (Source: Shanghai Urban Planning Bureau). The result is that on the one hand the physical identity of the Road has been retained to a good extent so that its early golden age can be recalled, and on the other hand, there are numbers of building niches which now often accommodate impromptu activities (Figure 5.21, 5.22).



**Figure 5.21** The historical buildings in Nanjing Road are generally well preserved. Their entrances, windows, steps and facade elements (including details, materials and colours) have been largely restored according to their original scales/forms/styles. Their ground floors are often occupied by shops with colonnaded spaces so that the building-street edge appears 'interactive', tending to 'gather' the people rather than to 'repulse' them. New buildings are required to stand tightly along the existing street line so that the continuity of the public space has been well shaped. Some of the new buildings offer additional open spaces on the ground to accommodate more public amenities. The last photo shows that the Royal Meridien tower offers a huge colonnaded forecourt connecting with the street (Source: photo taken by the author).

**Figure 5.22** All the attempts at building preservation and control to a great extent have led to the proliferation of 'active' building niches over the Road. There are lots of 'occasional' public uses that are frequently facilitated in those colonnaded spaces. These photos show that a group of people are having their impromptu dancing in the covered forecourt of a shop (Source: photo taken by the author).

And thirdly, the Golden Line, the expected 'highlight' of the scheme, has successfully become the concentration lane of public activities. Its good scale and diverse settings ensure that people are able to undertake different social behaviours within the Line (Figure 5.23, 5.24).



**Figure 5.23** It can be observed that people are enjoying different types of activities along the Gold Line, no matter individually or in groups, without much disturbance from the movement flow. They normally prefer to sit, chat with each other, or just watch others. The Line is also used for a range of commercial promotions and street shows. The top-middle photo shows that some unprompted ballet dancers are putting on a show in the street. Mr. Chen, one of them, told the researcher that *'we don't make a living doing this; it just entertains ourselves and others'* (Source: random interview and photo taken by the author).

**Figure 5.24** In comparison with the other four CPDs, Nanjing Road is equipped with the most public facilities. They include numbers of selling booths, a mini children's playground, and several exterior cafe sites. Many of these are commercial items by nature, but it is observed that they are generally acting as 'gathering points', contributing to the overall ambience of the Road as a public place (Source: site observation and photo taken by the author).

However, it has been observed that the Road is still faced with two major problems that potentially obstruct broader public uses. Firstly, its land use has been excessively serving international brands and mega shops, while deliberately marginalising local shops and smaller retailers. It is reported that many local shops are not allowed to continue their tenures, despite their good turnovers, because the government is fonder of the 'international image' of the Road. It is reported that the government hopes that the proportion of 'international brands' will increase from the current 65 per cent to 70 per cent within three years (Sina 2007). The following table reveals that small, local retailers in the Road do not achieve a high quantity (Table 5.2).

**Table 5.2**: Shop Style(s) and Number(s) of Nanjing Road

| Small Retailer(s) | Eating and Drinking | Department Store(s) | Street Booth(s) | Office(s) | Bank(s) | Hotel(s) | Others |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 51 [1] | 23 [2] | 10 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 11 [3] |

Note: **1.** There are few small retailers in Nanjing Road, particularly in comparison with Wang Fujing. But in total they cover a broad range: clothing (17), watch (3), jewellery (11), native handcraft and souvenir (5), glasses (7), pharmacy (3), tobacco (2), shoes (2) and bedding (1). It is observed that they generally sell at acceptable prices. But, they occupy large shop units - the scale and area of most of these shops are actually at least twice the size of their counterparts in Beijing. It is not certain if this is the result of the current 'expelling' of real 'small retailers' which may lead to the takeover of the property tenure by bigger retailers. **2.** Eating and drinking consists of a large amount of fast-food shops (14), restaurants (6), and a small number of cafes, teas or ice-cream (3). Again there is an evident absence of 'informal' eating and drinking places which might be more conducive to people's occasional socialisation. **3.** The others however cover a relatively diverse services including lottery selling (4), barber shop (2), KTV (2), photography (1), bookstore (2), and even one waxwork exhibition (Source: site observation).

Secondly, the Golden Line itself needs a further improvement in terms of its physical setting. Yao (2000) argues that the idea of Golden Line is intrinsically an outcome of image-chasing so that its design easily falls into the trap of pursuing 'superficial prettiness' instead of providing public use. Yao illustrates that the dark-red granites composing the Line are prone to reflecting heat in summers

while becoming slippery on rainy days, therefore not suitable for public use. From the researcher's own site observation, Yao's concerns are accurate (Figure 5.25).



**Figure 5.25** A number of visitors told the researcher that these fixed granitic benches would be too cold in winters and too hot in summers to sit on, and that they thus preferred some 'movable chairs with pavilions'. Some pointed out that the colonnades along the street could protect the pedestrians from the weather but it was a pity that no seats were offered within them. The researcher also observed that there was a real lack of big trees over the Road - these small planters could not shelter people in Shanghai's sweltering seasons (Source: site observation and photo taken by the author).

### 5-5-3 Preserved street pattern and benign management, Central Street

In Harbin the trend of 'politicisation of the street' withered in the late 1970s, and since then the Central Street has seen a fast establishment of commercialism, e.g., by the early 1990s the number of shops in the Street increased by 100 per cent. This led to severe traffic congestion in this area, and consequently in 1996 the government started to pedestrianise the Street. Compared with Shanghai, Harbin's pursuit of pedestrianisation appeared more moderate. The government set out three targets: first to improve the capacity of gathering and moving the visitor flow; secondly to sustain the historical identity in terms of streetscape and architecture; thirdly to offer more utilisable open spaces and to maximise the value of tourism (An 2002; Gao and Zhang 2000; Sun and Fu 1998). A 1,050-meter-long street section was projected to be converted into a vehicle-free street. Lots of historical buildings in the street were legislated to be permanently preserved. Such an incremental strategy has kept the long linear pattern of the street relatively intact without many bold physical interventions (Figure 5.26). In terms of land use, a mixture of commercial functions is now a feature of the Street. More than 200 shops, many of which are local, small retailers, have concentrated in this area (Table 5.3).

**Figure 5.26** Street pattern of Central Street: the pedestrianised Street is 1,050 metres long and 21 meters wide in average. Starting from the Jing Wei Street at the south and ending at the Stalin Park by the Song Hua River at the north, the Street links the most central area of Harbin's commercial district with the tourism-based quay area. As the primary street pattern has been kept intact, the continuity of the street can be clearly sensed. Some 20 alleys are linked to the main street, and half of the intersection areas are developed into small squares, so that the overall accessibility to the Street remains generally well (Source: adapted from the author's survey; also see Appendix 3 for a bigger map of the city).

**Table 5.3**: Shop Style(s) and Number(s) of Central Street

| Small Retailer(s) | Eating and Drinking | Bank(s) | Small Supermarket(s) | Hotel(s) | Department Store(s) | Shopping-Mall Complex(es) | Others |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 98 [1] | 31 [2] | 7 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 16 [3] |

Note: 1. Central Street possesses the highest number of small retailers among the four CPDs, which creates a high variety in land use. They include: clothing (36), watch (1), jewellery (8), native handcraft and souvenir (19), glasses (9), pharmacy (5), tobacco (3), shoes (7), bedding (1), digital items (6), and video (3). Generally these retailers sell at bargain prices. And most of them take small-size shops, creating 'active' and 'easy-to-access' frontages on the street. 2. Eating and drinking consists of numbers of local dining places (25) including cafes, teas, snack bars, traditional food stalls, and some taverns and beer gardens alike. Many of them function as 'third places' for the people due to their informal atmosphere and bargain menus. There are also a few fast food shops (4), and formal restaurants (2). 3. The others offer a diverse usages including GYM (1), SPA (1), barber shop (2), KTV (1), photography (5), bookstore (4), travel agent (1), and post office (1) (Source: site observation).

The completion of pedestrianisation in 1997 has brought a huge commercial boom. In the first month after the re-opening of the Street, the total retailing turnover of the shops in this area increased by 25 per cent. From January to March of 1998, the Central Plaza, a big department store on this street, created the highest daily turnover of a single store in Harbin - five million yuan a day. Since 1998 the number of daily visitors has reached 200,000 (before 1997 it was 30,000), and on vacation days it reaches 300,000 (Wang and Gao 2001: 35).

Statistically, the Street has been used as a concentration site for public events for various purposes. From 1998 to 2002 totally 845 commercial and public welfare activities had been staged on the street, including 571 (67.6 per cent) commercial activities such as production promotion and enterprise consultation, 49 (5.8 per cent) government-affair propaganda, 33 (3.9 per cent) photography or art shows, 40 (4.7 per cent) blood-donations and free clinics, 32 (3.8 per cent) public donations and auctions, and 41 (4.9 per cent) other public performances (An 2002: 123). It is the Central Street Management Division, a local public authority, that is responsible for approving and charging intended public activities. It is reported that the management is quite flexible: two thirds of these activities are free of charge while only one third, mostly commercial events, charge a nominal fee, average 915 yuan (An 2002: 123) (Figure 5.27).

**Figure 5.27** Observed public events in the Street include health-knowledge propaganda, an organised clinic consultation, a mini beer festival, an army men's meeting event, and different types of retailers' promotions. It is seen that the Street does not just contain commercial activities but is managed to hold non-profitable events (Source: photo taken by the author).

The management of individual behaviours on the street under many circumstances is also loose. It is observed that there is no obvious sign of strict social control or extreme private regulation. On the contrary, the Street in many parts appears an 'inclusive' place which is used by different groups of people. The following photos record several 'surprises' in individual usages on the Street (Figure 5.28, 5.29, 5.30, 5.31).



**Figure 5.28** Homeless people (often treated as 'undesirables' in particular places) are free to sit, move and beg on the street, at no obvious risk of banishment. While in Wang Fujing and Nanjing Road, the homeless are rarely seen (Source: photo taken by the author).

**Figure 5.29** It is observed that teenagers are allowed to skateboard in the street. Normally this type of activity is forbidden in places with commercial interests, particularly in Western cities. In Beijing and Shanghai, skateboarding in the street is also not seen. But it is observed here that these teenagers mainly confine their skateboarding within the 'intersection areas' (the small squares) between the main street and the secondary alleys, rather than in the main street. There may be bylaws regulating the subdivision, or differentiation, of the street space so that 'unplanned activities' can be contained in certain places without annoying the others (Source: photo taken by the author).



**Figure 5.30** It is also observed that some 'bizarre' people enjoy 'showing' themselves in the street. The photos show that a dog-walker dressed in a fake police uniform is cruising over the street with his handsome dog. He enjoys being surrounded and followed by huge amounts of people; while the real policemen are quietly looking on. Arguably this type of behaviours appear more typical in Western cities - they are labelled as 'street displayers' by Mean and Tims (2005) - rather than Chinese cities because traditional Chinese culture tends to discourage individuals to act in that 'showy' way. The case here, however, indicates that the management of the Central Street has developed a considerable 'sense of tolerance' in the public realm (Source: photo taken by the author).

**Figure 5.31** At the north end of the Street is an open square which is popular with the middle-aged or older groups. From late afternoon they begin to gather in this place, exercising Chinese traditional handwriting (with water) on the ground, randomly chatting and joking. Such a unique social meeting happens nearly everyday and lasts until the evening. Mr. Ye, a retired mid-school teacher, told the researcher that:

'*This is the most favourable place of many old people of Harbin, especially those who are interested with the art of Chinese handwriting... It is a pleasure to be here with old friends, learning from them and having chats on any topics... Or sometimes you can just write and enjoy yourself... I am lingering here for hours at least twice a week, usually from April to November*' [between December and March it is freezing in Harbin] (Source: random interview and photo taken by the author).

Briefly speaking, the well preserved street pattern and the public authority's benign management contribute to a high degree of public interaction and social cohesion on the street. However, there are still some aspects that have provoked criticisms. Firstly many new developments are considered to show 'little respect' for the sense of place of the Street (Sun and Fu 1998: 34) (Figure 5.32).

**Figure 5.32** New building composition of Central Street (for number reference, see *Figure 5.26*: 1-China Merchant Bank, 2-Euro Plaza, 3-Central Plaza, 4-Ma Dier Hotel, 5-Lane Crawford Mansion, 6-IC Bank). Many of these new buildings are thought to be hostile to the public realm due to their huge scale, inconsistent architectural style, and crude facades. For instance, the huge glass–clad wall of the Euro Plaza and the bold projection surface of the Central Plaza are regarded as 'forged European symbols', and the blank facade of the IC Bank tower is criticised as 'essentially selfish modernism' (Sun and Fu 1998: 34). There is a worry that more developments like these would damage the physical identity of the Street (Source: photo taken by the author).

The second criticism concentrates on the maintenance of the small squares located at the points where the main street intersects the secondary alleys. Many of them are currently empty places with low-quality public settings. In fact, the number of seats in the street is surprisingly low: a total of 20 benches and seats together able to support at most 152 people. On average, there is only one sitting facility every 70 meters (Source: site observation). Thereby these small squares could have been functioning better as resting points, rather than being the sites purely for skateboarding. According to An (2002), the public authority which is in charge of the street maintenance and the supply of public settings only tends to 'focus on' the main street while 'neglecting' these 'lateral' squares because they appear 'less vital' in attracting the tourists (i.e., the potential buyers) (Figure 5.33).



**Figure 5.33** The 'lateral' squares largely lack quality public settings. In the shortage of seats on the main street, these squares should have received a higher level of investment and maintenance so that they can offer more resting points to the public (Source: photo taken by the author).

### 5-5-4 Dominance of mega-structures, Xin Jiekou

In Nanjing, the government opened a new stage of redevelopment in Xin Jiekou in the early 1980s. The government's initial strategy, however, was more preoccupied with architectural approaches rather than the creation of streets and places. In 1983, the Jinling Hotel, an investment by a Singaporean developer, was developed on the north-east corner of the Xie Jiekou Square. As the highest building of the time in China (110.75 metres and 37 floors), the development of the Hotel marked the beginning of Xin Jiekou's radical physical transformation (Zhang and Zhang 1997: 30) (Figure 5.34).

**Figure 5.34** The Jinling Hotel built up in 1983 dwarfed the surrounding dense danwei-compounds and bunches of old houses. It also overwhelmed the Xin Jiekou Square (bottom left), the physical symbol of this area (Source: http://www.jinlinghotel.com/CN/hotel/jinling/photos.asp).

The Hotel attracted large amounts of visitors, mostly overseas. This convinced the Nanjing government that Xin Jiekou's renewal should rely on mega-structures and high-rise towers. During the following two decades, therefore, massive old blocks in this area were swept away and a series of skyscrapers were erected, e.g. New Century Plaza (52 floors), Tian An International Plaza (42 floors), International Financial Centre (50 floors), etc. (Lu 1997: 11). Accordingly, the commercial area of Xin Jiekou rapidly expanded. The area of commercial buildings was 100,000 m$^2$ in 1992, 500,000 m$^2$ in 1993, 800,000 m$^2$ in 1996, and in 2001 it reached striking three million m$^2$ (Wang 2001: 64). The amount of visitor increased simultaneously. In 2002, the daily pedestrian flow was around 400,000 and on vacation days between 600,000 and 1,000,000 (Zhu *et al.* 2002: 16). During the same period, however, the government still did not make much effort to raise the quality of public space. The lack of efficient space and traffic management led to evident imbalance in commercial development: by the late 1990s, two thirds of the biggest department stores of Nanjing had crowded in this area; while a department store in a 'privileged site' could attract a population five times more than a remoter one could (Zhu *et al.* 2002: 16).

Under such circumstances, in 2000 the government finally set out to improve the quality of the

public realm through implementing urban design strategies. An Australian design company COX was hired to formulate a feasible plan. COX suggested that the block southeast to the Square be developed into a pedestrianised precinct so that the cluttered commercial environment could be integrated into a 'comprehensive and exciting open space' (COX 2003: 80). The government added five principles to the pedestrianisation scheme: *symbolisation* (this area should be developed as a 'commercial brand' of Nanjing), *simplicity* (the built form should be developed into a concise, modern pattern), *identification* (the identity of Xin Jiekou should be further enhanced), *commerce led* (the design should serve the commercial efficiency and interests), and *human needs* (this area should become a 'paradise of the pedestrians') (Liu *et al*. 2001). The preliminary pedestrianisation was completed in 2001. The site was redeveloped into an inner square with limited access to the surrounding traffic lanes (Figure 5.35).
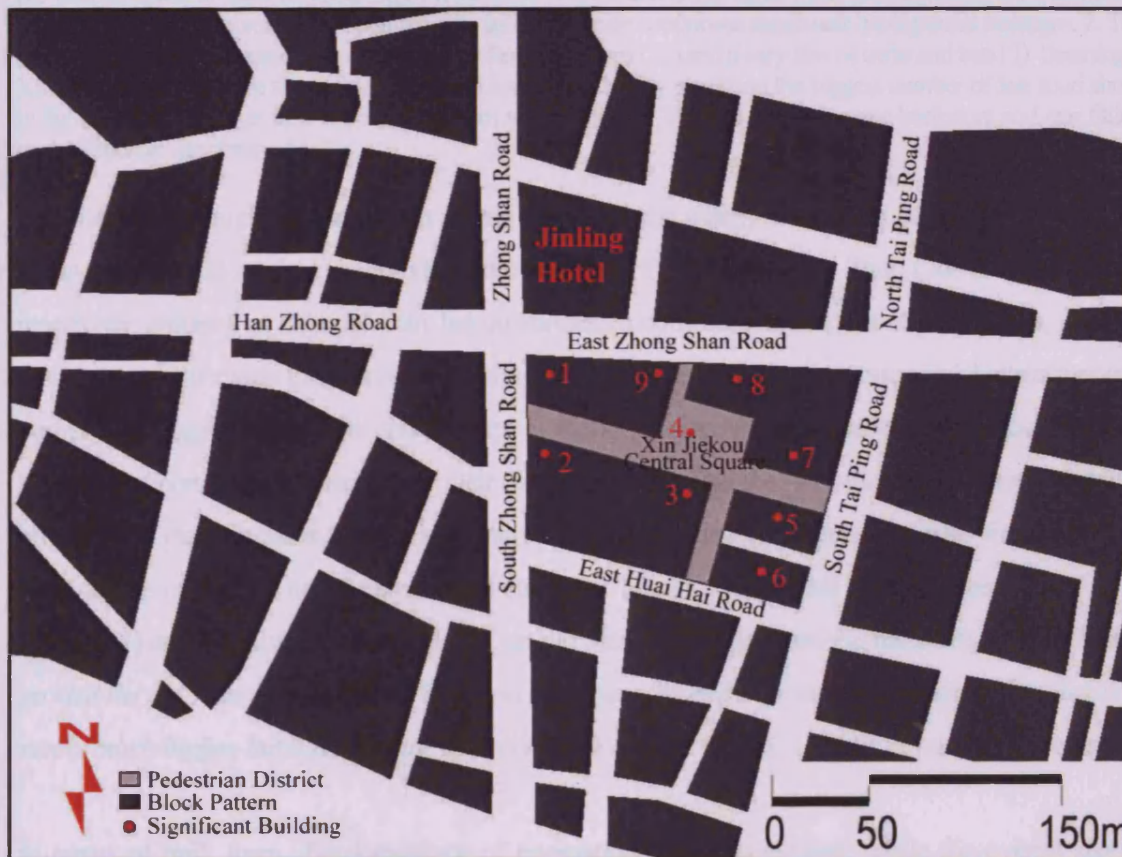


**Figure 5.35** Street pattern of Xin Jiekou: the projected site (with a 120,000 m$^2$ area) is located on the south-east corner of the Xin Jiekou Square, opposite to the Jinling Hotel to the north. It is surrounded by four main traffic lanes, the East Zhang Shan Road, the South Tai Ping Road, the East Huai Hai Road, and the South Zhong Shan Road. Pedestrians can access the centre of this precinct through four entrances directly off these surrounding traffic lanes. The central location, now termed 'Xin Jiekou Central Square', is a foursquare inner space with a 200-meter-long perimeter. The pedestrian paths accessing to the Central Square are 520-metre in total length and 18 metre in

average width (Source: adapted from the author's survey; also see Appendix 4 for a bigger map of the city).

Despite the government's benign initiative, however, whether the envisaged five principles have been fulfilled remains debatable. It is the mega-retailers (department stores and shopping malls) that currently dominate the whole place. The total retail area reaches 300,000 m², but the number of individual retailers is extremely low (Table 5.4).

**Table 5.4**: Shop Style(s) and Number(s) of Xin Jiekou

| Small Retailer(s) | Eating and Drinking | Department Store(s) | Office(s) | Shopping-Mall Complex(es) | Small Supermarket(s) | Bank(s) | Others |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 25[1] | 15[2] | 5 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2[3] |

Note: **1.** Xin Jiekou has the lowest number of small retailers in the four CPDs, only 25, which in total offer a quite limited merchandise provision: clothing (8), watch (1), jewellery (1), native handcraft and souvenir (4), glasses (2), pharmacy (2), shoes (2), bedding (1), and digital items (4). It can be suspected if such a small number could meet the various needs of local communities. Furthermore it is observed that these small retailers/shops are fragmented by large department stores and shopping malls, failing to create continuous small-unit lines/ground frontages. **2.** The majority of eating and drinking is dominated by fast food shops (12) and a very few of cafes and teas (3). Seemingly Xin Jiekou tends to force the people to 'eat and leave quickly' (by providing the biggest number of fast food shops in the four CPDs), rather than encouraging them to stay long. **3.** The two others are one bookstore and one fitting centre (Source: site observation).

The functional simplification of Xin Jiekou has to a great extent reduced its competitiveness as an urban commercial symbol (a 'brand', in the wishes of the government). Zhou (2004: 7), a retailing researcher, argues that although Xin Jiekou contains a considerable amount of pedestrians, most of them are tourists rather than natives, and thus it is in danger of losing its commercial attractiveness, particularly lagging behind its counterparts in the same city. When asked about the status of Xin Jiekou, numbers of people expressed their disappointment with the mono-land-use - 'nothing worth buying' was their frequent answer, and many said that the renewed Xin Jiekou was virtually not as good as the other two noted commercial streets of Nanjing - the Fuzi Temple Street (see *1-2* of *Chapter 1*) and the Hunan Street. Ms. Lin, an old Nanjinger, suggested the researcher that '*Why not go visit the old Fuzi Temple Street? That will bring you the real impression of Nanjing. Xin Jiekou is surely much bigger, but it is the same as everywhere all over China...*' (Source: random interview).

In terms of built form, the dominance of international style is evident; while the overall spatial composition remains fragmented (Figure 5.36).

**Figure 5.36** Building composition of Xin Jiekou (for number. reference, see *Figure 5.35*: 1-Xin Bai Department Store, 2-Shang Mao Deparment Store, 3-Central Department Store, 4-Fashion Lady Centre, 5-Yong Le Digital, 6-Wan Da Plaza, 7-Pan Gu Tai Ya Plaza, 8-Cultural Palace, 9-Guo Mao Centre, 10-Central Square). The dominance of the international architectural style is evident; while buildings largely appear self-interested and all together deliver a fragmented image. They seem to conflict with, rather than integrate, the public space. For example, it is seen that unnecessary projection elements on the frontages break the continuity and enclosure of the square, facades are blank and lack small-scale details, ground floors are occupied by mega structures without providing 'usable' niches to the public (in sharp contrast to Nanjing Road in Shanghai), etc. In sum, the overall physical character appears quite chaotic, far from 'simplicity' (Source: photo taken by the author).

As regards public setting, the Square is yet to become a 'paradise of pedestrians'. It is observed that unplanned bicycle parking frequently blocks street entrances and walkways, heavily constraining the accessibility of the pedestrians. This is a problem related to both planning control and management. The urban-design plan requires that every 100 m$^2$ retail area should be provided with six bicycle-parking plots. Currently there is a 300,000 m$^2$ retail area which accordingly demands 18,000 parking plots; but the actual provision is just 9,442. And it is reported that Mega-retailers frequently use cycle garages as short-term commercial space, which has further exacerbated the problem (Shi 2005) (Figure 5.37).

**Figure 5.37** One of the problems in terms of public setting is that the Square is frequently crowded with bicycle parking in its fringe areas. This has imposed negative influences upon the pedestrian's access to the inner place. Two factors have led to this problem: loose planning control and a laissez-faire attitude in management (Source: http://www.fotoe.com/image_detail.php?Id=20072644).

On the other hand, the Central Square severely lacks public facilities based on human needs. The middle of the Square particularly appears a void place, rather than a focus of activity (Figure 5.38).



**Figure 5.38** The provision of public facilities is surprisingly low. Basically there is no effective subdivision of place and nor are adequate landscape elements provided (the glass pavilion shown in the photo is the entrance of an underground shopping mall, which provides limited seating under the pavilion). Overall, the square delivers a void and dull image, failing to create a real sense of public life. (Source: photo taken by the author).

The public activities in Xin Jiekou appear 'routine' in comparison with other four CPDs. General events (promotions, exhibitions, etc.) and individual behaviours (wondering, sitting, etc.) are still observed. But 'impromptu' or 'occasional' socialisation is not widely seen (Figure 5.39).



**Figure 5.39** Some events are observed in the Central Square, including an art-works exhibition and a range of commercial promotions. Generally the Square presents a certain extent of 'adaptability' for public activities. But 'occasional' socialisation, or 'surprises', (such as seen in Shanghai and Harbin) are absent throughout the survey (Source: http://www.fotoe.com/image_detail.php?Id=10143564 and photo taken by the author).

And finally, has the redevelopment substantially enhanced Xin Jiekou's identity (the sense of place)? It remains as the place where most of the high rises and mega-malls of Nanjing have concentrated. The government is still encouraging more high-rise developments in this precinct, e.g. the Jinling Hotel Group has planned to develop a 200-metre new hotel in this area, and the British design company Atkins has proposed a brand-new solution that is radically different from the old Jinling Hotel (Figure 5.40). It becomes difficult to tell what identity exactly now remains because the physical linkage between the current environment and the context of this site has become so weak. Latest news is that the Xin Jiekou Square has been dismantled for the purpose of constructing metros and an underground shopping mall; however, nothing has been planned for the surface (Figure 5.41).

**Figure 5.40** *Left*: Atkins' proposal for New Jinling Hotel: the dominance of mega structures continues, which may further diminish the identity of this place.
(Source: http://www.atkinsdesign.com/#CONTACTS)
**Figure 5.41** *Right*: the Xin Jiekou Square has been dismantled. The biggest historical symbol of this place dated back to 1930s is now gone, taken over by an underground commercial complex.
 (Source: http://www.fotoe.com/image_detail.php?Id=10097237)

## 5-6 Conclusion

In sum, these four CPDs share a general similarity in their 'transformation' process which, if not too much simplified, can be concluded into four sentences (the bolded texts indicate their main development dynamics and reflected public characters at key stages). *1*. Originally, they were the elite settlement or the early colonial concession area to the exclusion of general public, or in the form of marginalised precincts contributing less value to local public life. *2*. Then under the sway of **Western commercial culture and planning ideology**, they were widely transformed into commercial-concentration areas featured with eclectic physical characteristics, hereby they began to thrive as important public loci of cities; while arguably they **tended to more favour the Western physical/social patterns** (i.e., Western commercial/civic buildings, modern traffic, boulevard systems, military patrol, etc.). *3*. However, during the pre-market period, dominated by **Maoist ideology**, they all suffered 'socialist redevelopment' to some extent so that their public functions were largely simplified in the name of common interest (reduced into traffic corridors or

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deteriorative 'politicised' sites); and consequently they became incapable of producing diverse public use, **remaining as nominal and deteriorated public centres of cities.** *4.* Since the late 1970s, the **recurrence of consumerism** has largely renewed their socio-spatial forms (re-commercialisation and 'depoliticisation' of space, symbolic buildings, etc.) in order to attract more visitors, capital, and developments. While the post-1990s pedestrianisation endowed with **increasing concern about the quality of public realm** (thorough removal of vehicles, more space and facility supplies, preservation of historical buildings, reasonable management, etc.) has further expanded their potential of containing more public uses apart from commercial pursuits. Arguably, they have currently developed into **consumerism/consumption-based milieus, but with more civic/communal public functions than they had in the past.**

Despite the common genesis and development trajectory of these CPDs, it is clear that there are still lots of similarities and differences in terms of specific socio-physical manifestations. These are concluded under the following subtitles which have been identified in *3-4-2* of *Chapter 3*. Many of the principles of 'good public space' (justified in *Chapter 2*) are used here to measure the quality of places.

◆ *Scale, size and pattern*

Generally, the redevelopment of the four CPDs aims not just to pedestrianise the 'street' but to broadly 'upgrade' the central environment of the city, which is considered by the local government as a necessity of forming a 'concentration site' for capital accumulation and consumption activity. As a result, these CPDs create a much larger spatial scale and size than any historical commercial streets did (reflected by their unprecedented street length, width, and building height and volume). Among them, Wang Fujing, Nanjing Road, and Central Street have by and large pedestrianised the existing street grids, and fitted them relatively well into surrounding urban patterns. Thereby, they can be easily accessed and penetrated by visitors, and more importantly, remain 'legible' (both visually and psychologically) to the local community. By contrast, Xin Jiekou has created a new central place alienated from the former street grid and completely altered the selected area. The resultant square however reminds the author of the modernist idea that treats space as a 'totalised entity' while ignoring its link to the context and the site. Consequently, it fails to offer equally good accessibility and permeability that the others have, so that it may create less potential to include

broader individuals and groups. These two different approaches to restructuring and scaling the streets also reflect different levels of 'retaining the past'. Wang Fujing, Nanjing Road, and Central Street have respected their former urban patterns which prove significant in sustaining their historical identities as traditional commercial centres. In contrast, despite its equally high number of visitors (mostly office workers and shoppers; the existence of local users and non-commercial activities, however, appears less evident than the other three CPDs) Xin Jiekou is in danger of losing its recognition by the local community ('*Why not go visit the old Fuzi Temple Street? That will bring you the real impression of Nanjing...*').

◆ *Land use*

It is evident that in all the four CPDs the majority of land is designated to commercial uses which cover a wide range of 'downtown items', including retailing, eating and drinking, hotel, bank, entertainment, etc. But generally, the ground floor is occupied by retail shops and dining places, while the upper floors of buildings accommodate office-based companies and businesses. But the scale and usage of ground-floor shops vary widely over these CPDs, which indicate different extents of diversity and adaptability in ground land use. Statistically, Central Street has the highest level of ground-floor small shops related to local retailers and products. Though they may not cater for the needs of all social groups, the high presence of small retailers still renders this place a site for community users and everyday life, and therefore enhances its ambience as an 'inclusive' public environment. Wang Fujing and Nanjing Road also have achieved an acceptable coexistence between small retailers and mega department stores and shopping malls. In particular, Wang Fujing has created a dining area with strong vernacular characteristics, the Snack-bar Street, which balances the mass retailing on the main street and creates a public environment with dynamics of its own. But Xin Jiekou is in its most parts occupied by mega retailers. It appears an 'assembly site' of upscale, big department stores and shopping malls. This makes its land use appear much more homogenised than the others. To the author, the central square which is enclosed by these mega structures is as if made up of pieces of 'corporate lands', rather than being a 'united' public space.

◆ *Architecture with the street*

There are different extents of architectural mixture in these CPDs. Despite the fact that some of them have preserved large numbers of historical buildings (particularly Nanjing Road and Central

Street), a common theme in their development is that since the early 1990s, they have increasingly received new buildings that are larger, taller, and presenting more diverse architectural styles. This trend on the one hand has enhanced the image of these CPDs as the place of capital input and the symbolic site to display 'money and power', and on the other hand, inevitably imposed challenges upon the link between buildings and the public realm. Generally, two forms of building-and-street-linkages are observed in these CPDs - a gradual transition, or a strict separation. Nanjing Road has made evident efforts to integrate new buildings with the public space by providing 'transitional zones' on frontages, such as colonnades and open arcades, where people can stay and create 'impromptu' activities. And the booths, cafe chairs and tables, and children's play sites placed along these building facades also help add the 'cohesion' (in both physical and social terms) between buildings and the public realm. Wang Fujing and Central Street have however provoked higher controversy in terms of their architectural imitation of traditional character; but their street enclosure, continuity and frontage 'activeness' are generally well produced. There are still niches, entrances, and steps in them that act as 'gathering places' creating opportunities for people to stay and meet. In Xin Jiekou, the treatment of the building-and-street integration appears the crudest - mega structures front the public space with huge, closed walls, and the interior shops connect with the street through limited entrances, so that visitors tend to enter and leave quickly, or just walk past. There are fewer opportunities in this place, in comparison with the other three, for people to create broader social experiences near the buildings.

*◆ Places, facilities and management*

Generally, these four CPDs have offered numbers of open places with multiple purposes for the public which, in an overall sense, help form some more 'humanised' and 'personalised' environments in comparison with the Maoist period. Some of these places are functioning well as positive components of the public realm, responding well to the public needs (e.g., the colonnaded places and the 'golden line' in Nanjing Road, and the 'handwriting square' in Central Street). In particular, Nanjing Road provides a valuable experience that the pedestrianised street should better be subdivided into different lanes, or zones, according to different behavioural requirements - some for people's fast movement, and others for stay, events, and social activities. The central square in Xin Jiekou apparently lacks such a subtle spatial differentiation, which is arguably responsible for its appearance as a void place. Besides that, the within facility and management are also considered

two key elements that can influence the sense of 'vibrancy' of public space. Those with human-need-based public facilities and under 'benign' management (flexible control, efficient place subdivision and maintenance, etc.) tend to work well, and vice versa. In general, the inadequacy of 'utilisable' facilities has been widely observed in these CPDs - landscaping strategies in many places are not effectively linked to the users' needs (such as the benches in Nanjing Road). In particular, sittable settings are in high demand in all of them given the huge visitor population. But in a broad sense, all these four CPDs are reasonably well managed - there is no sign of extreme social control or surveillance (no matter public or private), and a sense of general tolerance is developed towards certain groups and activities (beggars, skateboarders, and impromptu 'street displayers'), which however may not be allowed in places elsewhere.

#### ◆ Social uses

In total the four CPDs have contained a relatively wide range of social uses including commercial (promotions, selling), collective (political and welfare events, festivals) and individual ('necessary' and 'optional') activities. Certainly, there is a large overlapping and interaction between these three categories - it is seen that these places have been extensively shared between public and private sectors and between different individuals with different interests and behavioural patterns. In this respect, though by nature being consumption-based milieus, these CPDs have not been overwhelmed by commercial functions, as might be expected. On the contrary, in many instances they still possess character of being 'inclusive' or 'enabling' environments for community and civil uses. A certain extent of commodification, privatisation and symbolic manipulation of the public realm can be clearly detected (e.g., inappropriate settings, signature buildings and landscape, etc.), and the process of gentrification at a larger scale has also occurred (e.g., the replacement of prior residential neighbourhoods and danwei compounds by apartment, office and retail buildings). Some problems, such as inappropriate design and maintenance of places, the loss of identity of space, and the expulsion of small shops by mega retailers, are therefore increasingly emerging. But yet, so far these are not exercised to such an extent that the sense of 'publicness' in these CPDs has been deprived. These CPDs are still widely shared by different sections of the society (in particular, those who reside in surrounding neighbourhoods can easily access and use these places, and in many cases are creating a real sense of public life, e.g., the handwriting square in Harbin), and the 'malfunctions' mentioned above do not prevent them from being so.

In all, what the survey has captured is that the realisation of diverse social uses appears to a high extent dependent on the design and management of certain places (as reflected by the first four aspects above). When the places are well designed and managed, they are likely to produce a good degree of comfort, safety, freedom of action, sense of place, etc., through which a wide range of public use can be facilitated (see examples from Central Street, Nanjing Road and Wang Fujing, etc.), and vice versa (see examples from Xin Jiekou). The next chapter will look at *Jie Fangbei* in Chongqing, the principal case of this research. It will present deeper discussion on the 'design and management' of certain public spaces, by examining the full development process of Jie Fangbei CPD and the current usage conditions of its specific places.

# Chapter 6

## Case study: designing and managing Jie Fangbei, Chongqing

### 6-1 Introduction

Following the survey of four China's renowned CPDs in *Chapter 5* that reveals their common development trajectory and general social-physical manifestations, this chapter examines the most extensive example, *Jie Fangbei* in Chongqing, China's largest CPD. This case study will answer the last research question of this study - *how have the specific spaces of contemporary CPDs been shaped by detailed design and management rationales/policies/practices over recent years, and to what extent have these spaces addressed public-use requirements, alongside their commercial functions?*. In this chapter, discussions will move from the general concerns with the overall social and physical dimensions of CPDs, as seen in the last chapter, to a fuller review of the development process and much deeper observations on particular spaces in relation to users' perceptions and behaviours. This 'process' is shaped by the 'political and economic dynamics' of Jie Fangbei's transformation; while the 'usage of spaces' is the effective expression of 'everyday life'. Madanipour (1996b) emphasises that to achieve a deep understanding of space, it is necessary to have a perspective 'reconciling' political economy with everyday life, so that both the 'procedure' and 'products' of place-making can be included. The integration of these two aspects in this chapter therefore may compensate for the non-comprehensive critiques of China's CPDs so far (see *2-5* of *Chapter 2*). From a practical viewpoint, this chapter will also address particular design and management merits and demerits of specific streets, plazas, resting and strolling places, building edges, etc., so that experiences of both success and failure can be learnt. In this regard, Whyte (1980) argues that the factors which make small spaces successful in one city/district will work in another provided they have a similar urban scale and population density. As discussed in *Chapter 3*, all five CPDs are in the central areas of large cities, with a similar spatial scale and visitor density. Therefore, the outcomes of Jie Fangbei's case study can be also applied to the whole CPD group.

There are seven sections in the following part. The first section outlines Jie Fangbei's image, and then echoes the 'time line' set up in the last two chapters to recall Jie Fangbei's early history from

the Treaty-Port and Republican period to the pre-market period. The following four sections move to the contemporary period. They sequentially examine the four periods which are identified as the key stages in Jie Fangbei's development to the local CPD (see *3-5-2* of *Chapter 3*), i.e., the *first high-rise boom* (1980s-middle1990s), the *first pedestrianisation* (1997), the *second high-rise boom* (1998-2001), and the *second pedestrianisation and street refurbishment* (from 2002 towards 2010). Key design and management rationales/policies/practices at these four stages are examined, and selected places are given in-depth analyses to probe how they promote activities and what are the perceptions of users. The sixth section adds three key dimensions that are particularly important to the understanding of public space: *land use*, *resting/strolling localities and public facilities*, and *control and surveillance*. They provide an extra, important evaluation of the overall performance of Jie Fangbei CPD's public space. The last section synthesises all these narratives, summarising the answers to the research question.

## 6-2 Jie Fangbei's image and early history

### 6-2-1 The embodiment of a 'world city'

Chongqing is one of China's four provincial-level municipalities, with Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin. Unlike the other three distributed in the county's rich east and north areas, Chongqing is the only such municipality located in the less-developed southwest part of China, and is generally regarded as the regional development hub of western China (Watts 2006). The Municipality of Chongqing proper covers a vast metropolitan area (860 km$^2$). Its inner city is located on a leaf-shape peninsula (9.5 km$^2$) termed Yuzhong Peninsula that is tightly bounded by two rivers, the Jialing River to the north, and the Yangtze River to the south. This long, narrow peninsula contains both Chongqing's major administrative and commercial areas, the former being in the middle part and the latter at the east end (Figure 6.1). The east commercial area comprises the most spectacular urban icons of Chongqing, including the waterfronts, the high-rise skyline, and the Jie Fangbei CBD in the centre of which sits the largest central pedestrian district of China. These elements are regarded as signifying Chongqing's ambition to become a 'world city', competing with its national and even international counterparts through intensive place-making exercises (French 2007) (Figure 6.2).
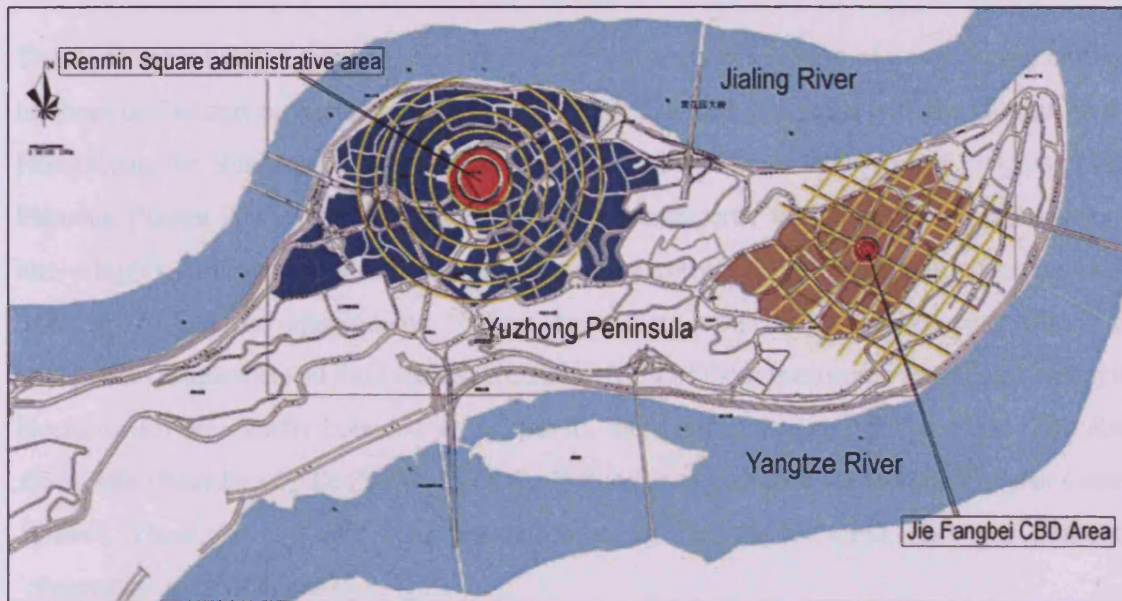
**Figure 6.1** Yuzhong Peninsula, Chongqing's inner city (Source: Chongqing Urban Planning Bureau 2003a).
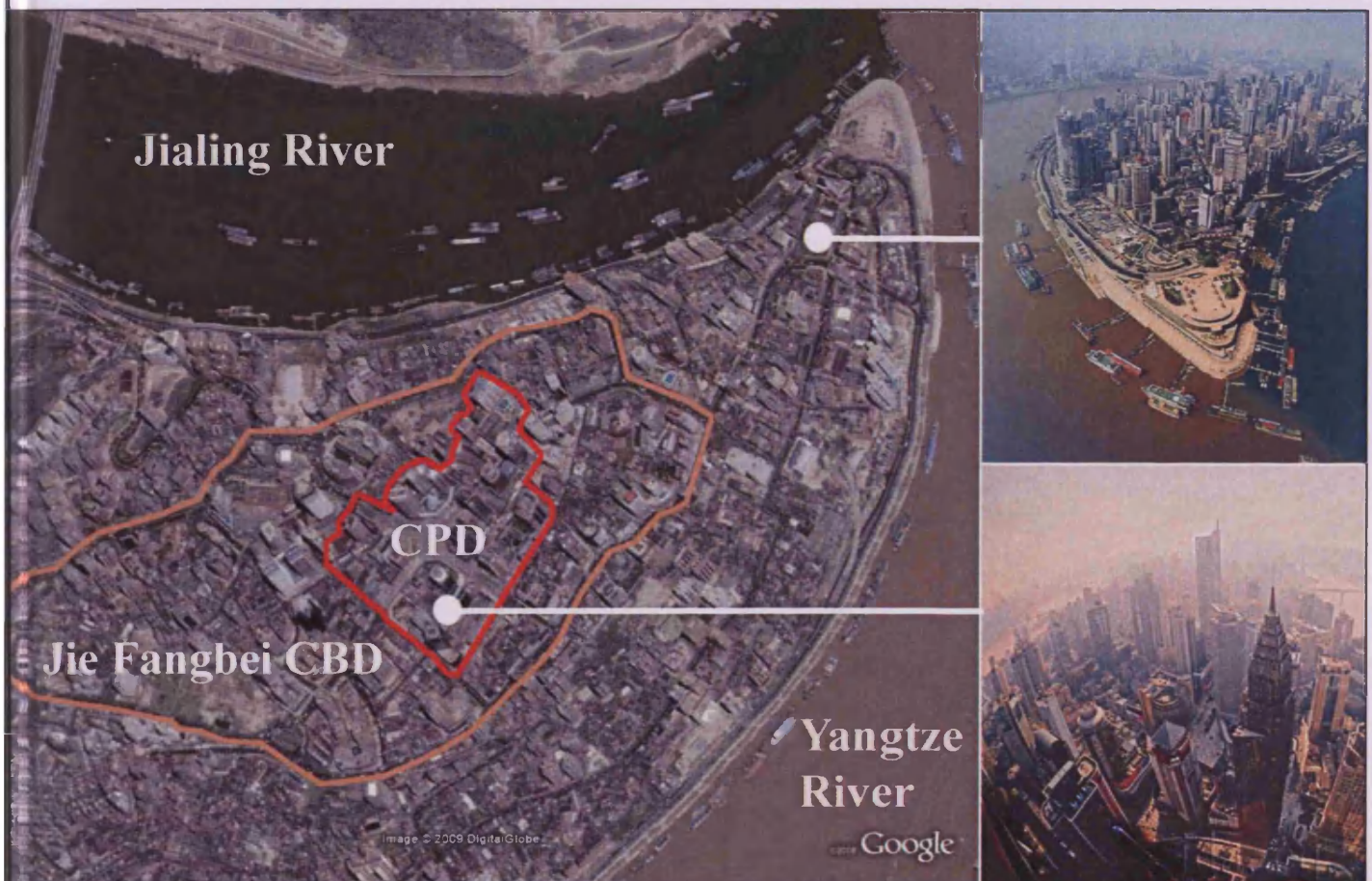


**Figure 6.2** *Left*: CPD sits in the central area of the Jie Fangbei CBD. *Right top*: the waterfront of the Peninsula. *Right bottom*: the bird's view of the CPD area (Source: Google Earth; http://www.scio.gov.cn; http://jda.cq.gov.cn).

The Jie Fangbei CPD in particular characterises the government's pursuit of a world-class city, as it has been deliberately promoted in the City's planning strategies, in parallel with the Central Area of Hong Kong, the Shinjuku-ku of Tokyo, and the Lower Manhattan of New York (Chongqing Urban Planning Bureau 2003a). Similar to these Western counterparts, Jie Fangbei has been developed into a highly consumption-based environment - it currently has 25 big department stores above 5,000 m$^2$, 87 financial organisations, 10 three-star or more hotels, about 460 company offices, and 340 diverse restaurants and food chains (Hu 2006). Most of these businesses are located within the blocks which are directly bounded by, or link to, four consecutive pedestrian streets (*Zou Rong Road, Min Quan Road, Min Zu Road*, and *Ba Yi Road*), and one open square (*Jie Fangbei Central Square*). These are the basic constituent elements of Jie Fangbei CPD, and they frame the 'observation sites' of this study (Figure 6.3).
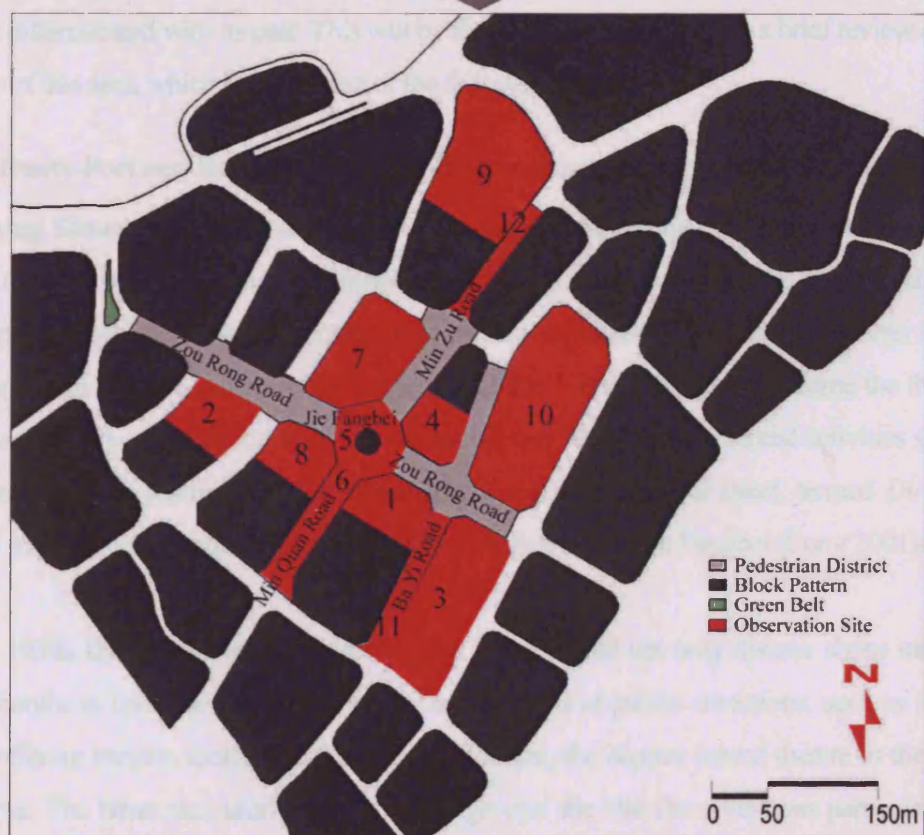
**Figure 6.3** *Top*: the fundamental constituent elements of Jie Fangbei CPD include: Zou Rong Road, Min Quan Road, Min Zu Road, Ba Yi Road, and the Central Square. The buildings containing the major companies and businesses generally link to these streets and the central square (Source: Google Earth). *Bottom*: for the feasibility of the on-site observation, the author abstracts the morphological pattern of Jie Fangbei CPD which indicates the observation sites. In numeric order, and according to the four, specific development stages, they are *sites of the first high rise boom*: 1-Chongqing Commerce Mansion, 2-New Century Mansion, 3-City of Dainty, 4-Yangtze Peninsula Mansion; *sites of the first pedestrianisation*: 5- Central Square, 6- Min Quan Road; *sites of the second high rise boom*: 7- Times Square, 8- Xin Hua Bookstore, 9-Land King Plaza, 10-the Metropolitan Plaza; and *sites of the second pedestrianisation and street refurbishment:* 11- Ba Yi Road, 12- Min Zu Road (northeast end).
(Source: adopted from the author's survey and from the Jie Fangbei plan provided by Chongqing Urban Planning Bureau. Observation sites were selected in pilot study).

Today's Jie Fangbei is claimed as both the most profitable consumption venue as well as the most popular public attraction of the City. Official statistics indicate that 10 per cent of Chongqingers' daily spending is made in Jie Fangbei, 7.7 per cent of Chongqingers are likely to visit Jie Fangbei on vacation days, and the daily visitor flow is 330,000, 17 per cent of which comes from other cities and countries (Chongqing Yuzhong District Government 2005). In the face of the commercial boom and popularity, we may raise similar questions that have been repeatedly used to inquire into other large CPDs in previous chapters, in order to understand Jie Fangbei's dynamic 'publicness' and identity, i.e., how this place has evolved over time, and thus how its current socio-physical form can be differentiated with its past. This will be firstly investigated through a brief review of the early history of this area, which is the subject of the following parts.

## 6-2-2 Treaty-Port and Republican period: from commercial street to political symbol

Following Shanghai, Nanjing, and Harbin, Chongqing was among the cities that were required to set up their Treaty Ports in the late nineteenth century. In 1891 it became the first inland commerce port open to foreigners, which transformed this remote, isolated hinterland town into a waterside trading hub in western China. At the beginning of the 1900s, Chongqing became the third biggest commercial port city of the country, after Shanghai and Wuhan. Commercial activities spread from the quays into the central part of the Peninsula where a commercial street, termed *Du You Street*, started to gather lots of primary shops. It was the earliest part of Jie Fangbei (Long 2001).

In the 1930s, the Street became more thriving: it assembled not only diverse shops ranging from street booths to up-scale department stores, but numbers of public attractions, such as the *Hot-Pot Alley* offering bargain foods, and the *Guo Tai Theatre*, the biggest inland theatre in the country at that time. The Street was used by multifarious groups: the Hot-Pot Alley was particularly popular

with the porters (termed *bangbang man* in Chongqing as they used bamboo poles, *bangbang*, to carry out goods. They are still a colony in the city today.); while the Theatre and restaurants were the favourite resorts of the higher class (Yuan *et al.* 2006).

During the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), Chongqing was heavily bombed by the Japanese Air Force, so that it now holds the distinction of being the most bombed city in history (Long 2001). The bombing severely impaired the commercial vitality of the Du You Street. In 1941 a five-storey wooden structure was erected in the middle section of the Street, named 'Spiritual Fortress', to signify the city's fortitude against the bombing. Since then this place had been often used as the site of anti-Japanese meetings, and therefore the Street was to a certain extent transformed into a political symbol of the city (Figure 6.4).

**Figure 6.4** *Top*: the Spiritual Fortress, a symbol of the city's fortitude against the Booming, was erected in the centre of the Du You Street in the 1940s. *Bottom*: anti-Japanese demonstrations and war memorial events were staged in this place so that the Street was imbued with strong political meanings (Source: Zhu 1999).

In 1946 the government rebuilt the Fortress as a permanent structure, a 27.5 metre high, octagonal concrete tower on a raised stage. It was renamed the 'Monument of the Anti-Japanese War Victory'. Its surrounding buildings were gradually recovered and the Street revived into a pedestrian-based, commercial place as it used to be in the 1930s (Figure 6.5). In 1950 when the Communist Party established its regime in Chongqing, the tower was renamed as the 'Monument of the Liberation',

*Jie Fangbei* in Chinese, and that has since been the official name of this area (Huang 2005).



**Figure 6.5** In 1946 the Spiritual Fortress was rebuilt into a permanent, concrete tower (afterwards renamed as Jie Fangbei by the communist in 1950), and its surrounding environment gradually became thriving again (Source: Zhu 1999).

### 6-2-3 Pre-market period: the socialist redevelopment between 1950s and 1970s

Through 1950s and 1960s, like its counterparts in other cities, Jie Fangbei was redeveloped in a socialist way. Private shops were transformed into state-owned institutions. Ranges of major national stores were set up, such as the Chongqing Department Store, the Traffic and Electricity Mansion, the Changjiang Stationery Store, and the Xin Hua Bookstore. However, their provisions largely conformed to the planned economy rather than the local market demands. For example, the Traffic and Electricity Mansion sold radio and bicycle equipments; but the former was too expensive to purchase for most of the people at the time, while the latter was of less use as Chongqing was a hilly city. It was ironic, however, that people still frequently gathered in front of the Mansion as it often radioed political programmes for the purpose of production advertising - '*the people did not care at all what the programmes were about; they just came to kill their time*' (Ding 2006). This reflected an essential absence of vibrant public life or at least, an absence of

adequate public amenities at the time. Many other public attractions had been also underplayed after the 1960s, for instance, the Guo Tai Theatre, renamed as the Oriental Red Theatre, was prohibited from featuring any Western dramas, with only 'socialist films' allowed.

The physical redevelopment in this area, meanwhile, also progressed. The Monument itself was physically upgraded so that its role as a monumental icon and a traffic landmark became stronger. The surrounding streets were largely redeveloped according to the modernist rationale which the government believed could raise the traffic efficiency and create a 'grand' urban image (Figure 6.6).



**Figure 6.6** *Left*: the Monument was physically detailed after 1949: a clock and a vane were put on its top, and a circular border was placed around the stage. These approaches further evolved this structure into a monumental icon and a traffic landmark of Jie Fangbei. Its visual and symbolic dominance over the surrounding environment thus became stronger. *Right top*: since the 1950s bus lines were introduced into Jie Fangbei and the streets were widened to better serve the vehicles. New buildings were required to give a bigger setback from the streets and stand in a continuous line, so that the views to the Monument could keep straight and clear. *Right bottom*: in late 1970s, railings and rows of trees were placed along the streets, which further developed them into boulevard-like traffic lanes, and restricted pedestrians' traversing over the streets.
(Source: http://www.flickr.com; http://blog.gkong.com)

The modernist redevelopment impaired Jie Fangbei's character of being a pedestrian-based place. Between the 1950s and the 1970s, however, the streets of Jie Fangbei were frequently occupied by mass political meetings and parades. These events often caused extreme congestion (Figure 6.7). It

was thus proposed by some planners in the late 1950s that Jie Fangbei should follow the British experience to build car-free zones in its central place. This proposal, however, was thought not to be in accordance with the 'socialist ideology' and thus was never implemented (Jie Fangbei Central Square Planning and Design Team 1999). The modernist redevelopment became more extreme through the 1970s: lots of old buildings were dismantled, giving way to uniform socialist structures. Even worse, some sites were 'emptied' for the purpose of manufacturer's storages and parking grounds. All these further devalued the quality of the public realm; the streets largely became crowded and filthy places (Ding 2006) (Figure 6.8).



**Figure 6.7** Political meetings and parades frequently happened in Jie Fangbei between 1950s and 1970s, which made this place largely politicised but these often conflicted with the vehicle-based street pattern as the iron rails and trees placed along the curbs would become large constraints upon the movement of the people (Source: Whitehouse and Whitehouse 1988: 90).

**Figure 6.8** *Top*: Jie Fangbei in late 1970s became a visually mediocre place with lots of socialist structures (usually 4-6 floor slabs made of grey bricks) taking over the old buildings and some sites even being used as storages for manufactories and parking grounds (in the right-down corner). *Bottom*: the streets were seen as crowded and filthy places so that they hardly facilitated healthy, civic public events. The photographer described the observed street scene as '*Street-corner vendors, pushed almost into the road by the crush of people on the pavement*' (Source: Whitehouse and Whitehouse 1988: 91).

In sum, Jie Fangbei's history leads to the similar conclusion drawn from the other four CPDs (see *Chapter 5*). It became thriving in the early twentieth century, due to the impact of imported Western commercialism, and was soon being recognised as an important commercial centre of Chongqing. The Sino-Japanese War largely impaired Jie Fangbei's commercial ambience, but on the other hand it made this place imbued with more political and civic functions, resembling Xin Jiekou in the 1930s. But in the pre-market period, Jie Fangbei unexceptionally saw the rise of extreme modernisation and politicisation of the built environment, which simplified the function of the streets. In that sense, the quality of the public realm deteriorated, characterised by a lower extent of 'publicness' than its earlier period. As stated before, the 1980s started China's political-economic transition and witnessed the advent of Jie Fangbei's physical evolution towards the local central pedestrian district. Four periods are identified as the key development stages in that evolution. The design and management at these different stages have dissimilar considerations and approaches, and produce different physical outcomes. Each of these periods is now analysed in turn.

## 6-3 The first high rise boom between 1980s and the middle 1990s

### 6-3-1 Functional transformations and their impact on the planning concern

Between 1980s and the middle 1990s four major functional transformations had taken place in Jie Fangbei: first, speculative office developments largely occurred in order to attract private capital in bank, trade and insurance industries which was once evicted from this area after 1950s; second, the hotel industry had been constantly facilitated by the rising influx of tourists and travelling merchants; third, retailing was transformed from plan-led to market-based with major retailers striving to provide their commodities in accordance with the market; and fourth, the dining industry increasingly thrived, attracting more restaurants to look for convenient sites to share the consumers (Ding 2006).

These functional transitions led to a huge demand for taller and more modern buildings because the old socialist structures could not satisfy these incoming speculative developments with their limited accommodation capacity and unattractive images. The former Director of Chongqing Urban Planning Bureau (CUPB hereinafter) recalls that the government and its planning authority had been concerned with two major aims over the 1980s: '*to offer a higher building volume in Jie Fangbei and to greatly improve its architectural visage*' (Source: interview in Chongqing).

Motivated by these desires, the tower form was considered an instant and effective treatment. High rise development became top of the planning agenda, but meanwhile the planning authority did not predefine any urban-design control guidelines, or a comprehensive evaluation system, to pilot the overall development of Jie Fangbei. New building proposals were generally examined by the CUPB through a 'case-by-case' process, while the 'laissez-faire' attitude of the Bureau often appeared evident:

*'In most cases the given planning conditions were simple and general. We basically examined several key elements such as the height, FSR* [floor space ratio]*, and the setback from the edges...Occasionally* [we] *invited external experts such as senior architects or university professors to participate in some case examinations...*[but] *basically we respected the choices of the developers and the designers in design aspects... Senior officers usually felt that the investment with these developments was very important to this area; sometimes the government could not afford to lose them by forcing too many planning or design conditions.'*
(Former Director of CUPB, Source: interview in Chongqing)

### 6-3-2 Four high-rise developments

Consequently, it was often the buildings rather than the places that became the first priority in Jie Fangbei's redevelopment at the time. The following four high-rise developments are the outcomes of that period. Generally, their common method to dealing with the public realm was largely based on architectural solutions. They produced inconsistent physical results (Box 6.1).

**Box 6.1: Four high rise buildings built between 1980s and middle 1990s**
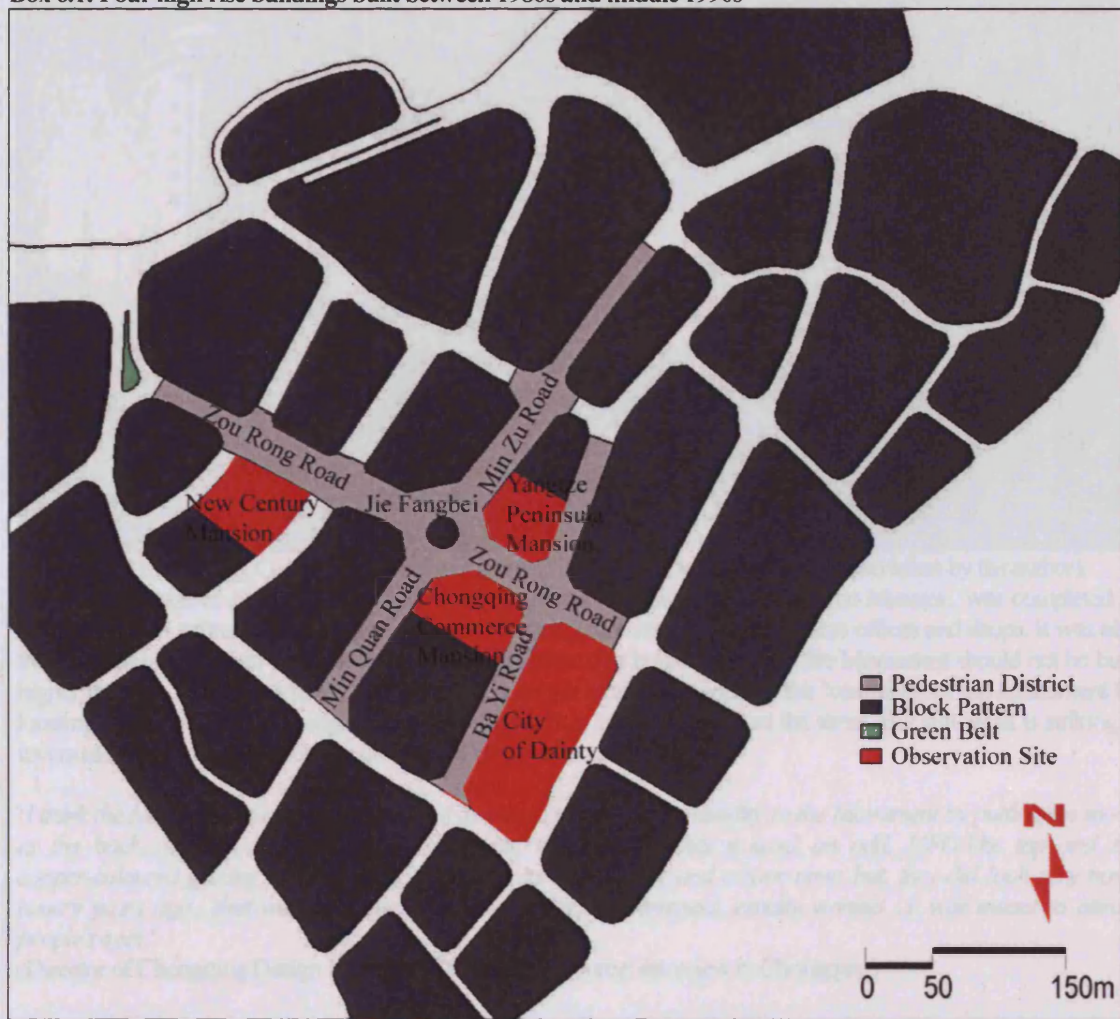


**Figure 6.9** Building sites (Source: adopted from the author's survey).

**Figure 6.10** Chongqing Commerce Mansion (Source: Chongqing Design Institute; photo taken by the author).
The first high rise of Jie Fangbei, with its symbolic name the Chongqing Commerce Mansion, was completed in 1987 to contain a three-star hotel, an up-scale restaurant, and a range of medium-size offices and shops. It was also the first building allowed to break the planning regulation that buildings around the Monument should not be built higher than the Monument itself. It has showed a certain extent of respect to the 'centrality' of the Monument by locating its tower at the back edge of the site, while letting its lower part front the street. But still, what is striking is its visual appearance, more than its linkage with the public realm:

'*I think the Mansion is successful in terms of its siting as it shows its humility to the Monument by putting the tower at the back...It was very, very much debatable in aesthetics that it used an odd, UFO-like top and the copper-coloured glazing...We may not appreciate its appearance and colour now; but, they did look very novel twenty years ago...that was what the developer, and the government, exactly wanted...it was meant to attract people's eyes.*'
(Director of Chongqing Design Institute, CDI hereafter, Source: interview in Chongqing)

Another aspect of the Mansion deserves mention: it provides a series of small shop units on the ground floor, constructing a continuous street line with convenient steps. It was observed that these steps were used as resting or lingering points by both general public and some 'socially-marginalised' people, e.g., beggars. At the time of the observation, no strict private control or management was being exercised over these steps.

**Figure 6.11** New Century Mansion (Source: Dai Zhizhong; photo taken by the author).
The New Century Mansion completed in 1994 took over the site of the former Traffic and Electricity Mansion. It was projected to accommodate a three-star hotel and a big department store. The architect used a combination of several vertical towers clad with deep-blue glazing. His focus was to a great extent upon the visual appearance of the building:

*'We wanted to create a metaphor of industrialised architecture reflecting the context of this site which was based on industrial production that the Mansion sold. That idea was transformed to an intention to project a complexity in appearance.'*
(Architect of the Mansion, Source: interview in Chongqing)

The original design had more details on the frontage, such as a video screen and an exposed escalator, in order to 'offer an architectural richness to the street'. But many of them were simplified in the final completion because the developer considered these as 'unprofitable' items. And the planning authority compromised in this regard:

*'The developer considered these items unnecessary, and costly to deliver. Both the government and the developer were eager to quickly erect that new landmark…We thought the tower itself was distinctive enough; in fact we did not argue much on the design of the frontage…'*
(Former Director of CUPB, Source: interview in Chongqing)

There is now roughness in scale and detail on the building facade near the street. Arguably the Mansion only delivers a mediocre visual quality to the public realm, rather than the 'architectural richness' it attempted. But two food booths at the entrance acted as magnets, constantly attracting people to gather and stay; and the steps were also used as seating places, similarly without strict private control being imposed there.
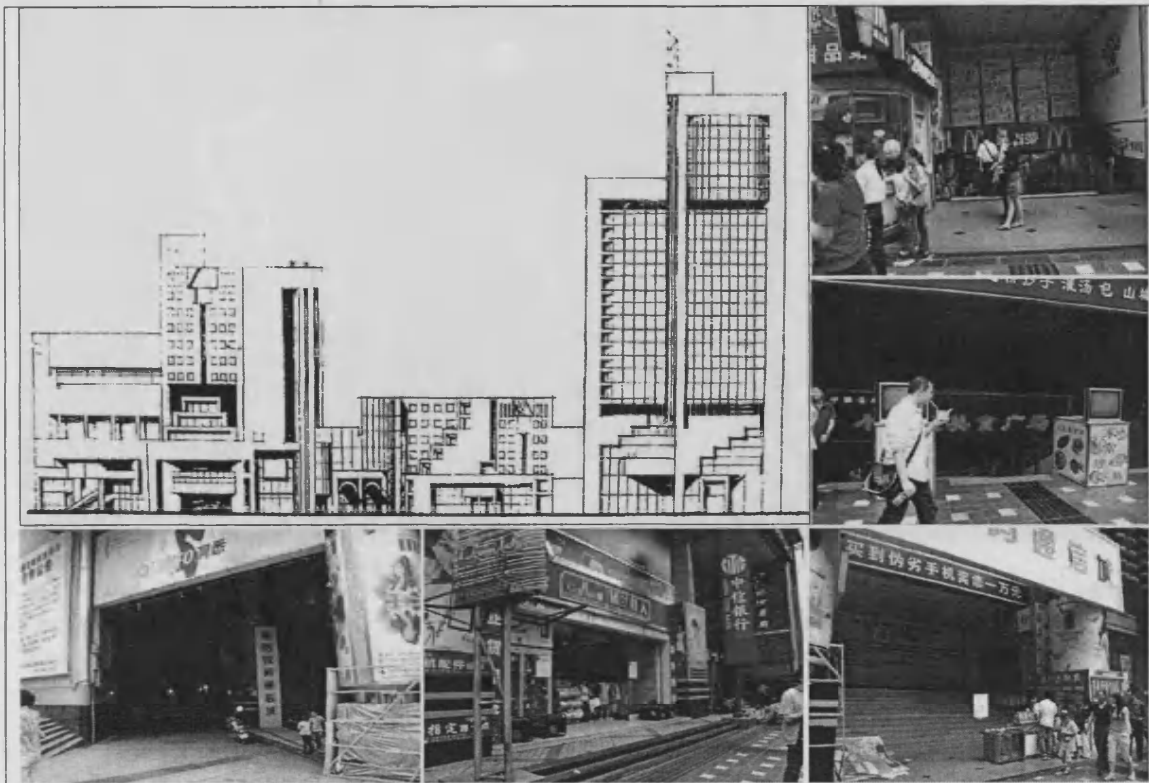
**Figure 6.12** City of Dainty (Source: Dai Zhizhong; photo taken by the author).

In 1994 the site behind the Chongqing Commerce Mansion was planned as a mega commercial complex, termed the City of Dainty, containing offices, apartments, hotels and shops. Its ground floor was particularly designated as a concentration area of dining shops because this place already had a high number of local restaurants and snack bars. The architect projected an eclectic design that mixed two modernist towers with various ground floor elements along the street - lots of niches, steps, and raised or recessed platforms. But his interest was largely based on the 'aesthetics' of the facade rather than the practical usage of these elements:

'*We deliberately mixed the modernist style with the local architectural language in order to produce a distinctive building pattern in Jie Fangbei...Lots of small shops needed to be accommodated in that Mansion. That was an advantage* [for our design] *because we would be able to create the high visual diversity that we wanted on the facade...*'
(Architect of City of Dainty, Source: interview in Chongqing)

The completed building however seems 'excessive' in detail and style. Too many raised and recessed niches have largely fragmented the public realm and the building facade, achieving only a disconnected frontage system and leading to a disorderly distribution of shops. At the time of the observation, the inside shop entrances usually looked dark, creating privacy rather than delivering decent visual access. It was observed that, although there were plenty of steps for seating, there were different degrees of 'emptiness' at these entrances. Some shopkeepers still placed their stalls on the street:

'*I did rent a stall inside one of the shops. But there are more than fifteen steps between the street and the shop entrance. That's too many for a customer to climb up to enter the shop. Too many steps are a huge disadvantage for small businesses.*'
(Local vendor, Source: random interview in Jie Fangbei)

**Figure 6.13** Yangtze Peninsula Mansion (Source: CDI; photo taken by the author).

The Yangtze Peninsula Mansion was the second high rise built close to the Monument. Its function covered a four-star hotel, a bank, and numbers of retailing shops. In terms of layout, it followed the Chongqing Commerce Mansion, locating its tower at the rear of the site while fronting the Monument with its lower storeys. This time this was largely due to the active intervention of the planning authority:

'*The Chongqing Commerce Mansion was considered a success, or at least acceptable, in terms of its siting. Therefore in the case of the Yangtze Peninsula Mansion, we clearly required the developer place the tower away from the frontline near the Monument...in terms of architecture we raised few prescriptions.*'
(Former Director of CUPB, Source: interview in Chongqing)

In contrast with the City of Dainty, it has created a more generous, efficient colonnaded ground floor with higher continuity and accessibility. Having a more balanced distribution of shops, this half-open colonnade is also used as a covered 'belt' shading the strolling people and numbers of vending points. This strategy was the combination of a pursuit of usage adaptability and an attempt to address the public realm in a compact way:

'*The developer had a clear strategy - he asked us to create a range of uniform shop units along the street, so that he could promptly combine or subdivide them according to the demand of the tenants...We thought it would have overwhelmed the Monument if we over designed the facade; so we just introduced a coherent colonnade roofing over the shops below...*'
(Architect of the Mansion, Source: interview in Chongqing)

However, there was still one strong criticism that the upper facade of the building was so closed and blank that it had no 'dialogue' at all with the Monument - according to the architect, that was because the developer needed a huge 'board' for large advertisements (This has been later addressed as an important lesson which reflects the negligent planning concern with the public realm - see *6-4*):

'*We have received criticisms from both the public and senior government officers...People have generally considered it inappropriate, or ugly, to front the Monument and the street with huge, closed facades...people may wish to see the Monument at different heights.*'
(Section Chief of CUPB, Source: interview in Chongqing)

To briefly conclude, the redevelopment between 1980s and the middle 1990s was largely driven by a strong pursuit of architectural distinctiveness for the purpose of large-scale, single-development marketing (*'it was meant to attract people's eyes'*). With a dominant aim to attract private capital, and in the absence of systematic urban-design considerations, the planning authority's control over the place-making was largely sacrificed. In many cases, the design focus was more on the 'tower' than where it hit the ground. And it was often the architects' sporadic thinking, mostly by-products of the architectural design, which shaped the surrounding environments of these buildings. The physical outcomes thus appear inconsistent - many of these buildings characterise a very weak physical association with the public realm, and even 'fragment' the street with facade 'interruptions', despite the fact that some of them present positive elements (steps, alcoves etc.) which can be used by the people, including the 'marginalised group', as resting and lingering places.

## 6-4 The first pedestrianisation, 1997

### 6-4-1 The environmental exacerbation facilitated by the high-rise boom

The first high rise boom largely transformed Jie Fangbei from a mediocre socialist city centre to a focus of intense commercial development. But in the meantime, this boom further intensified the conflict between pedestrians and vehicles as new high-rise buildings attracted more clients and consumers into this area. The iron railings along the street curb still confined the pedestrians onto the narrow sidewalk which was only three to four metres at its narrowest and was even cluttered with trash bins, lamps, and telegraph poles (Jie Fangbei Central Square Planning and Design Team 1999: 24). This condition led to not only frequent congestion but safety problems: in 1996 the building in the northwest corner of the Monument was burned down due to a short circuit on the congested telegraph poles. To ease the congestion, the government began to restrict vehicle access at weekends. This, however, was not a permanent solution (Cao 2001) (Figure 6.14).

**Figure 6.14** In late 1990s, a weekend car-free scheme began to be undertaken in Jie Fangbei. It attracted more visitors into this area on weekends. But the restriction of the railings remained and thus people on the street were still isolated from the side buildings/shops. To a certain extent, the street was updated into a widened 'movement lane', rather than a place able to facilitate more public uses (Source: http://play.cq139.com).

## 6-4-2 The municipalisation of Chongqing and the economic analyses of the CPD strategy

In 1997 a significant institutional reform took place: the central government selected Chongqing as China's fourth municipality city. The aim was that this city might become a Chinese Chicago, acting as the 'engine city' for the development of the western part of the country, as Chicago did in the United States of the nineteenth century. Investment was then put into massive infrastructure works, including a plan to develop Jie Fangbei into a permanent 'central pedestrian district' of the city (Chongqing Urban Planning Bureau 2003b).

The municipal government was concerned with the commercial potentials of that plan. According to a research report by the Chongqing University, that plan was based on four 'economic reasons' (Table 6.1). They indicate the government's attempt to create a 'branded environment' of the city. It treated the land as a profitable commodity, and considered that pedestrianisation could maximise the commercial benefits (the 'returns') but should require relatively minimal inputs. These concerns reflect the debatable 'themes' of contemporary place-making which we have discussed in *Chapter 2*, that large cities all over the world are driven by commercial services and consumer needs, and therefore are struggling to make places suitable for commercial aims.

**Table 6.1** Economic analyses of CPD Plan

◆ *To avoid high land cost*
The land price of Jie Fangbei (five million yuan per mu, about 667 m$^2$) is much higher than that of the other sub-centre districts (averaging below two million yuan per m$^2$), which means that a radical redevelopment based upon massive land reclamation will cost an extremely high price. In contrast, a controllable pedestrianisation enables the government to upgrade the public environment at a relatively lower cost.

◆ *To gain high financial returns*
A safe and efficient public environment can draw more consumers, and therefore can gather more investment and shops, creating higher value land leases and more revenue for the government.

◆ *To create high efficiency of space provision*
The government believes in the Law of Diminishing Marginal Utility in the public space provision, meaning that in a congested commercial environment a relatively limited space provision meets the public demand more efficiently. In this respect, a pedestrianisation confined to the existing street pattern is a better option than a radical reconstruction of the public-space system.

◆ *To create an attractive and marketable 'brand' of place*
Pedestrianisation in this area can create alluring places by quality landscaping and environmental beautification, attracting more people, not only the locals but also tourists from other cities. Thus it can help make up an influential urban image that will in return benefit the city's economy.

(Source: School of Architecture and Urban Planning, Chongqing University 2004a)

## 6-4-3 The 1997 Pedestrianisation Plan: five principles and four approaches

Based upon the considerations above, the government set up its practical 1997 Pedestrianisation Plan to dictate the first pedestrianisation of Jie Fangbei. The Plan stated five planning and design principles which laid emphases on the quality of the public realm and the aesthetics of space (Cao 2001) (Table 6.2).

**Table 6.2** Five principles of 1997 Pedestrianisation Plan

| |
|---|
| *1. Comprehensively considering social, economic and environmental dimensions of Jie Fangbei, in terms of not only their current utilities but future demands;* |
| *2. Shaping a 'compact, bright, decent, and flourishing' commercial centre image;* |
| *3. Upgrading the traffic net;* |
| *4. Creating a series of 'graceful' urban spaces;* |
| *5. And, offering more public facilities.* |

(Source: Jie Fangbei Central Square Planning and Design Team 1999: 26)

Apart from the general principles, the Plan set out four practical approaches. *The first one* was that the four street sections crossing the Monument, 400 metres long in west-east *Zou Rong Road* (32-35 meters in width) and 350 metres in north-south *Min Zu Road* and *Min Quan Road* (30 meters in width), be fully pedestrianised, and the Monument site should be developed into a central square to act as a permanent 'civic stage' (Figure 6.15).
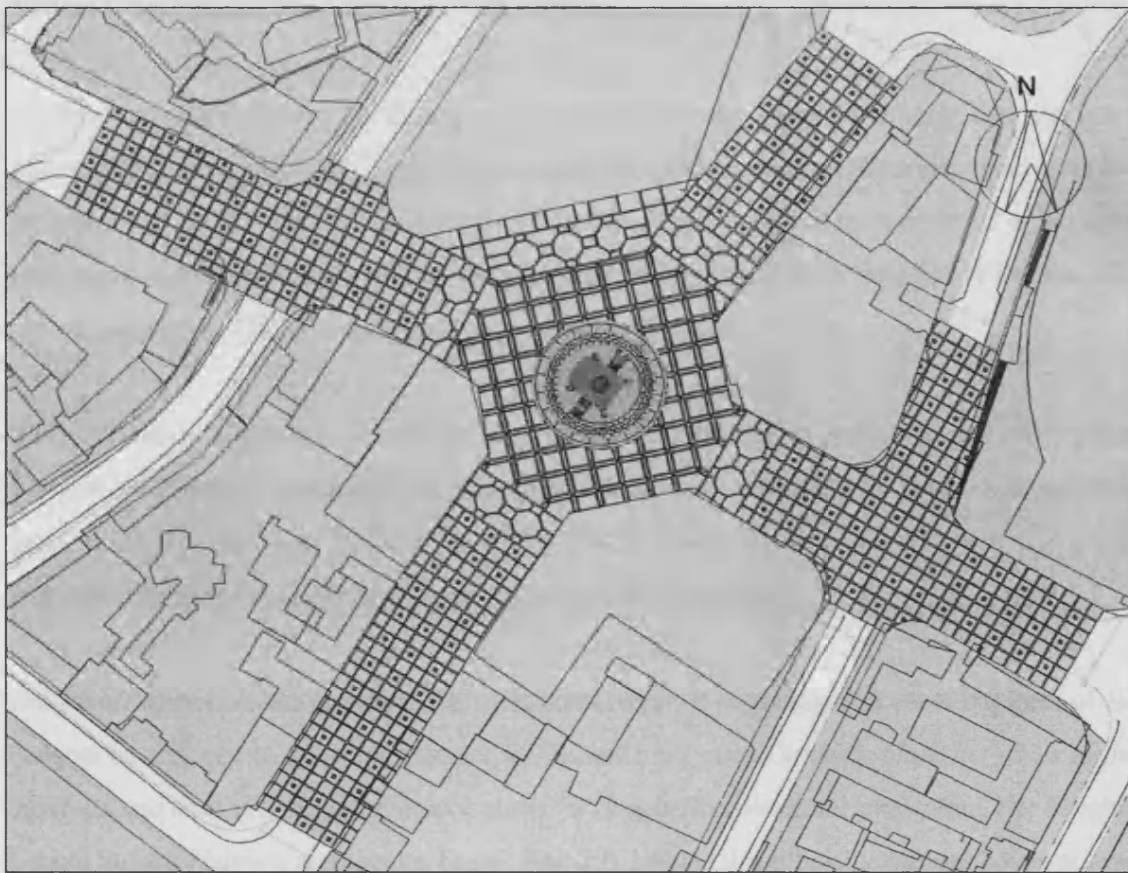
**Figure 6.15** The 1997 Pedestrianisation Plan. Four street sections crossing the Monument were proposed to be fully pedestrianised. The whole layout of this place remained largely intact; while most of the considerations were given to the floorscape, particularly the pavement (including its scale, forms, materials, and colour in different pedestrianised sections) (Source: Cao Chunhua).

*The second approach* aimed at the frontage of new buildings. It addressed the 'frontage failure' of the Yangtze Peninsula Mansion, stating that '*transparency and continuity of building frontages are necessities to new developments*', and that the integration between the exterior and the interior environments should be particularly established in any future development near the Monument (Cao 2001). Proposed prescriptions included using frontage materials with higher transparency, and more colonnaded or open-arcaded spaces on the ground floor. These are considered as the sign that the planning authority began to intervene more into new building proposals:

'*The pedestrianisation of the streets was basically public funded. The government certainly hoped it could achieve a good impression...More planning and design conditions were necessary for new developments. That actually conformed to the overall development strategy and the principles.*'

(Former Director of CUPB, Source: interview in Chongqing)

*The third approach* focused on the use of the northwest corner of the Monument that was burnt down in 1996. Although many argued that it should be rebuilt as an open plaza that could assist the central square with more places and facilities, the Plan suggested an alternative solution: a speculative development item with an additional 20 metre setback from the edge of the site. The planner explains that the decision was based on a direct financial problem:

'*The government simply did not have the financial capacity to build up an independent public plaza. It needed to offset its investment* [in the pedestrianisation] *and compensate the people who lost their properties in that fire. So we had to trade off that land to private developers.* '
(Principal Planner of the 1997 Plan, Source: interview in Chongqing)

*The fourth approach* has provoked the most controversy. It suggested that most big trees of Jie Fangbei be replaced by movable planters as '*mature trees would severely block the views to the buildings and thus have negative impacts upon Jie Fangbei's commercial atmosphere*' (Jie Fangbei Central Square Planning and Design Team 1999: 29). Behind this official statement, however, was the biased perception of certain individuals on public space:

'*That proposition* [the move of big trees] *was in fact raised by one of our vice-mayors. He admired the grand square in some Western cities...He thought that the new buildings in Jie Fangbei should be visually exposed to the visitors as much as possible...*'
(Principal Planner of the 1997 Plan, Source: interview in Chongqing)

### 6-4-4 Setting the street management byelaw

After the preparation of the Pedestranisation Plan, a special public department affiliated to the Yuzhong District Government, named the Jie Fangbei Comprehensive Management Sector, was set up to take charge of the street management. Proceedings such as public-event organisation, exterior advertisement, public-facility placement, and street maintenance had to be examined and approved by the Sector in order to secure the 'high CPD profile'. Moreover, it produced the byelaw that clearly prohibited a series of behaviours (Table 6.3).

**Table 6.3** Behaviours that are legally prohibited in Jie Fangbei CPD

* *Affray*
* *Knife carrying and leaflet sending*
* *Begging, unlicensed street performing, and trash collecting for trade*
* *Violating civic facilities*
* *Cycling, skateboarding, dog walking and ball playing*
* *Vandalising public guideposts*
* *Unapproved advertisement placement*
* *Sitting on or crossing fencing or bordering facilities*
* *Stalls encroaching the street*
* *Unlicensed vending*
* *Unclean activities (spitting, trash dropping, etc.)*
* *Any unapproved organised events*
* *Unapproved car driving- in and parking*
* *Any other illegal activities*

(Source: www.yzxw.gov.cn)

That was the first byelaw as such in Jie Fangbei CPD. Before that, some activities had existed in the 'grey zone' of management, e.g., leaflet sending and trash collecting; legally they had been neither admitted nor necessarily forbidden. In this regard through the bylaw the street management became more formalised and tighter than before.

## 6-4-5 One Square and one street

The pedestrianisation started in the middle of 1997 and was completed at the end of that year. The proposed Central Square was created, with its four linked streets pedestrianised. Some sections of these streets were refurbished in the later second pedestrianisation, and thus will be discussed in section 6-6. The following sites, however, have largely retained their characteristics of the time when they were first pedestrianised. Their usage patterns are therefore examined so that the lessons of the first pedestrianisation can be learnt (Box 6.2-6.3).

**Box 6.2: The Central Square**



**Figure 6.16** The Central Square site (Source: adopted from the author's survey).



**Figure 6.17** Physical setting of the Central Square (Source: adopted from the author's survey).

The site around the Monument was transformed from a quasi traffic roundabout into a public central square. By appearance, the Monument still remains as a ceremonial structure: surrounded by a flowerpot belt, it offers few seating places to the public, except the steps connecting the ground with the stage that can seat people. And two nearby planter borders can also be used as seating devices. Public access to the Monument is allowed as long as no public events are staged here. The government allows the stage and the Square to accommodate 'any approved political, economic, social and cultural activities' (Chongqing Yuzhong District Government 2002). But the approval and examination of event organisation are under tight control of the Jie Fangbei Comprehensive Management Sector. Generally only two types of events can be permitted: government-led marketing and public-welfare promotions, and corporate commercial displays/performances (Figure 6.18-6.20).

**Figure 6.18** Environment-protection event in Central Square (Source: photo taken by the author).
Pictured on 5th June, 2007, Tuesday. It was a memorial event for the World Environment Day which aimed to disseminate the government's policies and achievements in environmental protection during recent years. The attendants were senior officers and the audiences consisted of governmental employees and general citizens. The event lasted for two hours, from 9:30 to 11:30.



**Figure 6.19** Public concert in Central Square (Source: photo taken by the author).
Pictured on 14th June, 2007, Thursday. A huge public concert was held in the Square in order to celebrate 'the first decade of Chongqing's municipalisation'. It was organised by the government but heavily funded by private companies - large-scale real estate advertisements were hung around above the stage. The surrounding close spaces were tightly arranged as seating areas. It was learnt that the government had made great efforts to make this event appealing and grand:

'*We got paid by our danwei to attend this concert. It's 20 yuan for each person.*'
(Audience, Source: random interview in Jie Fangbei)

Thus essentially this event could be considered as part of the government's city marketing. Its content was to praise and advertise the recent social-economic achievements of the City. The concert lasted for three hours, from19:30 to 22:30, attracting a huge audience.

**Figure 6.20** New Year count down in Central Square (Source: http://www.cq.xinhuanet.com).
Pictured on the New Year's Eve, 2006. The Square has been used as a count-down place for the New Year's Eve on which huge populations are gathering around the Monument to have a public celebration, much similar to a massive carnival. It is the government that is in charge with the order and maintenance of this event. It is now a big annual attraction of Jie Fangbei which potentially reinforces the 'brand value' of this place.

Regarding its function in supporting individual behaviours, the Square fares relatively well as an exercising and strolling place in the early morning and late evening of a day when the weather is cool and the streets remain relatively capacious. But in the middle of the day, particularly from early lunchtime until the late afternoon, when the temperature rises and office workers and tourists build up in large numbers, the Square is largely used as a 'photo opportunity' site. The lack of sitting/sheltering space is evident: there are no high planters or temporary structures (e.g., booths or pavilions) that can shade the people; only two circular borders are placed at the edge of the Square that can each seat around 20 people. The Monument stage itself is isolated from the ground in its most parts by railings and arrays of flowerpots, thus unable to seat many people on its border. Besides, according to the management byelaw, individual vending and performing are strictly forbidden in this place, unless with official permissions which are however very difficult to get (Figure 6.21-6.25).



**Figure 6.21** Central Square, between 7:30 and 8:30 (Source: photo taken by the author).
Pictured on 4th June, 2007, Monday. In the early morning the Square was particularly popular with exercisers from nearby local communities. At the time of the observation, there were 10-15 people playing badminton, 60 group dancing, 5-6 exercising *Taichi*, and numbers of others strolling around, or standing still and watching. The overall ambience of this place appeared relaxing and with a strong sense of community:

*'In the summer I come everyday with my friends. It is a good place to do exercise and watch others exercising.'*
(Morning exerciser, Source: random interview in Jie Fangbei)



**Figure 6.22** Central Square between 9:30 and 10:30 (Source: photo taken by the author).
Pictured on 4th June, 2007, Monday. Morning exercisers had gradually dispersed and office workers increased. In general, people at the time had come and leave in haste. There were few socially interacting activities that were captured except that a table was seen placed there to do a short-term promotion for the next day's public event.



**Figure 6.23** Central Square between 13:30 and 14:30 (Source: photo taken by the author).
Pictured on 4th June, 2007, Monday. The pedestrian's haste was unceasing. There were occasionally people stopping and having a short chat; but long-lasting, impromptu activities hardly occurred, except that there were always 20-30 tourists approaching the Monument to take photos. The lack of sitting/sheltering space became quite apparent: someone was standing beneath the awning of the near building to escape the sunlight.

*'It is overexposed to the sunlight and even you cannot find a booth to buy a cold drink here.'*
(Tourist, Source: random interview in Jie Fangbei)



**Figure 6.24** Central Square between 17:30 and 18:30 (Source: photo taken by the author).
Pictured on 4th June, 2007, Monday. It was now off-work time and the air temperature began to drop. Off-work office workers increased in the centre of the Square. Many of them tended to linger for a while and talked with their friends. There were also several window shoppers lingering around nearby shop fronts. The two circular borders began to be frequently occupied, acting as points for occasional socialisation. At the time of the observation, there were 2-3 shoe cleaners and bangbang men who were looking for customers in the Square (illegal).

**Figure 6.25** Central Square between 19:30 and 20:30 (Source: photo taken by the author).
Pictured on 4th June, 2007, Monday. When it was getting dark the Square began to be filled with 'strolling people'. Some of them were off-office workers, and some from local communities. They usually lingered for a long time, talking in groups or just standing still to watch others. At the time of the observation, there were also 5-6 families walking and playing with their children in the Square. They were from relatively distant residential neighbourhoods where there was a shortage of communal, open spaces. They came to Jie Fangbei to 'compensate for' that:

'*This is a spacious and safe place for our child to play in. We don't have such a place in our neighbourhood.*'
(Parents, Source: random interview in Jie Fangbei)

**Box 6.3: The Min Quan Road**



**Figure 6.26** The Min Quan Road site (Source: adopted from the author's survey).
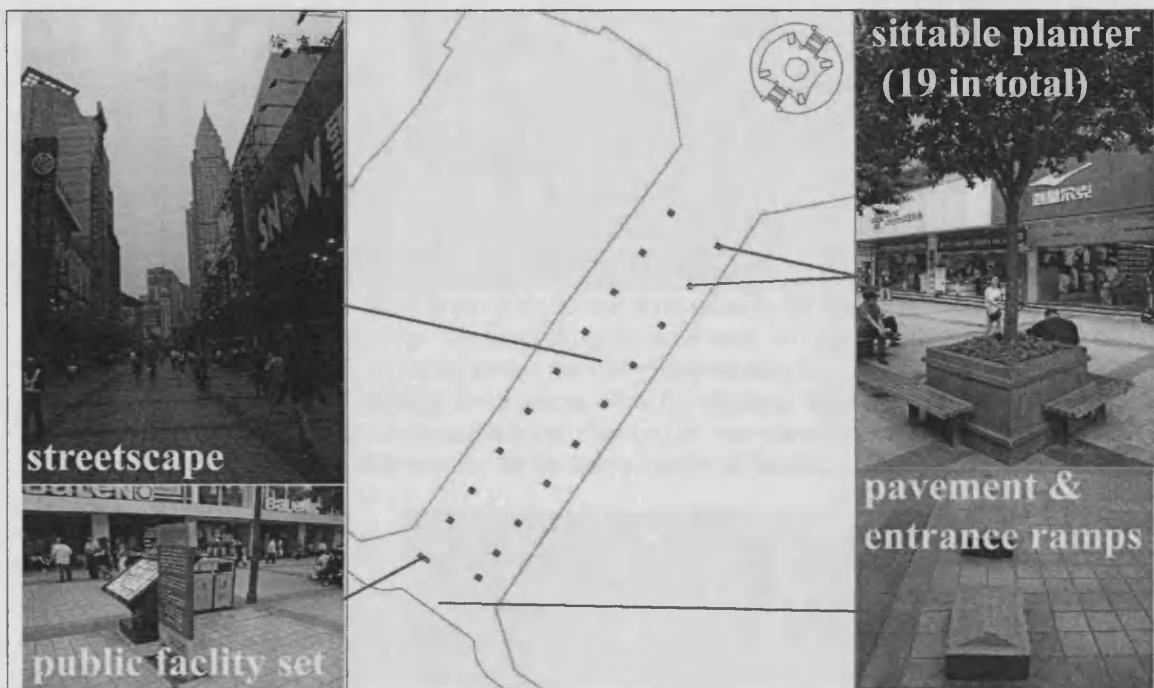
**Figure 6.27** Physical setting of the Min Quan Road (Source: adopted from the author's survey).

The Min Quan Road was pedestrianised in 1997. Led by the approach 'removing the big trees', the previous two rows of tall trees standing along the sidewalks were completely removed, replaced by 19 movable wooden boxes with small-size plants and attached seats (each seating 10 people at most). These boxes have taken a 12-metre distance in total from the building frontages, leaving an 18-metre gap in the middle of the street (the whole width of the street is 30 metres). The pavement of this street is quite uniform, made of quadrate grey tiles confined by dark granite belts. Some new public facilities, such as sign boards and trash bins, are also added onto the street. Some critics have commented on the Min Quan Road featuring the 1997 pedestrianisation, pointing out that its pedestrianisation did not create an effective sub-division of space:

*'The whole spatial form is still as flat as the formal traffic net. The over-straight street lines, the high enclosure by surrounding buildings, and the lack of series of small spaces all together make the pedestrians fell like still walking on a wide road rather than within a carefully-deployed and human-based place that is full of richness of living...Particularly in the centre of the street the void environment makes the pedestrians feel like 'floating' in a huge space; they are therefore uneasy with crossing the street or staying in the centre while in most cases tending to go along the building edges...Thus there is an apparent waste of space in the central parts of the streets, which also obviously sacrifices the sense of hospitality of this place.'* (Su 2004: 85)

The on-site observation confirms the critique. Partly similar to the Central Square, the centre of the Road is fully used only in the morning, due to the occupation of morning exercisers. While through most of the day, the Road is largely functioning as a 'moving lane' containing few 'optional' activities. But those box planters near the building edges are frequently used as gathering points for people to linger; but in many cases, people's staying there appears 'passive', lacking substantial social interaction (Figure 6.28-6.32).

**Figure 6.28** Min Quan Road between 7:30 and 8:30 (Source: photo taken by the author).
Pictured on 13<sup>th</sup> June, 2007, Wednesday. The shops along the street were not open until around 8:30-9:00. At the time of the observation, there were 6 elderly people from local communities exercising *Taichi* in the centre of the street. The planter seats were occupied by 10-15 people, either the elderly or bangbang men. There was sporadic chatting between those from the same group, but most of the people were staying on their own. Another main user group was the sanitation workers who were starting the street cleansing of the day.



**Figure 6.29** Min Quan Road between 9:30 and 10:30 (Source: photo taken by the author).
Pictured on 13<sup>th</sup> June, 2007, Wednesday. The shops almost opened and the office workers rushing by on the street had increased. More people, around 30-40 in total during the observation, came to sit on the planter seats. The majority of them were still the elderly from local communities (for them, this was surely the place to have some random 'time-killing') as well as some bangbang men (this was the place for them to take a short break as well as to look for new clients). But interpersonal socialisation was still rare, and most people did not stay for long - generally 5-7 minutes was the utmost time that for a people to be sitting on the seat.



**Figure 6.30** Min Quan Road between 13:30 and 14:30 (Source: photo taken by the author).
Pictured on 13<sup>th</sup> June, 2007, Wednesday. The sunlight became much stronger and the air temperature increased rapidly. It was observed that the centre of the street got very uncomfortable due to its direct exposure to the sunlight and strong reflection of the heat (Chongqing's summer temperature was often beyond 35℃ and could reach 40℃). There were few people now walking in the middle of the street. Also, the edge areas were not ideal for sitting as the plants were too small to offer shelter. Therefore many less people were sitting on these seats, and some chose to stand near the shops in the shade:

*'They sometimes favour staying right in front of the shop doors where the inside air conditioners can reach, but that in fact greatly interrupts the normal running of these shops.'*
(Local shop clerk, Source: random interview in Jie Fangbei)



**Figure 6.31** Min Quan Road between 17:30 and 18:30 (Source: photo taken by the author).
Pictured on 13th June, 2007, Wednesday. The sunlight now largely weakened and the air temperature obviously declined. The middle of the street now contained the biggest pedestrian population of the day which consisted of off-duty workers, shoppers, and tourists. Some of these people (10-15 during the observation) stood on the street for a while, talking with each other or simply waiting; while most still passed by. There were many more people now sitting on the planter seats. They appeared more relaxed than earlier hours - at the time of the observation, around 50-60 people in total were using the seats, among which 5-6 were eating or drinking, 2 reading newspaper, 2 playing with their children, 1-2 repeatedly standing up, wandering around, squatting and then sitting down again, and most simply sitting and aimlessly looking around. The time for which they had occupied the seats also extended - averagely 5-10 minutes for each and some a few stayed more than 15 minutes.



**Figure 6.32** Min Quan Road between 19:30 and 20:30 (Source: photo taken by the author).
Pictured on 13th June, 2007, Wednesday. The pedestrian density on the street now began to decrease. During the first half hour, the people using the seats evidently decreased - only 15-20 in total; and they had just sat there for a much shorter time - averagely 5 minutes each. During the second half hour, however, relatively more people had come to sit, about 30-40 including 10 off-duty policemen, 5-8 retired local workers (by look), and 1 'illegal' shoe cleaner serving the customer. But most of them still did not stay for long - similarly 5 minutes each in average - it was presumably because there was now nothing to watch on the street when the pedestrian density dropped. After 20:30 the people again decreased so that the edge areas shortly became empty.

To briefly sum up, the 1997 pedestrianisation was the first attempt to forge Jie Fangbei as an entire 'brand', featuring the government's own strong commercial pursuits and marketing strategies for the whole place. The use of the Central Square is evident - seemingly it has been reinvented as an 'event stage' as it was in its earlier period. Virtually it has been radically altered into a much more commercialised, sometimes 'festivalised' site (but under official management control) - its public events are often funded by/advertising for private enterprises; while with its marketing promotions usually celebrated in the name of common welfare. These observations again coincide with the

dominant issue revealed in *Chapter 2*, that contemporary urban public spaces are increasingly coupled with commercial requirements so that their public nature is facing more challenges.

But on the other hand, the 1997 Plan began to raise some primary urban-design principles which engaged with the production of places rather than individual buildings. In that sense, the Plan can be seen as a preliminary commitment to raise the quality of the public realm. However as revealed previously, along with the increasing sophistication of design and management (financial pressures, officer's personal favours, formalised management regime, etc.), the final production of the 1997 Plan had in many places reflected the ineffective sub-division of space, as well as the inadequate provision of public amenities, therefore failing to deliver a fully convincing ambience of civility and community. The following quote again says the similar critique:

*'They thought that big trees would shade the skyline of the buildings and so impair the overall commercial atmosphere of the street...But we need to understand what on earth makes up the atmosphere, the people or the buildings? If there are no people at all because of the lack of shaded environments, where does the commercial atmosphere come from?'*
(Professor of Architecture at Chongqing University, Source: interview in Chongqing)

## 6-5 The second high rise boom, 1998-2001

### 6-5-1 Increasing commercial potentials after the 1997 pedestrianisation

The 1997 pedestrianisation created a 22,400 m$^2$ area of pedestrian space in total. As expected, Jie Fangbei had largely become a 'brand' place in western China in terms of economic achievement - between 1997 and 2001 the annual retailing turnover of Jie Fangbei had constantly increased by 12 per cent each year and its total retailing income accounted for 11.45 per cent of the city's retail activity. In 1999 its 'brand value' was recognised by the central government, being awarded as the 'National Demonstration Commercial Street' (Xu 2001). The commercial success resulted in a constant influx of shops and enterprises looking for their niches in this potential area: in 2002 there were already 5,057 various companies in Jie Fangbei (Chongqing Yuzhong District Government 2006). And more significantly, the 1997 pedestrianisation transformed more sites into convenient lands for speculative development, facilitating the second tide of high-rise boom between 1998 and 2001.

## 6-5-2 Four high-rise developments

The high-rise buildings developed or granted planning permissions between 1998 and 2001 had highly commercial content including offices, hotels, retailing, and entertainment, so that they were often projected as corporate commercial complexes. As will be outlined below, in general they pursued a higher degree of 'visual distinctiveness', in comparison with those developed in the first high-rise boom, through adopting more novel architectural languages. But meanwhile, on the basis of the 1997 Pedestrianisation Plan (its aims, principles, and approaches), the planning authority had also begun to impose more interventions upon these new developments, requiring more contribution from new buildings to the public realm.

'*After 1997 the Planning Bureau established a formal Planning Commission in charge of the case examination of important new developments of the city. Jie Fangbei has certainly become the key area that the Commission looks at...There are about twenty panel members in the Commission, including government officers, university professors, renowned architects and other professional experts...The examination was largely based on the 1997 Pedestrianisation Plan...We suggested that new buildings offer more open forecourts or in-between public squares.*'
(Principal Planner of the 1997 Plan, Source: interview in Chongqing)

'*Our main concern was gradually shifting from architectural dominance to relatively more urban design interests. We had made efforts to look at if new proposals conformed to the overall aim of the 1997 Plan.*'
(Director General of CUPB, Source: interview in Chongqing)

As the result, the high-rise buildings built up between 1998 and 2001 in many aspects gave more considerations to the public space. Their architectural design was often coupled with the deliberate provision of small-scale open squares (Box 6.4).

**Box 6.4: Four high rise buildings built between 1998 and 2001**
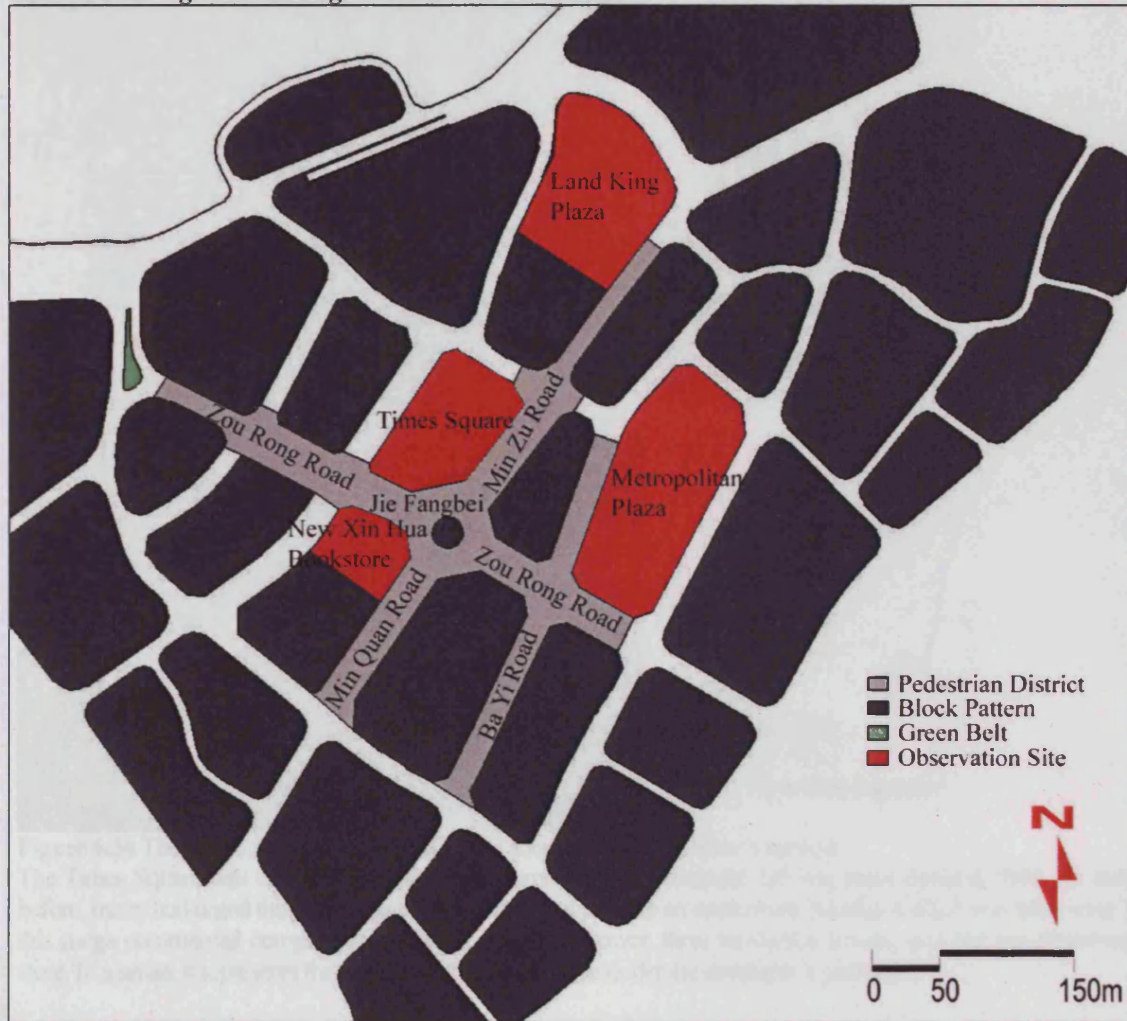


**Figure 6.33** Building sites (Source: adopted from the author's survey).
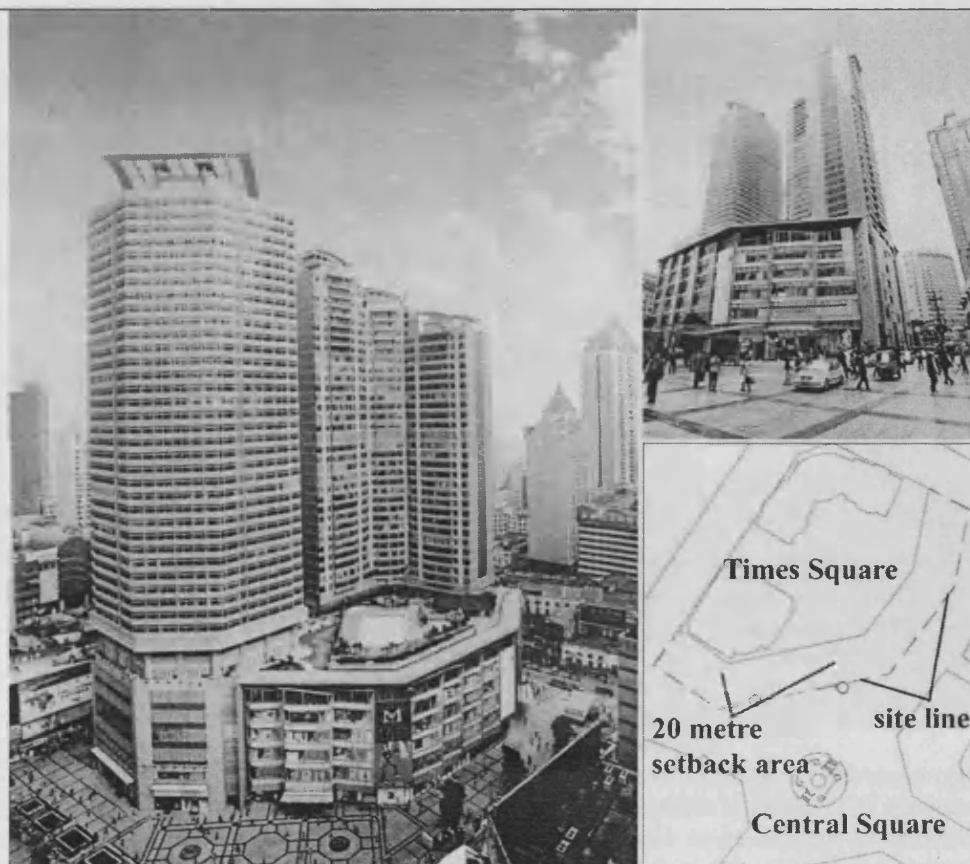
**Figure 6.34** The Times Square (Source: CDI, and adopted from the author's survey).

The Times Square was erected in the northwest corner of the Monument that was burnt down in 1996. As stated before, many had urged the government to transform that site into an open plaza, but eventually it was taken over by this mega commercial complex consisting of one office tower, three residential towers, and one big department store. In a sense, it represents the government's compromise under the developer's pressure:

'*We once suggested another plan: the surface of the site could remain open and flat if the commercial complex could be accommodated underground. But it failed to attract any developers. Developers needed not just shops but offices and residential departments ... We eventually had to accept the solution that the 1997 Plan projected.*'
(Former Director of CUPB, Source: interview in Chongqing)

The Times Square is visually more striking than the previous buildings around the Monument. It placed its highest tower (much higher than its neighbours) on the closet edge to the Monument so that it now holds the biggest visual dominance over the Central Square. However the 20 metre setback suggested by the 1997 Plan has been achieved. The created place fully connects with the Monument site, under private management but open to all (see above). It is now an integral part of the Central Square the usage of which was introduced in Box 6.2.

And the 'transparent facade' has been also implemented at the insistence of the planning authority:

'*The facade in the original design used a large proportion of materials with low transparency and its whole impression appeared not so efficient. We required the developer to resubmit the overall elevation design. He committed it to the American firm KPF [Kohn Pedersen Fox]...KPF used large amounts of glass to shape up the front towards the Monument...*'
(Section Chief of CUPB, Source: interview in Chongqing)

**Figure 6.35** The Xin Hua Bookstore (Source: photo taken by the author).
The Xin Hua Bookstore took up the last site close to the Monument, the southwest corner opposite to the Times Square. While in contrast, the Bookstore appears more visually modest: it consists of 11 storeys with the upper three gradually stepped back. In particular, it creates a huge entrance on raised steps towards the Monument. This semi-open space is often occupied, becoming a platform for people to wait, gather, rest, and watch the events on the Monument stage. Similarly, at the time of the observation, there was no private control that was observed over people's lingering on that 'platform', although sometimes it did cause congestion at the entrance.

The most distinct character of the Xin Hua Bookstore is its high internal visibility - it has exercised the 'transparent facade' principle to an extreme extent through cladding most of its frontages with large class curtains. To some, this is seen as an overreaching approach to emphasising the integration between the external and the internal environment; while to some others, it is a 'positive attempt' to 'animate' the public realm:

'*It is definitely energy consuming, and is a disadvantage to the interior arrangement of the Store.*'
(Director of CDI, Source: interview in Chongqing)

'*It has set up a good visual access both from and to the Monument. I think it is a good form of respecting the public space and the context* [the Monument]. *Besides, it has left no space for chaotic advertisement. That is also a good thing.*'
(Section Chief of CUPB, Source: interview in Chongqing)

'*It looks fantastic when its internal lights are lit up in the evening; it warms up the around streets…*'
(Pedestrian, Source: random interview in Jie Fangbei)

**Figure 6.36** Physical setting of the Land King Plaza (Source: CDI, and adopted from the author's survey).
The Land King Plaza, located near the north entrance of the CPD area, was built at a high land-reclamation price which is reflected by its symbolic name. But it did not completely occupy the site with a full ground floor. Rather, the architect set a continuous, open colonnade fronting the street. Moreover, the building offers a medium-size, in-between open square connecting to the street, in which a raised stage has been placed.

'*We thought that the architectural style of that building was still debatable because an imitated European style might soon appear outdated. But what we are most satisfied with is that it has offered a open colonnaded space plus an open square. They effectively link the building with the external urban environment. They are the real highlights which have raised the quality of that development. In that case we compromised our argument on its architectural style.*'
(Director General of CUPB, Source: interview in Chongqing)

'*Additional public spaces could add value to our development. We hoped this square would accommodate both commercial promotions and people's some daily social activities...for example, that raised stage could be used for commercial displays but also as an venue for people to stay and watch others.*'
(Developer of the Plaza, Source: interview in Chongqing)



**Figure 6.37** Observed activities in the Land King Plaza (Source: photo taken by the author).
It was observed that the square was to some extent welcomed by morning and evening exercisers, and sporadic teenagers. But its setting should have been further enriched - its long depth with a scarcity of quality landscapes and sittable devices made it difficult to gather more people through most time of the day, thus often appearing a leftover space rather than an active container of public activities. Arguably that could be improved through the provision of more public amenities; but at the time of the observation, it appeared that the good original intention of the developer had not been fully realised.
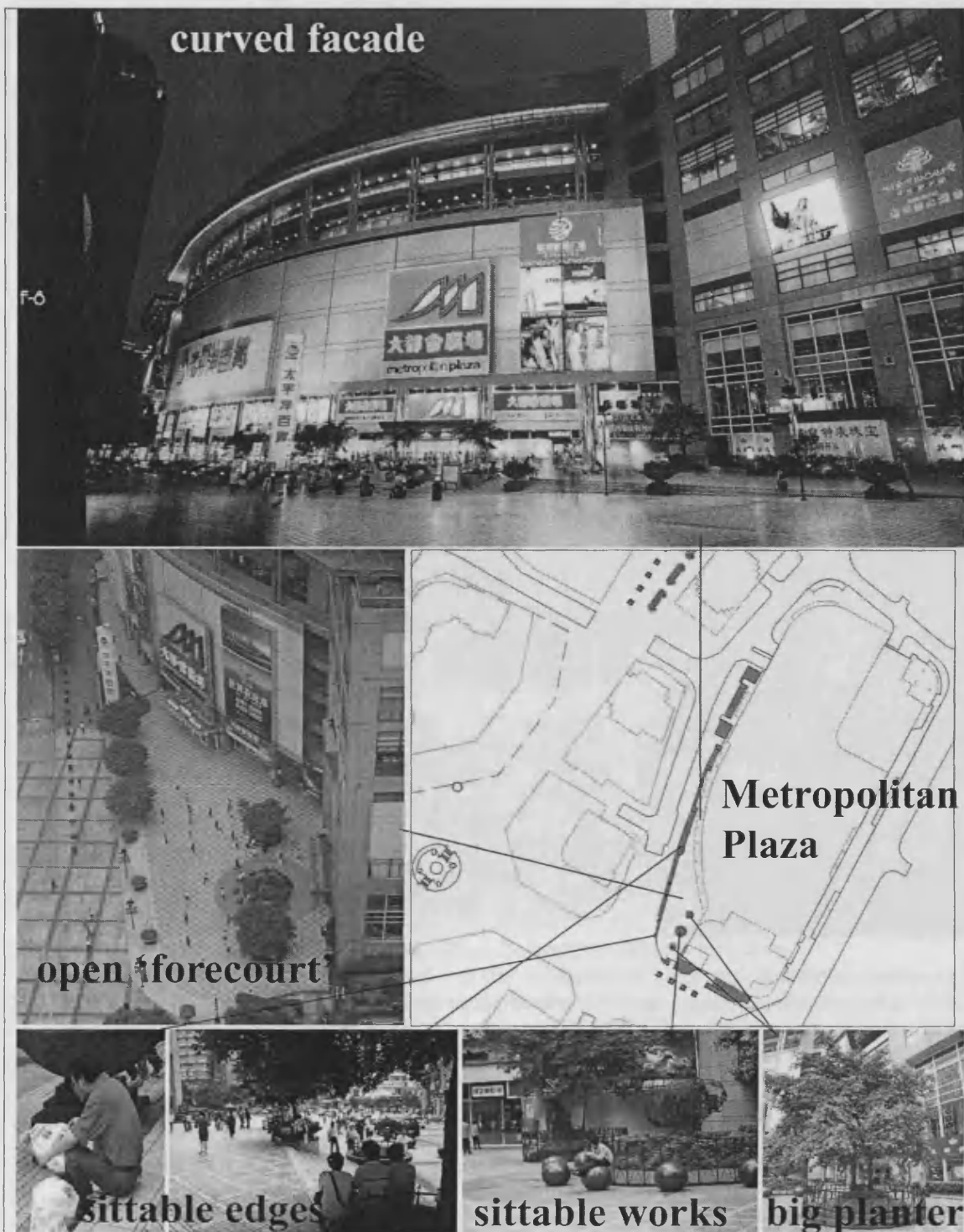
**Figure 6.38** Physical setting of the Metropolitan Plaza (Source: adopted from the author's survey).
The Metropolitan Plaza stands opposite to the City of Dainty. It was developed by the Hong Kong businessman Li Ka-shing who has created a series of controversial developments in other Chinese cities such as the Oriental Plaza in Wang Fujing. Li has been usually known, and also criticised, for his wholesale, gigantic developments that often result in 'corporate' or 'impersonal' environments. But the Metropolitan Plaza, Li's first development in Chongqing, has arguably provided a decent solution - the tower stands at a moderate distance from the street while the adjacent

skirt part meets the tower with a curved facade. Thus an open forecourt has been created. What differentiates this development from Li's others largely lies in its devoting part of the land to a fully open space - due to the land price of Jie Fangbei, Li could perhaps have gained higher commercial return if this development had occupied the entire land, as Li did in the Oriental Plaza in Wang Fujing. That came from a long negotiation between the planning authority and the developer:

*'Initially the developer presented a proposal that overspread this site with a huge development. That, we thought, would do no good to the health of the environment. After 20 years of development Jie Fangbei then needed to have more open spaces. We tried to persuade the developer that an open, civic square in front of the building would eventually add value to that development...The case examination lasted for nearly one year; we had repeatedly bargained on how that square should be formed and how it should be designed.'*
(Section Chief of CUPB, Source: interview in Chongqing)

*'The Planning Bureau was very much concerned with the facade design as well. We were required to create aesthetics of a civic-building style instead of simply a commercial shopping mall...We invited French architects to work with us to draw inspirations...'*
(Architect of the Plaza, Source: interview in Chongqing)



**Figure 6.39** Observed activities in the Metropolitan Plaza (Source: photo taken by the author).
The completed building has successfully created a modest architectural richness to its surrounding environment. While the open space it provides has been well equipped with sittable settings, big planters, and pieces of art works. It is by nature a privately-owned space, under the management of the developer because as observed it was the private cleaners that were cleaning this place. But still, it was freely accessed and used by people as a resting and socialising place. Both residents of local communities and visitors coming out of shops were observed spending their leisure time in this place, insomuch it delivered a good sense of civility and community.

In sum, the second high rise boom represents a stronger pursuit of architectural aesthetics than the first boom between the 1980s and 1990s. It was certainly driven by the same intrinsic desire of developers to market their properties through symbolic architecture; but meanwhile the planning authority's concern had largely moved from buildings to 'spaces' guided by the established 1997 Plan and consistent with the government's insistent attempt to physically reinforce the whole area as a entire, 'profitable item'. It has been revealed through the above cases that there had emerged more

active design interventions, and harder negotiations between developers and the authority particularly in terms of small-space provision and facade improvement. As a result, public space has increased in quantity, and become increasingly addressed by new buildings. But, it is also evident that many of those newly emerging spaces has presented a low standard in detail and public amenities (e.g., the Land King), and therefore not at large created substantial social uses. Besides, the streets pedestrianised in 1997 had still remained largely untouched during the second high rise boom. It was only afterwards that they received appropriate physical refurbishment, as will be seen.

## 6-6 The second pedestrianisation and street refurbishment, 2002-2010

### 6-6-1 The original trigger and two primary aims

The completion of the last two sites around the Monument (the Times Square and the Xin Hua Bookstore, see Box 6.4) marked a provisional end to the intensive high-rise development since the 1980s. The primary street pattern has since become stable as most of the projected buildings have been completed on their sites. The government has increasingly benefited from the considerable revenue from this district - the Yuzhong District Government has gained the most financial income in the City since 2000 (Hu 2006). On the other hand, as stated above, there had been an increasing recognition that a further street refurbishment was needed:

*'The lack of big trees was the public complaint I had received most after the pedestrianisation.'*
(Principal Planner of the 1997 Plan, Source: interview in Chongqing)

*'We came to see some shortcomings deserving of further improvement. On the one hand the public constantly presented their dissatisfaction with the absence of trees, seats and some other facilities; in that sense the government knew that it had made a problematic decision to remove the big trees. On the other we had produced some new open spaces through a preliminary pedestrianisation* [i.e., the 1997 one] *and through a series of site planning conditions that required the new high-rise developments to offer public spaces; but it became clear that these spaces did not function as well as we had expected.'*
(Director General of CUPB, Source: interview in Chongqing)

In the early 2002, the government started a secondary pedestrianisation and street refurbishment

scheme. There were two primary aims: first the Ba Yi Road fronting the City of Dainty was selected to be developed into a semi-pedestrianised street to quantitatively extend the existing street net; and second, the existing streets were projected to be further physically improved, provided with more shading places and public amenities. The first aim was expected to be achieved by 2004; while the second was considered as an incremental and long-term course (2002-2010). During the following years, the government developed several design and management strategies to detail and guide that scheme. They are briefly outlined below.

## 6-6-2 The Urban Image Design on Yuzhong Peninsula 2002

In 2002 the Chongqing Urban Planning Bureau launched the Urban Image Design on Yuzhong Peninsula. It was projected to consist of two interrelated parts. The first was envisaged as a comprehensive conceptual design for the total image of the Peninsula, covering its main river lines, the overall skyline and urban layout. The second was focused on nine specific sites of the Peninsula, including Jie Fangbei CPD, giving them concrete urban design prescriptions. The Bureau defined six key principles that the Urban Image Design should adhere to (Table 6.4).

**Table 6.4** Six principles of the Urban Image Design on Yuzhong Peninsula 2002

| |
|---|
| 1.  *The Design should accord with the role of Chongqing as the biggest economic centre in the upriver district of the Yangtze River as well as one of China's four municipal cities.* |
| 2.  *It should highlight the unique geographic typology of the Peninsula which is surrounded by rivers along its three edges and also featured with numerous inside mountains and hills.* |
| 3.  *It should take a full consideration of the functional diversification of the Peninsula, facilitating the integration of urban spaces and urban functions.* |
| 4.  *It should respect the development context and the historical identity of Chongqing; particularly be aware that the Peninsula was the origin of the contemporary Chongqing as well as the political centre during the wartime.* |
| 5.  *It should take into account the local climate character featured with long and sweltering summers; particularly be aware of its impact upon the architectural design and space deployment of the Peninsula.* |
| 6.  *And the Design should be able to be integrated into the existing planning administrative mechanism.* |

(Source: Chongqing Urban Planning Bureau 2002: 2)

The Design lays its first principle on the economic development of Chongqing, but it is evident that the majority of emphases are funded on urban design concerns. In terms of particular prescriptions for Jie Fangbei CPD, it proposes that the former Guo Tai Theatre site that is adjacent to the Times Square be developed into a 25,000 $m^2$ open civic plaza with an affiliated new theatre (Figure 6.40).
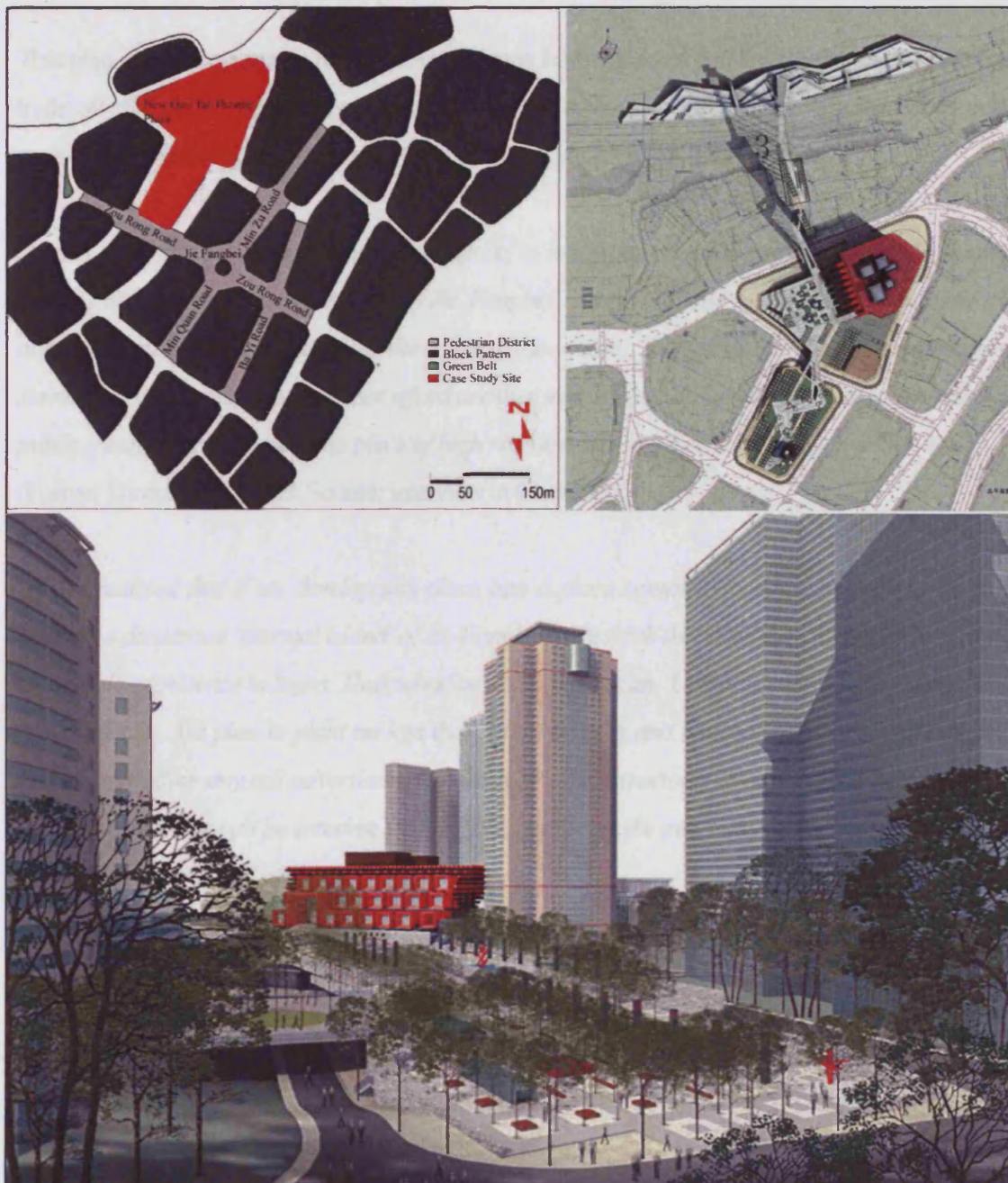
**Figure 6.40** Proposal for the new Guo Tai Theatre redevelopment. *Top left*: the site; *Top right*: the master plan; *Bottom*: the 3D concept (Source: CUPB). It is proposed to be a huge civic plaza covered by an 'urban forest', fully accessible to the main street, and a public theatre is to be placed at the far end of the site, acting as a building hinge linking the fringe green belt and the waterfront. It is projected as a place equipped with big trees, sittable settings, water landscapes, and art works. According to Mr. Cui, the architect of the Plaza, this place aims to help the whole CPD area deliver an ambience of being easy and diverse in activity (Xinhuanet 2006):

*'The situation in Jie Fangbei is usually that the women are wandering in the department stores, while men are wearily standing in the street and waiting. I hope this plaza will solve that problem: in the future, men can choose to watch the art exhibitions, and elderly people and children can stroll and play in the shade of the trees; everyone can find their own pleasures.'*

This plan came as a surprise to the public as many had suspected that the government would again trade off that site to private developers. It thus has been regarded as a remedy for two previous regrets: the 'removal of big trees' and 'the loss of the plaza' in the Times Square:

*'In fact many developers still made great efforts to lobby the government. They hoped to share the benefits of the largest remaining site of Jie Fangbei...Some of them were trying to persuade us to allow high-rise developments along the edges of the square...But eventually the government did not surrender, or in a sense, it could not afford another mass public criticism. The Mayor promised in a public meeting that not even one piece of high rise development would be allowed in that site.'*
(Former Director of CUPB, Source: interview in Chongqing)

*'We've realised that if we develop this plaza into a place completely with hard pavements, it will become a disastrous 'thermal island' of Jie Fangbei...We think that the Central Park of New York is a valuable experience to learn. Thus what we really need is an 'Urban Forest' where the public can really benefit...We plan to plant no less than 1,000 arbores and bunches of bamboos in this plaza. We will not allow any tall advertisement boards or other structures to be included here so that the wind from the river can be entering Jie Fangbei, improving the micro-climate of the CPD.'*
(Vice Mayor, Source: Xinhuanet 2006)

### 6-6-3 The Jie Fangbei Urban Design Plan 2004

In 2004, within the Image Design framework, the Chongqing Urban Planning Bureau raised an interrelated strategy, the Jie Fangbei Urban Design Plan. It proposes more practical prescriptions for the CPD area. The following are the simplified formulations of the key parts (Table 6.5).

**Table 6.5** Five prescriptions of the Jie Fangbei Urban Design Plan 2004
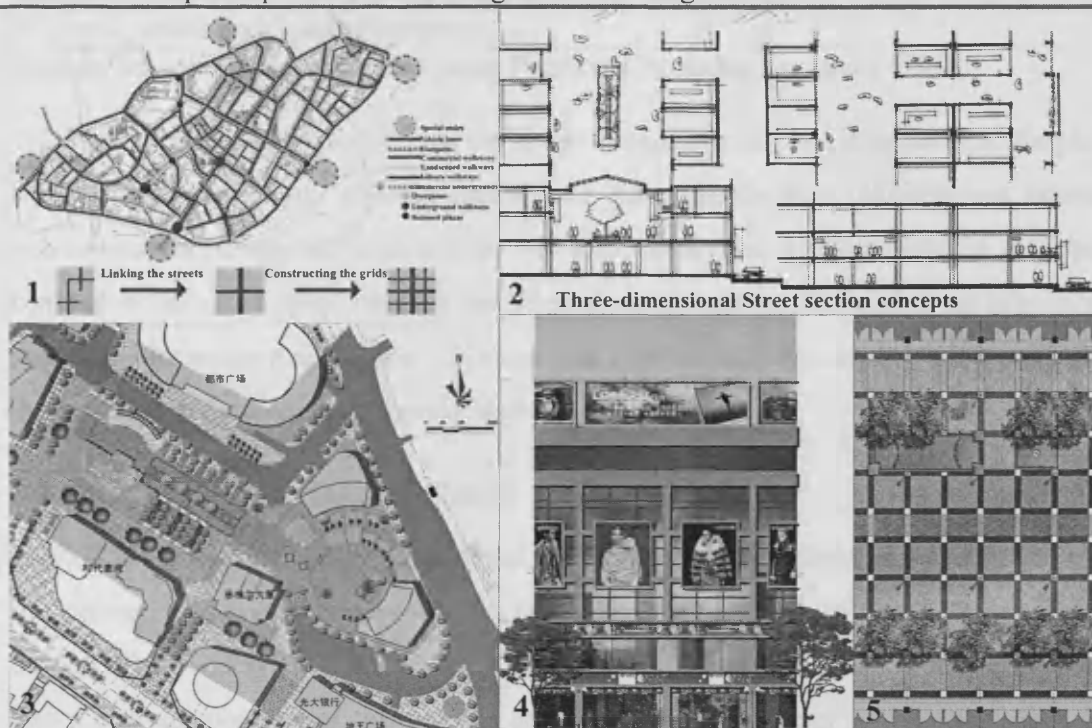


**Figure 6.41** Five specific prescriptions for Jie Fangbei CPD (see below).

*1. Walking Net*

Intensifying the density of streets within the existing CPD area through reducing the site size of future developments; enhancing the physical linkage between the alleys, semi-open backyards and the main streets; developing a secondary street system in the adjacent block to extend the existing streets; encouraging the construction of arcades, open atriums and interior streets within buildings and integrating them into the streets.

*2. Three-dimensional Street*

Developing underground social and commercial functions which can be integrated into the public transport system; developing an integrative overpass-mall system above the existing streets which can accommodate multifold social uses and link with the above floors of major stores.

*3. City Stage*

Developing the new Guo Tai Theatre site into a 'city stage' that can accommodate themed events, particularly those with historical and cultural meanings; also developing that site into a true urban park where the people can enjoy staying and watching others.

*4. Space Interface*

Integrating the frontages of different buildings through careful facade reconstruction; particularly improving the parts near the streets (usually between the ground floor and the second floor) which most influence pedestrians' perceptions; differentiating the street pavements according to their different functions but developing an 'uniform rhythm'.

*5. Micro-Elements*
Providing more public facilities and green amenities which should be equally effective in social, economic, artistic and sustainable terms.

(Source: School of Architecture and Urban Planning, Chongqing University 2004b)

This Plan is essentially an extension of the Image Design. As has been integrated into the planning administrative mechanism, it further legalises the government's street refurbishment, bringing in more systematic, design-led interventions. But at the same time, it also reflects the government's constant ambition to largely 'beautify' the physical environment of Jie Fangbei via more symbolic approaches (overpass-mall system, 'city stage', etc.) which have been used by many cities all over the world to 'enhance' their commercial centres.

## 6-6-4 The Wall Street strategy, 2007-2010

In 2005 the government however presented an 'inconsistent' attitude by raising the third strategy that attempts to mould Jie Fangbei into 'the Wall Street of western China'. In the word of the Mayor, the aim of that strategy is to construct a 'Headquarters Economy', namely, to develop Jie Fangbei into a concentration site of 'high-profile and office-based industries' (Xinhuanet 2007). It is a three-year strategy (2007-2010), and the government is now beginning to evaluate some possible approaches (Chongqing Yuzhong District Government 2005). They include: *first*, the basic land use is possibly to be adjusted. The area of office buildings is to increase from 1.21 million $m^2$ to 2.12 million $m^2$, from current 30 per cent up to 36 per cent of the total building area of Jie Fangbei; the area of retailing buildings is to increase from 1.51 million $m^2$ to 1.77 million $m^2$, whereas dropping from current 37 per cent to 30 per cent; and the area of residential buildings is from 1.26 million $m^2$ to 1.30 million $m^2$, sharply falling from current 30 per cent to 22 per cent. *Second*, in terms of office-building provision, the government is considering to give more priorities to 'notable' international companies in banking, financial, and insurance industries. *Third*, aiming at the existing shops, the government is considering to examine if their 'tastes and brands' are in accordance with the 'Wall Street' profile. Those with 'low profiles' may not be allowed to continue their land tenures.

The 'Wall Street' strategy has provoked controversy. Ostensibly, it does not conflict with the Image Design and the Urban Design Plan, both of which are generally considered as positive 'place-vision makers'. But it does deliver a strong message that the government is hoping to reduce the current multifarious functions of this district by 'squeezing out' small retailers and local residents, and

therefore to transform a 'public amenity' into a place shaped by stronger private, corporate interests. Whether it will lead Jie Fangbei to a single-use, homogenised space is becoming a worry:

*'I personally regard this strategy* [Wall Street] *problematic. Jie Fangbei's vitality relies on its multiple functions which can meet different needs of the public. The office industry may contribute to the finance, but too much of that will impair the richness of Jie Fangbei as a civic centre. In that respect there are many lessons. We can look at some Western CBDs, they have well-designed public spaces but they are still deserted places because they are only for working, not for living...And the reduction of residential buildings can perhaps release the physical congestion, but we should be aware that it is a potential danger of weakening the link between the people and the public space.'*
(Director General of CUPB, Source: interview in Chongqing)

## 6-6-5 Two streets

At the time of the observation, the first aim of the scheme has been achieved - the Ba Yi Road is now open to visitors; while the second aim is still progressing - small-scale refurbishment has been undertaken in a few places, but the comprehensive street upgrade is yet to unfold. The following presents the investigation on some particular sections of Ba Yi Road and Min Zu Road, which are the provisional outcomes of the second pedestrianisation and street refurbishment, to look at how they are being used in their current forms and under current management (Box 6.5-6.6).

**Box 6.5: The Ba Yi Road**
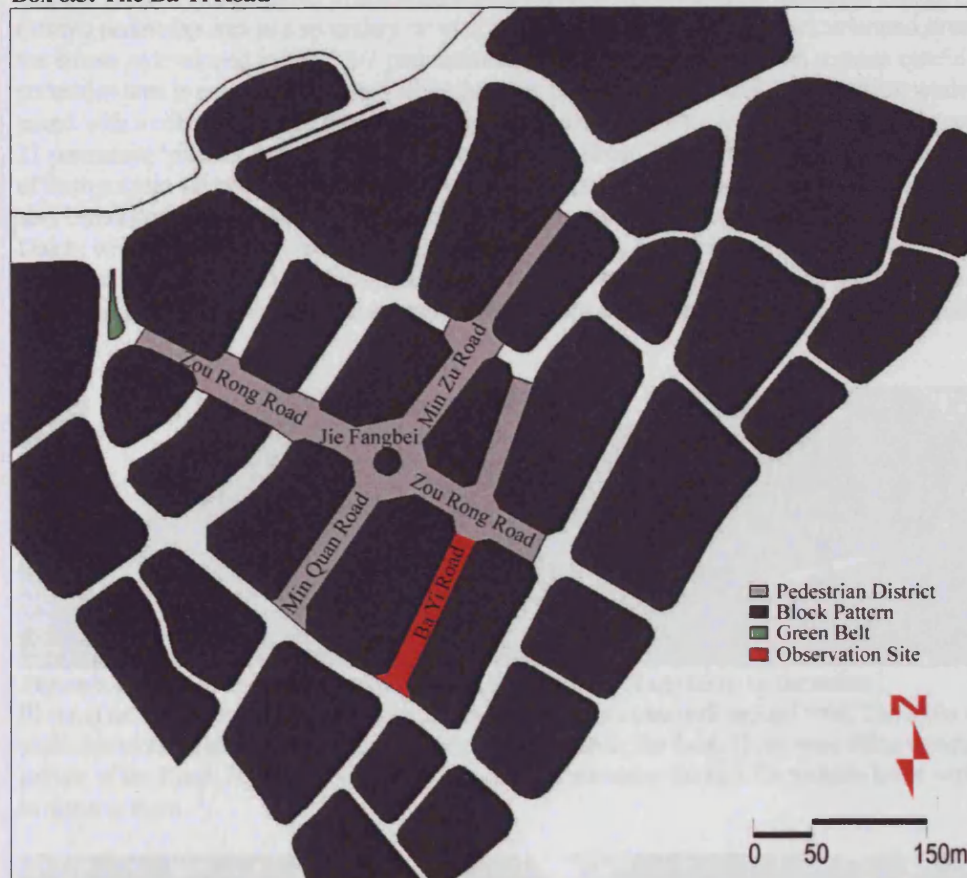


**Figure 6.42** The Ba Yi Road site (Source: adopted from the author's survey).

**Figure 6.43** Physical setting of the Ba Yi Road (Source: adopted from the author's survey).

The Ba Yi Road was projected in accordance with the *Walk Net* principle in the Urban Design Plan 2004 to aid the existing pedestrian area as a secondary street. It is now in the form of a semi-pedestrianised street, but in contrast to the streets redeveloped in the 1997 pedestrianisation, its physical setting is in a more careful arrangement. The pedestrian area is paved with red and white quadrate tiles confined by dark granite strips; while the vehicle lane is paved with a coherent ground made up of bigger grey tiles, so that these two parts are subtly partitioned. There are 21 permanent 'sittable' devices that are arrayed along the street. They in total can seat around 280 people, and many of them contain tall trees. More other facilities including public telephones, magazine booths and some art works are also introduced in here. Functionally the Ba Yi Road is also considered as an antidote to the disappointing City of Dainty which had failed to create a thriving dining place due to its fragmented architectural pattern (see Box 6.1). Open stalls are allowed to use the whole street as their communal selling and dining area. There are currently about 15 licensed food stalls as such plus several fast food shops and together they have created a hustle and bustle on the street.



**Figure 6.44** The Ba Yi Road between 7:30 and 8:30 (Source: photo taken by the author).

Pictured on 15th June, 2007, Friday. All the shops were not open until around 9:00. The main user group was the sanitation workers and some stall keepers who were preparing the food. There were office workers passing by in the middle of the Road. 2-3 trash collectors were observed searching the bins for tradable items while no one appeared to disperse them.



**Figure 6.45** The Ba Yi Road between 9:30 and 10:30 (Source: photo taken by the author).

Pictured on 15th June, 2007, Friday. All the stalls and shops were fully open. Early customers (mostly office workers) arrived at around 9:00 and soon began to build up in large numbers. About 70 per cent of the seats had been occupied for eating; averagely people had spent 5-10 minutes sitting and eating, and a small number of people chose to stand in the street and ate up their food more quickly. At the time of the observation, there were also 2 people just sitting and reading newspaper, 1 playing with his child in the street, and 3-5 elderly women trying to sell bagged tissue to the food consumers (illegal, but again no one appeared to banish them).

**Figure 6.46** The Ba Yi Road between 13:30 and 14:30 (Source: photo taken by the author).
Pictured on 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2007, Friday. During the first half hour, the street had been filled with food consumers. All the seats had been taken up. People on average spent 5-7 minutes sitting and eating while after they left, the seats would be immediately taken over by new arrivals. The whole street had thus been overwhelmed by the activity of food eating and the ambience appeared extremely busy. But in the second half hour when the sunshine began to become stronger, food consumers decreased; while more people began to rest (without eating) on the seats shaded by big trees. Most of them sat, watched and talked with their companies, while 2 were observed taking a nap. The average time of individual seat occupation extended to 10-12 minutes. Also more 'marginalised people' (1 disabled beggar, 2 trash collectors, 3-5 unlicensed hawkers) moved back and forth in the crowd. Several stalls had erected temporary pavilions to offer more shelter. The street thus appeared a relaxed, resting area instead of a mere food consumption venue.



**Figure 6.47** The Ba Yi Road between 17:30 and 18:30 (Source: photo taken by the author).
Pictured on 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2007, Friday. Food consumers again increased; while the relaxed atmosphere continued during most of the time. Seats were shared by both food consumers and street strollers, and their average sitting time sustained about 10 minutes. There were still several 'marginalised people' strolling on the street, and even more hawkers (5-7 at the time of the observation) came to take up a place on the street. They sold various home-made food and organic fruits, but presumably most were illegal as they did not want to be pictured. But surprisingly, one security guard (employed by the Jie Fangbei Comprehensive Management Sector) stood beside them and did nothing. These hawkers, with their portable stalls, were surrounded by people.



**Figure 6.48** The Ba Yi Road between 19:30 and 20:30 (Source: photo taken by the author).
Pictured on 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2007, Friday. During the period, food consumption again had become the dominant activity in the street. Seats continued to be fully occupied, for 5-7 minutes in average for each person. Unlicensed hawkers decreased to about 3-4 in number but they were still popular with the customers and without being banished. The elderly tissue sellers (3-5) also reappeared. Sanitation workers frequently came to clean up the street, according to

them, the busy scene in the street would still continue for a while:

'*As long as the weather is fine, the peak hour of the street starts at 9:00 in the morning, and continues until 9:00 into the night.*'
(Sanitation worker, Source: random interview in Jie Fangbei)

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**Box 6.6: The Min Zu Road (east end)**
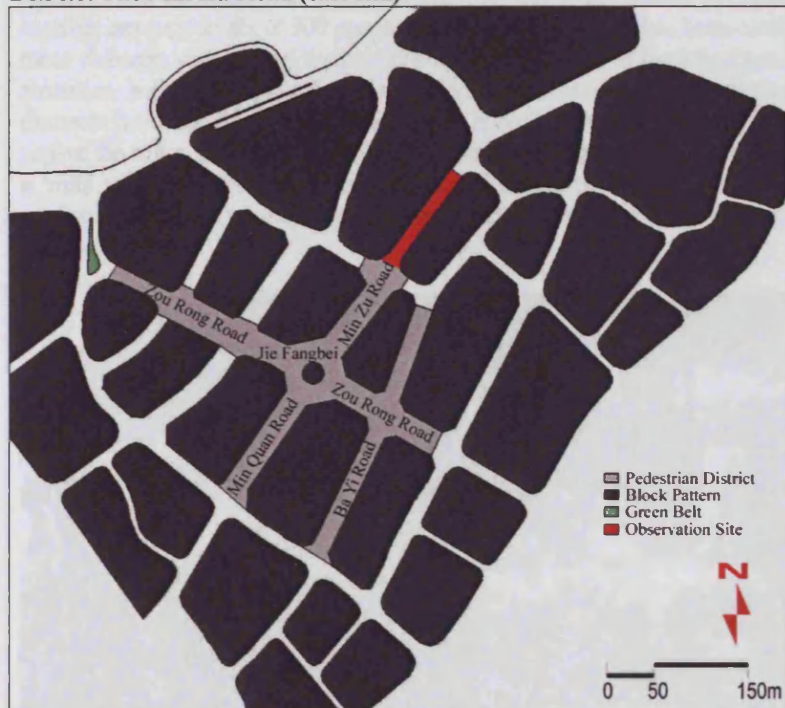


**Figure 6.49** The Min Zu Road (northeast end) site (Source: adopted from the author's survey).
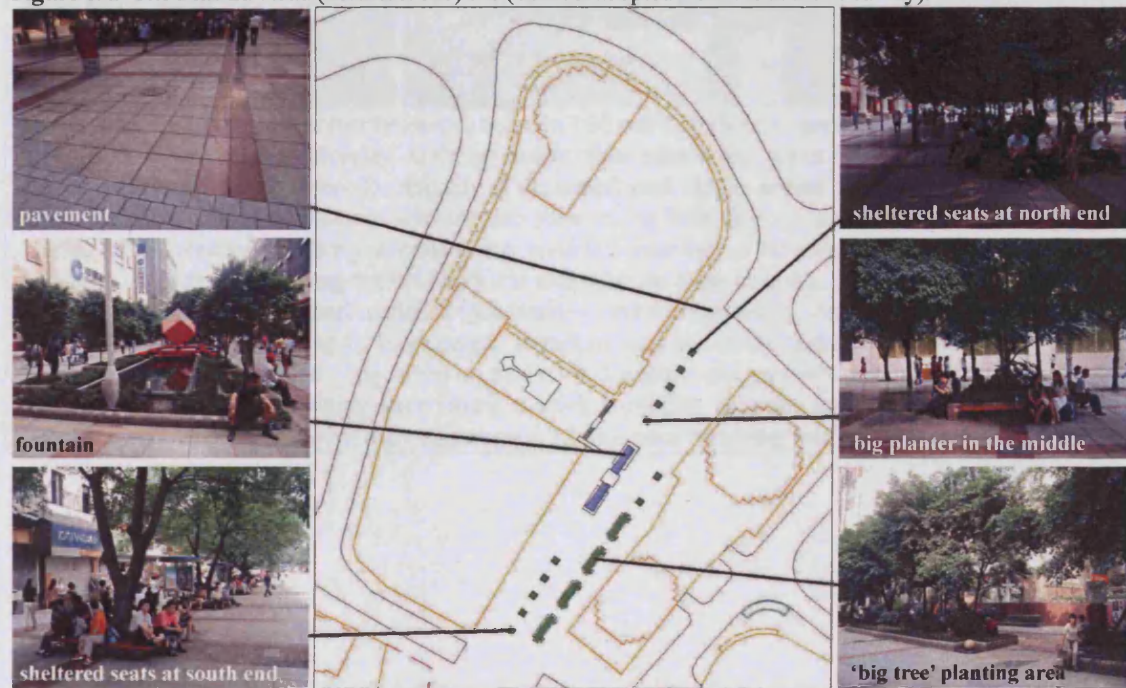


**Figure 6.50** Physical setting of the Min Zu Road (northeast end) (Source: adopted from the author's survey).

The Min Zu Road was originally pedestrianised in 1997. In the second pedestrianisation and street refurbishment, its northeast end was selected to be refurbished. Different from the Ba Yi Road that was designated as an eating place, the set function of the updated Min Zu Road was to be 'a linear mini park' with quality landscapes (Yuan 2002: 8). The main approach here was to provide this place with more feasible *Micro-Elements*, the last principle of Urban Design Plan 2004. Several physical changes are evident: a linear electric fountain has been placed in the middle of the street which can play music and make the water flow; 16 permanent, quadrate planters made of vernacular materials and bounded with groups of big trees and long benches are placed in tight rows on the street and all together can support about 300 people at one time; the ground has been carefully repaved with small-size tiles, in a more elaborate pattern than the previous uniform one seen in the Min Quan Road (see Box 6.3); and some more amenities, such as lamps, guideposts and trash bins have been also renewed in redesigned models. These new elements have made the Road visually more appealing than before. The fountain has effectively filled the 'middle gap' of the street, and these interlinked big planters have provided a sheltering environment that creates the sense of a 'mini park'. More significantly, the detailed on-site observation found that this refurbished place contained a continuing presence of illegal hawkers and users from various social groups, thus creating a degree of spontaneity and social mix.



**Figure 6.51** The Min Zu Road (northeast end) between 7:30 and 8:30 (Source: photo taken by the author).
Pictured on 18th June, 2007, Monday. At the beginning of the observation, about 40 per cent of the benches in the shaded street had been occupied; the majority of the seated were elderly people many of which came in groups. There were 6-8 unlicensed hawkers with portable stalls selling breakfast near these benches, and the passers-by (mostly office workers) constantly stopped to buy breakfast from them. One security guard (employed by the Jie Fangbei Comprehensive Management Sector) was sitting beside these hawkers, reading a newspaper. Within the next one hour these hawkers had continued their business, still without being banished, while about 60 per cent of the benches had been taken up by more people at various ages and social backgrounds (1 trash collector and 1 bangbang men were observed lying asleep on the bench, 1 commercial surveyor sending out questionnaires, and 2-3 clerks of nearby shops sitting there having a quick breakfast). Near the fountain the main users were the sanitation workers undertaking the daily maintenance, while several bangbang men (2-3) were wandering around.

**Figure 6.52** The Min Zu Road (northeast end) between 9:30 and 10:30 (Source: photo taken by the author).
Pictured on 18th June, 2007, Monday. The occupation rate of the benches slightly decreased but still about 50 per cent of them were constantly occupied. The main users of these benches again became the elderly group from local neighbourhoods. In general, they had been seated for a relatively longer time, averaging 15 minutes for each, and their main behaviour was chatting with each other and watching people. Also there were activities from other users: at the time of the observation, 5-8 people were reading, 4-5 eating, 2 playing with their children, and 1 wheel-chair person wandering around. The breakfast sellers were now gone, replaced by a new group that was selling home-made fruits and flowers. And still no one came to disperse them. Near the fountain there were relatively fewer users - 4-5 were observed sitting on the edge of the fountain, and 7-8 standing or strolling.



**Figure 6.53** The Min Zu Road (northeast end) between 13:30 and 14:30 (Source: photo taken by the author).
Pictured on 18th June, 2007, Monday. During this hour, again no less than 60 per cent of the benches had been occupied while the average sitting time largely extended, about 20 minutes for each. This should be to a certain extent due to the sheltering environment - although the sunshine had become fierce and air temperature risen, the daylight under the trees remained gentle and the micro-climate was relatively pleasant. And the users again became diverse by age - lots of young office workers came to take an after-lunch rest (1 was observed fully lying down asleep), 3-5 middle-age sitters from nearby neighbourhoods were amusing the babies, and still the elderly were

present in 6-7 small groups. A new group of unlicensed hawkers (5-6) arrived at about 14:00.They were 'puppy sellers'. And soon passers-by were attracted by their cats and dogs, and therefore several 'gathering points' formed spontaneously. But the situation near the fountain basically remained the same - there were some people wandering over there. They probably came from local neighbourhoods as well.



**Figure 6.54** The Min Zu Road (northeast end) between 17:30 and 18:30 (Source: photo taken by the author). Pictured on 18th June, 2007, Monday. The full occupation of the benches continued - 70 per cent being occupied, the average sitting time about 20 minutes for each. The diversity in behaviours was evident - at the time of the observation, there were many sitting, chatting and watching, 3 reading, 3 baby sitting, 2 napping, 1 wheel-chair person wandering around, 1 dog walking (illegal) and 2 shoe cleaners serving the customers (also illegal). Beside the fountain there were now more bangbang men sitting and strolling (7-10 in total), and 2 unlicensed hawkers displaying their products, gathering a large number of people. Again the security guard went by and did nothing.



**Figure 6.55** The Min Zu Road (northeast end) between 19:30 and 20:30 (Source: photo taken by the author). Pictured on 18th June, 2007, Monday. During this hour the air temperature in this area had become pleasantly cool and the ambience appeared quite comfortable. About 70 per cent of the benches had been taken, but the average sitting time reduced to about 7-10 minutes - many people tended to wander around after sitting for a while. The

diversity in users' age and activity still remained relatively high; in particular, family groups from nearby neighbourhoods took a big portion - 6-8 families consisting of two to three generations were observed strolling in this place. The fountain began to wave and air music. It had gathered lots of people to watch and to take photos, many of which were also with their families. By the time the observation was over, these communal activities still continued.

In sum, there seems a duality in character of the second pedestrianisation and street refurbishment scheme. The urban design plans in 2002 and 2004 demonstrated higher commitment to the quality of the public realm, promising more particular place-making approaches to developing a more diverse, vivid ambience. However, the new 'Wall Street' idea suggests a future place that seems more based on 'corporate interests' and 'office spaces'. Whether these two contrasting goals can be eventually 'reconciled' remains unknown as the overall scheme is still under construction. But, in terms of the status quo, the on-site observation above reveals that the first goal has so far to a substantial extent mastered the development of the public space. The study streets, despite their consumption functions (the Ba Yi Road), deliver a strong sense of behavioural vibrancy and social civility. The provision of more spaces for sitting and loitering and the integration of more feasible amenities (trees, water landscape) certainly contribute to that. Equally, the lack of intense efforts to 'sanitise' these streets (as might be expected for a future 'Wall Street') also contribute to that - evidence lies in the presence of the street management that often appears 'at ease' with the 'marginalised' group (such as unlicensed hawkers, bangbang men, trash collectors, etc.). In these respects, the second pedestrianisation and street refurbishment so far has had positive impacts upon the public space of Jie Fangbei.

Before drawing the final conclusion, the following short section provides some extra investigations of several key dimensions that have not been intensively addressed in previous observations, so that a more comprehensive conclusion can be made in the final.

## 6-7 Relevant key dimensions

### 6-7-1 Land use

As also done in other four CPDs, a land-use survey was undertaken in Jie Fangbei in order to learn the kinds of functions of the buildings that frame the public space and potentially create much of its symbolism. Due to the time and budget limits, however, the survey was only concentrating on the buildings that front onto the Central Square and the main pedestrianised streets. Counting both the

ground- and upper- floors of these buildings, the survey (Table 6.6) shows that Jie Fangbei holds the third place in the number of small retailers (66), after Central Street (98) and Wang Fujing (72); while it has the biggest number of eating and drinking places (31), paralleled by Central Street (31) and followed by Nanjing Road (23); but also, it has the most 'corporate' mega-developments (covering department stores, hotels, offices, banks and shopping malls), 31 in total, far exceeding Central Street (23) and Nanjing Road (21).

**Table 6.6**: Main Shop Style(s) and Number(s) of Jie Fangbei

| Small Retailer(s) | Eating and Drinking | Department Store(s) | Hotel(s) | Office(s) | Bank(s) | Shopping-Mall Complex(es) | Residential Apartment(s) | Others |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 66 [1] | 31 [2] | 6 | 7 | 7 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 16 [3] |

Note: 1. The small retailers in Jie Fangbei include clothing (32), digital stores (11), video (1), jewellery (1), native handcraft and souvenir (12), glasses (3), pharmacy (2), cosmetic (1), and shoes (3). 2. Eating and drinking consists of a large amount of local fast-food shops (18), restaurants (6), Western fast-food shops (7) including 1 McDonald's, 2 KFCs, 1 Pizza Hut, 1 Star Bucks and 2 local cafe shops. 3. The others are a range of independent, medium-size businesses including barber shop (2), estate agent (1), travel agent (2), photography (7), bookstore (3) and post office (1) (Source: site observation).

Considering that Jie Fangbei has the longest pedestrian streets among the five CPDs, its quantity of small retailers only gets an average level (whereas the predominance of mega developments in Jie Fangbei is much greater than others). It is the constant high-rise booms over the last two decades that have inevitably displaced many of the local small businesses with larger office and retailing companies. And it is worth noting that in the observed area there is only one residential apartment building which was however built for higher-income office workers and buy-to-let property seekers. This indicates a process of gentrification which has largely driven out the prior lower-income residents. Apart from these, as discussed previously, the 'expelling' of small retailers and grass-root communities will perhaps become further legitimised and intense if the government's Wall Street strategy is undertaken. In this regard, Jie Fangbei is in the process of symbolisation of space which aims to transform the environment into an artificial, corporate venue (a 'branded' environment), rather than retaining its ambience based on various, localised retailers. This in the long term leads to a more homogenised and exclusive public space which is increasingly seen in many other 'high-profile' city centres that are designed to serve top-end retailers and major corporate headquarters (as discussed in *Chapter 2*). But on the other hand, Jie Fangbei has provided a large number of eating and drinking places, the type of 'third-place' environments that still can foster a degree of social mix and a sense of community, as seen in the Ba Yi Road. And also, there are numbers of places which are privately-owned and managed, but fully accessible to the public and

have the potential to support spontaneous activities. They, together with the streets and public squares, form the localities where impromptu behaviours and incidental socialisation largely happen. These are the key elements that make Jie Fangbei still physically and socially vibrant (see below).

### 6-7-2 Resting/strolling localities and public facilities

There are currently three types of localities, differentiated by their ownership or physical pattern, which are frequently used as people's resting and strolling places in Jie Fangbei. First, there are some specific street sections which are owned and managed by the public sector. They either have an adequate spatial capacity to contain different types of activities (e.g., the Central Square), or, they are provided with pleasant public amenities which can interest the people (e.g., food supply in the Ba Yi Road, abundant sittable settings and tree-sheltering places in parts of the Min Zu Road, Min Quan Road and Zou Rong Road). Second, there are some privately-owned, open spaces or in-between squares many of which are created in the second high-rise boom. They are maintained by the private sector, but connect well with the main street and allow 24-hour public access. They include the affiliated open spaces of the Times Square, the Metropolitan Plaza and the Land King Plaza. The third are a series of 'edge zones' of certain buildings which contain accessible colonnades, steps, walls, or alcoves for people to walk in, sit on, lean against, or stand in. These are also privately-owned elements but they usually impose few restrictions on people's wandering around them (e.g., the Chongqing Commerce Mansion, the Yangtze Peninsula Mansion, and the Xin Hua Bookstore) (Figure 6.56). As described in previous sections, all these places are to different extents the centres of social activities, and there is still a lack of intense effort to explicitly 'commodify' or 'privatise' these places (e.g., through the encroachment of cafe sites, limited access, tightened personnel management, etc.). Therefore these places are essential to retaining the character of public space of Jie Fangbei, providing an important contrast to the increasing commercialisation and homogenisation of parts of this CPD.
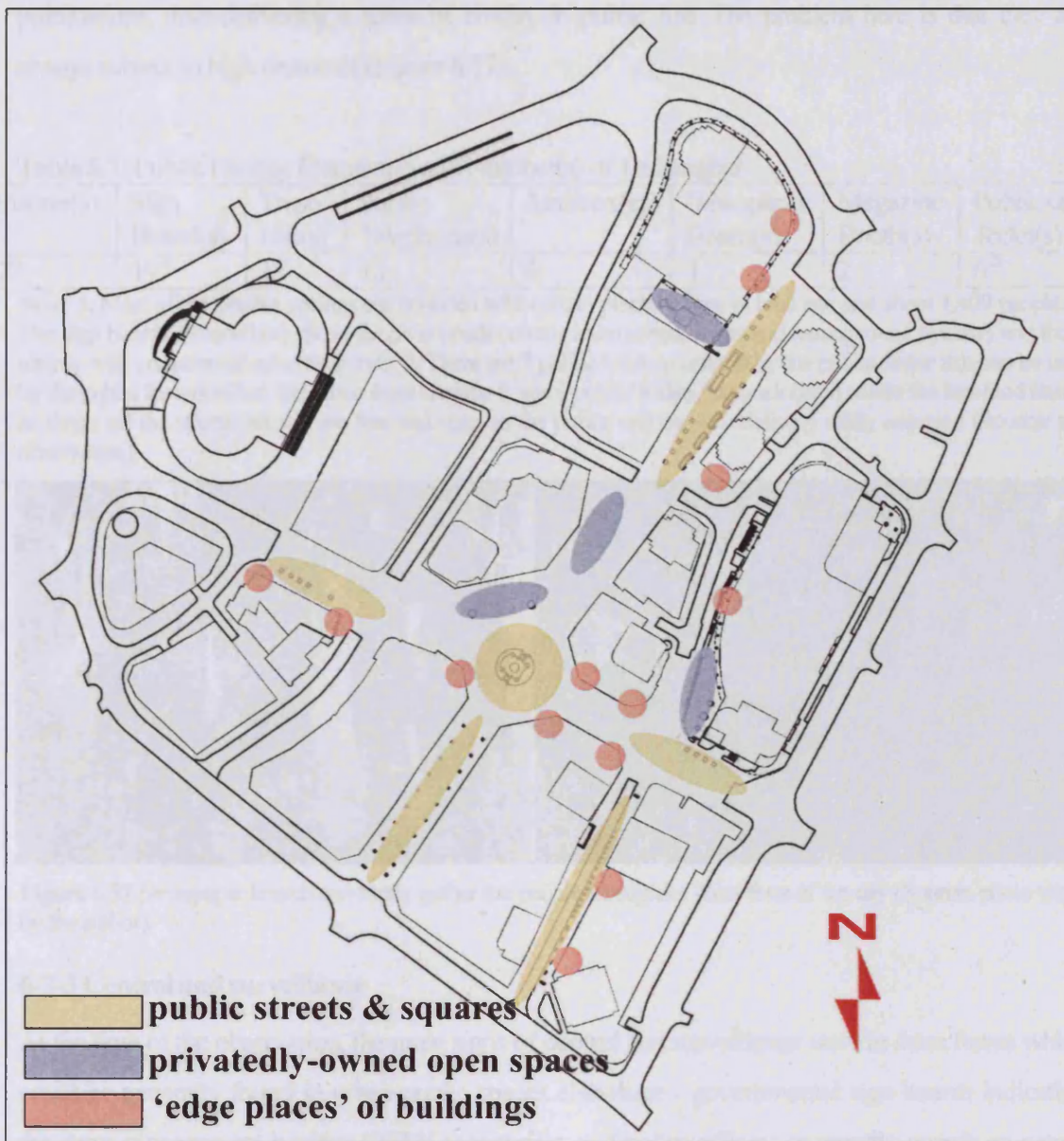
**Figure 6.56** Three types of resting/strolling localities in Jie Fangei (Source: adopted from the author's survey).

Public facilities are another key element of the essential infrastructure of public space. A rough survey was thus undertaken to learn the quantity and condition of public facilities in the study areas (Table 6.7). The second pedestrianisation and street refurbishment have added numbers of sittable settings and planters in various forms to Jie Fangbei, and as described previously, in many cases they now become the foci of public interaction. Another element that deserves mention is the newspaper boards. There are currently three of them clustered at the west end of the Zou Rong Road. It was observed that they played a strong role in constantly gathering the people to read free

publications, thus delivering a sense of civility in public life. The problem here is that they are always subject to high demands (Figure 6.57).

**Table 6.7**: Public Facility Element(s) and Number(s) of Jie Fangbei

| ...able ...ing(s) | Planter(s) | Sign Board(s) | Trash Bin(s) | Public Telephone(s) | Mailbox(es) | Newspaper Board(s) | Magazine Booth(s) | Public or Semi-public Toilet(s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 77 | 19[2] | 17 | 18 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 6[3] |

Note: **1.** Most of the sittable settings are bounded with certain planters; they in total can seat about 1,400 people. **2.** The sign boards include both those for civic needs (visitor information, maps and management byelaw) and those mainly with commercial advertisements. **3.** There are 2 public toilets managed by the public sector that can be used by the public for a nominal fee; while there are also 4 'semi-public' toilets that are located within the fast-food chains or shops off the streets but still are free and open to the public and can be relatively easily accessed (Source: site observation).



**Figure 6.57** Newspaper boards constantly gather the people throughout most time of the day (Source: photo taken by the author).

## 6-7-3 Control and surveillance

At the time of the observation, the main signs of control and surveillance were in three forms which could be generally found in urban public spaces elsewhere - governmental sign boards indicating the street management byelaw, CCTV monitoring, and police officers or security guards on patrol. The signboards were located at the entrances of every main street, usually coupled with visitor information and street maps. They were thus integral part of the public-facility system. There were seven CCTV cameras that had been found in the survey. One was placed above the mid-ground facade of the Chongqing Commerce Mansion, with a panoramic view of the Central Square. The others were linked with the traffic lights above several main street entrances. In contrast to the Western cities, perhaps particularly the British cities, a heavy use of the CCTV monitoring in street surveillance appeared less evident in Jie Fangbei. As regards the secuirty control, there was a significant absence of policing patrol - only a few pairs of policemen were seen walking through the

main streets on about an hourly basis, and a police electric vehicle was seen twice moving through the Central Square. In comparison, there was a more significant presence of the security guards employed by the Jie Fangbei Comprehensive Management Sector. They were frequently found in the study areas, usually between 7:30 and 17:30, mostly single and sometimes in pairs. In total, the physical indications of a highly monitored or controlled environment were not as strong as might be expected in this place which was with signs of strong commercialisation and a degree of corporate symbolisation (Figure 6.58).



**Figure 6.58** Signs of control and surveillance in Jie Fangbei: from *left* to *right*: signboard at the entrance of the Min Quan Road, CCTV camera on the Chongqing Commerce Mansion, police vehicle patrolling on the street, and presence of the security personnel (Source: photo taken by the author).

Another key aspect of control was the management of the 'socially-marginalised' people on the street. As stated previously (see Table 6.3), a range of activities such as begging, trash collecting for trade, and unlicensed vending are defined as illegal here, which are mostly brought into this place by the socially marginalised groups. But at the time of the survey, the Central Square was the only place where none of these activities were found. In other places the management tended to be tolerant - beggars and the homeless were generally free to rest and stroll in the public space (see Box 6.1); and as regards unlicensed hawkers or other illegal labourers (e.g., trash collectors, bangbang men, and shoe cleaners), there was often a peaceful coexistence between them and the security guards, as discussed in previous sections (see Box 6.5-6.6). Sometimes, usually when a public event was to be contained in the street (e.g., the public concert in Jie Fangbei, see Box 6.2) a constant to-ing and fro-ing between the hawkers and the security guards happened; but it rarely involved the police, and the security guards often left some leeway to the hawkers by giving an oral warning in advance, rather than directly fining them or confiscating their items which are allowed by the byelaw. In particular, the observations revealed that illegal vending often thrived in the late evenings. This was due to the absence of visible security and it did create a rather spontaneous

vibrancy on the street, and promote a degree of social interaction and cohesion (Figure 6.59).



**Figure 6.59** In the Zou Rong Road and the Min Zu Road, it was observed that unlicensed hawkers with portable stalls began to largely increase after about 19:30, and they soon gathered lots of people (Source: photo taken by the author).

## 6-8 Conclusion

Compared with its counterparts in Beijing, Nanjing, Harbin, and Shanghai, Jie Fangbei has been following a similar path in terms of historical evolution and public use. In the Treaty-Port period, the original part of Jie Fangbei was transformed by Western consumerism from an undeveloped site into a thriving commercial centre. In the first half of the twentieth century, it was widely used by different groups (from the wealthy to the 'bangbang men'), acting as an economic and social 'focal point' of the city. After 1950, under the Maoist ideology, this place was largely redeveloped into a politics and traffic based venue (reflected by frequent political demonstrations and the construction of wide roads), while its commercial function was weakened. As a result, its physical layout and social function became incapable of meeting public demands, and failed to address diverse civic and communal uses. But since the 1978's Reform, this place has been rapidly revived as the City's commercial hub. Again it has been treated by the local government as a valuable 'asset' which has a high potential to attract visitors, locals, and property development. Therefore, during recent two decades (over the identified four key stages), its 'physical infrastructure' (buildings, streets, and facilities) has been intensively updated, in order to promote both commercial and social uses.

The first wave of redevelopment between the 1980s and the middle 1990s was to accommodate the rapid influx of speculative capital facilitated by the city's functional transformations at the time. New buildings were largely presented as 'visual signatures' for the purpose of developers' property

marketing; while public-space provision was not among the primary concerns of the government, nor was a strong and active planning intervention system set up. In many places, it was the architects' spontaneous responses plus architectural solutions, rather than predefined urban design approaches, that impacted upon the public realm. As the result, developments between the 1980s and the middle 1990s largely produced physical outcomes that can be termed **spaces of architecture** which were rooted in architectural rationales and single-property developments. They were frequently limited, if not all negative, in their contribution to public life.

The 1997 pedestrianisation expressed the government's attempt to forge a 'brand' for the city. The government started to regard the whole land of Jie Fangbei as a profitable commodity, and thus to use the pedestrianisation process as an effective tool to exploit that commodity. Along with that strategic change, architecture alone was thought insufficient to create a 'high-profile' commercial environment. Preliminary urban-design considerations thus emerged in official planning plans and approaches. The Central Square was the direct outcome of that change, which features a place dominated by marketing and promotion activities. But, at its best this place broke away from its previous traffic-centred function and began to contain a degree of variety of public use. The second high-rise boom between 1998 and 2001 continued the change. While private developers retained their attempts to present more visually distinctive architecture, the planning authority reinforced the government's endeavour to create a consumption environment with a higher quality of place. The intervention of the planning authority thus became more active, leading to frequent negotiations between planners, developers, and architects in terms of frontage design and the provision of more open spaces. On the other hand, the street management regime and regulations were also developed, which further enhanced the role of this place as an intentionally governed, commercial venue. But, there was still an absence of more substantial, far-sighted urban-design thinking throughout the development at the time. This was evident in the fact that many of the remodelled streets lacked effective sub-division and sufficient public amenities so that they tended to act as movement corridors rather than diverse public spaces capable of accommodating a wider range of public uses. In this respect, they presented **spaces with limited functions and activities**, better than none but requiring further refurbishment and design to be successful.

The second pedestrianisation and street refurbishment since 2002 has its dual character. On the one

hand, it is based on an understanding of the problems in previous place making. The Image Design 2002 and the Urban Design Plan 2004 have raised more comprehensive, innovative and statutorily-established prescriptions. They are strong efforts to integrate buildings, open spaces, and elements of amenities, linking them with broader civic and communal needs. On the other hand, however, it reflects the government's more intense effort to implement its place promotion and marketing ambitions in Jie Fangbei. The Wall Street strategy arguably aims to 'simplify' the function of this place through the reduction of multiple land use and local shops. But so far, it is still the first rationale of place-making that is piloting the design and management of public spaces. As a result, the produced places present a strong sense of vibrancy and civility, and the whole environment is with a relatively diverse land use, a higher possession of resting and strolling localities and public facilities, and flexible and tolerant street control and surveillance. These feature **an active and inclusive public realm**, which can meet a wide range of social and physical needs of a broad population, not necessarily limited by its commercial functions. However, since the Wall Street strategy still retains in its infancy, it is now difficult to tell how the public space of Jie Fangbei will be eventually formed. While the future remains uncertain, tensions between diversity and homogeneity, freedom and control, and cohesion and exclusion, are likely to continue. In sum, Jie Fangbei's case study has probed both the economic-political process and the 'everyday life' of the public realm in China's contemporary CPDs. It again proves the conclusion made in *Chapter 2* that 'the dimension of time' is an indispensable element in understanding the 'dynamic nature' of public space. And again, coupled with the lessons learnt in other four CPDs, it proves the presumption that proper design and management practices have significant, if not determinant, impacts on the function of public space. The following chapter will synthesise all these aspects to draw the final conclusions of this study.

# Chapter 7

## Conclusion

This study of the evolution, form, and public use of central pedestrian districts in large Chinese cities reveals much about the way in which China's urban public spaces have been transformed through the ages. The discussions and analyses presented in the previous chapters demonstrate how current consumerist culture influences the practice of place-making in city centres, and how these places are physically formed and socially used. These outcomes indicate both consistencies and discrepancies between actual public behaviours in China's central urban spaces and Western theoretical critiques regarding the public nature of contemporary consumption space. In the following, this concluding chapter firstly brings together the key research findings, and draws out conclusions which correspond to the fundamental theoretical arguments and research hypotheses. Secondly, the chapter makes a series of design and management recommendations for China's CPD future development. Finally, the chapter summarises the main limitations of this study and suggests future researches to resolve them.

### 7-1 Discussions and conclusions

#### 7-1-1 Comparative 'publicness' of public space

This study is essentially grounded in existing urban design theories and perceptions. Public space is arguably the most fundamental practice and research object of urban design. While along with the transition of cities from production bases to consumption places, urban design has been largely manipulated by both state and corporate capital to upgrade, beautify and reinvent urban spaces, the majority of which are arguably 'public' by their ownership or levels of accessibility to the public. On the face of it, however, there has emerged a significant debate as to whether the *publicness* of contemporary public space tends to diminish in the face of consumerist culture. Authors argue that public spaces are in danger of becoming 'lost' as their nature and function are being constantly redeveloped to reinforce the consumption of goods and services, rather than to promote broader community and civil life. They have addressed an increasing privatisation, commodification, and symbolic manipulation of public space, which tends to homogenise the built environment and to

exclude wider social participation. These critics construct an overwhelmingly negative narrative of contemporary public space in the Western literature, i.e., *the critique of loss*.

At the same time, however, many authors argue that the publicness of space is a fluid, comparative concept - it varies over time and by societies, so that the meaningful way to understand the nature of any space is to trace the process of its evolution and change. In the light of this perception, a brief historical review of Western public space was undertaken in *Chapter 2*. By doing so, two aspects were identified as significant lessons to this study. *First*, in retrospect, one of the major functions of public space has always been to accommodate commercial activities and events, and this does not necessarily conflict with community and civil functions. On the contrary, commercial behaviours can effectively facilitate economic and political exchange, and promote social cohesion (examples include the Greek agora and the medieval marketplace). *Secondly*, public spaces have been often developed and used as a tool to express particular 'symbolic meanings', demonstrating the power and wealth of certain social groups and organisations. This can create a monofunctional public realm and lead to the exclusion of broader public participation. Therefore, many historical, non-commercial 'public' places featured a high extent of social control and homogeneity in function (examples include some early European civic and religious squares). And in comparison with these historical antecedents, contemporary consumption/commercial space does not necessarily present a higher level of exclusion and homogenisation and thus indicate a 'diminishing' publicness.

These important observations provide significant arguments counter to the critique of loss. *First*, it can be identified that consumerist culture is '*both constraining and enabling*' - it may diminish the social diversity in urban space, but properly manipulated, it can also conversely promote the vibrancy of public realm. In this regard, the critique of loss overemphasises the former aspect while neglecting the latter. *Secondly*, the '*dimension of time*' is one of the key elements in understanding of any space. As local circumstances and society's values change over time, large and small adjustments will be made to public spaces and people will not use them in completely the same way as previous generations. Therefore, in any attempt to understand the 'comparable, dynamic' publicness of a certain space, its history has to be included and reviewed, and any significant changes of its socio-physical 'circumstances' must be analysed. The critique of loss, however, in many instances sees contemporary public spaces as a 'totality', a generalised object for a 'universal'

analysis and discussion, while fails to examine their 'comparisons' and 'varieties' in terms of evolution and public use. In this regard, to what extent the critique of loss indicates the overall change of contemporary public space is highly debatable.

## 7-1-2 Historical evolution of CPDs

China's central pedestrian districts present the dual character of contemporary commercial space. They are not just the public spaces owned by public authorities and accessible to wide populations, but also a tool, or a branded asset, used by local governments to attract capital and consumers, and to create wealth. To some Western authors, these CPDs cannot be immune from the critique of loss. They are being criticised, similarly to their Western counterparts, in the respect that they have been developed to mainly promote and support consumerist needs, rather than social uses. And therefore, it is argued, homogenisation and social exclusion are likely to occur in them so that their publicness is inevitably in decline.

However, as revealed in *Chapter 2*, this critique appears unconvincing in that much of the evidence which the Western critics present to make this criticism is not comprehensive or 'socially specific'. These critics generally concentrate on some partial, contemporary dimension of these central pedestrian districts, while largely neglecting their historical evolution and substantial changes over time. In this regard, the 'dynamic nature' of the public space is not fully understood, and it remains unknown to what extent there was a 'publicness' in these CPDs that could really be lost.

The historical evolution of China's urban central spaces was thus reviewed in this study (*Chapters 4-6*), which found the significant comparison between today's CPDs and their historical precedents in terms of physical form and social use. _First_, in the early traditional period, Chinese cities were built mainly based upon rigid administrative and military requirements, and the central areas were characterised by considerable 'wards' and military avenues that were isolated from these wards by walls and ditches. The public's social life was thus constrained within small spatial units, and the overall public realm of the city was both physically and socially fragmented. _Second_, in the late traditional period when commercial pursuits became the most powerful force of shaping urban space, the ward walls were largely torn down and shops encroached onto the military avenues. Streets therefore became the key space which was shared by the public and largely promoted

economic and social exchanges. _Third_, the following Treaty-Port and Republican period saw a further enhancement of commercial activities and property developments in urban central areas, which was facilitated by the imported Western consumerist culture. Commercial streets continued playing their role as important public spaces, and during that period all the five CPDs began to be moulded as the central 'focal points' of cities, for both commercial and social uses. _Fourth_, the following pre-market period, however, imposed a strict planned economy and political control on place-making of Chinese cities. The 'danwei' compound, arguably similar to the previous ward unit, dominated the central areas, and once again, segregated public space from communal life through walling and gating. Meanwhile, the central streets underwent a heavy nationalisation in commerce, a bold modernisation in traffic update, and a frequent politicisation in social use. These changes deliberately sought to deny market-and-user-led consumerism, preventing the central areas from creating adequate opportunities for the public to access the public realm and use it for socialisation. These places therefore failed to sustain a vibrant and diverse public life, declining in their publicness. And _finally_, during the Reform period, the urban central areas have been renewed by the recurring consumerist culture. Again, the compound walls and gates were supplanted by shops fronting the exterior environment, and people gained higher mobility, set free (physically and symbolically) from their collective danwei units. Streets and open spaces returned, to again act as the main venue of economic and social exchanges. Over recent twenty years, the central areas in large cities have been substantially developed into pedestrian districts and provided with more public amenities. Apart from commercial events and consumption behaviours, these CPDs also accommodate a range of civic and community activities, and by doing so they have had an active involvement of a wider group of users (not just tourists and consumers, but also residents of local neighbourhoods and 'the marginalised people'). Therefore, in an overall sense, the CPDs have created a higher level of behavioural variety and social interaction than the pre-market period.

In sum, the historical evolution of CPDs indicates that the dominant issue essentially dictating place making practices in the central areas of Chinese cities was the conflict between power politics and commercial societies. It is clear that the streets in commercial societies (the late traditional period, the Treaty-Port and Republican period, and contemporary period) have many similarities, and they bear significant comparison with the highly regulated and 'standardised' public realm in the early traditional period and pre-market period, in terms of both physical form and social use. In this

regard, the force of commercialisation, or consumption, has arguably played a positive role, from a long-term and historically comparative perspective, in sustaining necessary social vibrancy and diversity in the central areas of Chinese cities.

In the light of all these perceptions, we now can argue that the critique of loss boldly imposed on China's CPDs lacks an appreciation of historical context. It has ignored, or potentially idealised China's historic public space, depicting a greater diversity and inclusiveness than actually existed. In fact, these CPDs have grown out of a context which is different from that of Western cities. Their true 'publicness' can only be illuminated by comparison with their complex past, insomuch they do not necessarily merit the critique on the loss of their public nature. On the contrary, they arguably present a higher level of publicness than at any previous stage in history.

### 7-1-3 Place-making process of CPDs

The historical analysis of CPDs suggests that dogmatism about the nature and function of public space should be avoided. But as stated in *Chapter 2*, this study also assumes that these CPDs are not problem-free under the undoubted impact of mass consumerist culture. In fact, there are lots of complexities and controversies in their detailed place-making process, many of which reflect the characteristics of contemporary consumption/commercial space (commodification, privatisation, and symbolic manipulation of public space, etc.). The cases presented in *Chapters 5-6* anatomised that process and presented some major features of CPDs' place-making process. Four aspects can be identified: *a government-led and pro-development process; a strong inclination to create a commercial and tourist 'brand' for the city; increasing homogenisation in physical form;* and yet, *a retained sense of civility and community.*

The review of the five CPDs' developments suggests a constant attempt by the local government at 'catching up' with principal Chinese cities, or even their international counterparts. Governmental policies in the making of the local CPD tend to heavily boost consumption prosperity, tourism, and property developments. Jie Fangbei was a typical example. At its initial stage of development, there was a 'growth-without-grace' attitude in the government's planning control, which was reflected by the government's heavy dependence upon individual developers and architects to provide and create public spaces (*spaces of architecture* were the result). But after the 1990s, the government

reinforced its command over new buildings as well as the provision of public space by formalising a set of stricter design and management regimes. But arguably, the physical outcomes (*spaces with limited functions and activities*) revealed a potential clash between two visions of place-making: the 'ideal' space (for commercial activities) envisaged by the government and its planners, and the lived space experienced on a daily basis by the general public. During recent years, the government has made stronger efforts to upgrade the quality of the public space through implementing more socially sensitive design approaches, some of which are based on past lessons and the requirements of wider populations. Although the government's most central concern is still to promote consumption and economics, there have emerged places that characterise *an active and inclusive public realm*.

Such a government-led development indeed represents a process through which planning and urban design are used as a tool to create 'marketable' places, which was discussed in the literature on contemporary urban design and public space in *Chapter 2*. Unexceptionally, all the CPDs presented in this study are intrinsically treated by local governments as 'brands' of cities which can qualify them to compete with their national counterparts. This branding activity equals a process of commodification at a macro-level: the whole land of a CPD which in the pre-market period was not considered much in economic terms now becomes a significant commodity having numerous 'tradable' items (sites for property development) and consumption possibilities (shops, restaurants, entertainment places, etc.). Frequently, this branding process is intertwined with a certain degree of symbolic manipulation in architecture and urban space. Rather than being simply an entity in which to *be*, lots of new buildings and places in these CPDs are treated as visually significant and functionally convenient environments in which to *consume*. Historical legacies are used as design inspirations and marketing approaches to creating innovative 'experiences' for consumers (e.g., Wang Fujing and Nanjing Road). Most significantly, multinational retailers, large department stores, and fast-food chains increasingly dominate the environment with their standardised design and production (evident in Xin Jiekou, and increasingly apparent in other four CPDs). Through supplanting the local community and small retailers (namely, through the process of gentrification similarly adopted in city centres all over the world), they are introducing an artificial and delocalised ambience to these CPDs. In this regard, all these CPDs are growing similar to other central areas in other world cities, being increasingly homogenised in terms of physical identity.

While the commodification (in a 'macro-level') and symbolic manipulation of public space is becoming increasingly evident, however, there are still some positive dimensions that contribute to the maintenance of public character of these places. _First of all_, the insistently strong control from the government over the prospects of these CPDs prevents an extensive privatisation of the public realm. Although specific sites are often delivered to private developers for property constructions, the local government is still largely in charge of the master-plan development and the maintenance of the overall district. It is observed that direct private involvement in public space management so far remains in its infancy - it is unexceptionally the public authorities in all these CPDs (such as the Jie Fangbei Comprehensive Management Sector) that takes the predominant role in the daily street security and maintenance, so that these CPDs might never achieve the same degree of 'duty transfer' from local government to private sectors in public space management, as many Western cities have done during the past decades (e.g., the Business Improvement Districts in some British and American cities). Simultaneously, neither is a 'micro-level' commodification of public space largely observed - the encroachment of private shops, restaurants, and cafes onto public streets and squares appears not as evident as that in Western cities. _Secondly_, while these CPDs are fond of activities financed by, and advertising for, commercial/corporate interests, they still provide many collective events (such as concerts, public-art exhibitions, public-welfare promotions, as observed in these CPDs) which reinforce a sense of civility and community. And many of the consumption behaviours they contain have also created a broader scope for fostering social vibrancy and cohesion, for example, through the existence of street food stalls and snack bars that provide the type of third-place environments for the general public. _Last but not least_, it is observed that a relatively rich variety of activity and integration of social class exists in these CPDs. In particular, the 'socially-marginalised' people manage to survive and even thrive in certain places at particular time (e.g., the spontaneous night market on a daily basis). This reflects that the management of these CPDs is still flexible and tolerant, not dictating an overwhelming social exclusion and usage homogeneity as might be expected.

### 7-1-4 Physical and social evaluations of CPDs

Apart from the review of the historical evolution and contemporary place-making process, this study also looked at the 'detailed' physical and social dimensions of CPDs, which have not been adequately explored in Western literature so far. A series of urban-design principles were at first

identified in *Chapter 2*, which can be used to ensure more 'responsive environments' that promote physical and social performances of public space. These principles were applied to the practical observations of the five CPDs, and the outcomes presented in *Chapters 5-6* indicate both commonalities and differences in terms of physical form and social use (see below).

*◆ Accessibility and Permeability*

Generally these five CPDs took two different redevelopment strategies. Wang Fujing, Nanjing Road, Central Street, and Jie Fangbei completed their pedestrianisation on existing streets; while Xin Jiekou demolished much of the central fabric, reinventing a new shopping environment. General observations proved that the former four had a higher level of accessibility and permeability as their streets retained stronger physical connections with surrounding urban fabrics, thus sustaining a level of 'familiarity' or 'legibility' that helped people better recognise and reach the place, and they also retained a relatively higher diversity of routes connecting to or running throughout the environment. By contrast, Xin Jiekou featured an ambitious, 'wholesale' redevelopment that eventually offered an inward-looking, over-scaled commercial space which was poorly connected with the main pedestrian flow, harder to access and penetrate. It thus can be concluded that the key difference here is whether these CPDs *used the streets or not* - streets which connect with each other allow for 'organic growth' and can ensure good accessibility and permeability; while a self-interested block disconnected with the main street and pedestrian movement is likely to lose its economic and social vibrancy.

*◆ Adaptability and Feasible-facility provision*

It was evident that all five CPDs had intensified the proportion of commercial use in various forms via pedestrianisation, whilst to different extents expelled former residents. Therefore the local community was inevitably weakened. This is a phenomenon widely observed in city centres elsewhere. Two measurements were identified as particularly significant to examine whether the pedestrianised areas were still 'adaptable' and 'feasible' enough to sustain a sense of community use. First, how many *small shops* featuring local commercial culture and retailing variety remained or were provided in that pedestrianisation process? Among the five CPDs, Central Street achieved the highest level of small shops/retailers so that it presented a stronger sense of community usage and commerce localisation. Wang Fujing, Jie Fangbei, and Nanjing Road also attained a relatively

healthy co-existence between small and mega retailers. But there was a strong tendency in them to reinforce the priority of mega structures in order to forge a 'higher CPD profile', which set lots of uncertainties in their future development. Xin Jiekou was otherwise dominated by mega shops, malls and offices so that it delivered an overwhelming sense of 'corporate use' and homogeneity.

Second, were there *places flexible enough and possessing sufficient public facilities* which could be used by people in diverse ways over different time? In an overall sense, all five CPDs offered more physically inclusive and 24-hour places than they had in the pre-market period, and these indeed contained a larger range of public uses, both collective and individual, official and civic. However, many of these places needed a further sub-division of space - there were instances that the streets or squares were over scaled while lacking 'intermediate spaces' to make people stay (the opposite to 'movement spaces' for people to pass through), so that it appeared difficult for them to inspire multi-purpose activities. The provision of public facilities was a highly relevant issue here. A prevalent problem was that these CPDs usually lacked plenty of amenities which might be of interest or benefit to the users. In particular, there was an absence of sittable places and shaded environments (though with some exceptions in Nanjing Road and Jie Fangbei). This led to the reduction of possibilities for people to stroll, stay, and rest. In many cases, this was the negative consequence of 'insensitive' place-making (e.g., 'removal of big trees' in early Jie Fangbei).

*◆ Enclosure, Continuity and Active frontage*

The application of enclosure, continuity, and active frontages in these five CPDs largely depended on the architectural frames and backdrops. Urban design practice usually recognises that in urban contexts firstly buildings should be joined to one another rather than being freestanding; secondly, the vertical height of framing buildings should be of human proportion; and thirdly, the ground-level frontage is arguably the most important factor because pedestrians rarely look above eye level in enclosed urban spaces and they interact almost entirely with ground-floor elements. In the first aspect, the majority of the CPDs that had confined their pedestrianisation within existing urban patterns retained a degree of *enclosure and continuity of streets* through keeping new buildings in line with old ones despite their different character. But in Xin Jiekou, there were unnecessary gaps and breaks in the rows of new buildings, delivering a sense of fragmentation of public space. In terms of *vertical limits*, however, high rise buildings mushroomed to different extents in all five

CPDs. In Nanjing Road and Central Street, the ambience of historical streets partly remained as numbers of old buildings had been well retained; but in the other CPDs, international high rises totally dominated the environment, often producing the 'canyonisation' effect (but arguably the sense of oppression might be relieved if these high rises fronted the street with their podiums while locating their towers in the rear, as observed in Jie Fangbei). As for *the ground frontage*, there was a huge variety in these CPDs; both merits and demerits were observed. Generally speaking, frontages which looked 'permeable' and provided 'sheltering and seating' niches (steps, concaves, colonnades, canopies, etc.) could promote the possibility of socialisation - successful examples include the 'colonnade approach' in Nanjing Road, and the 'transparent-facade strategy' in Jie Fangbei. But, there was evidence indicating that the architectural element alone was not enough - relaxed management over the building edges was another decisive factor ensuring behaviour activeness along the buildings, as also observed in Jie Fangbei, Nanjing Road, and Central Street.

*♦ Comfort, Safety and Freedom of action*

The sense of comfort relies upon many interrelated dimensions. In terms of physical aspects, it is identified in *Chapter 2* that 'comfortable' public space should at least provide: first adequate devices and places for people to sit and rest; second physical protection from sunshine, rain and inclement weather; and third some basic public conveniences (trash bins, toilets, etc.). By these three measurements, the five CPDs still need improvement, particularly as regards the first two aspects - the lack of facility provision identified above addresses this issue. But it was evident that in some cases *needed improvement was already in progress*, e.g., the second street refurbishment of Jie Fangbei injected more benches and trees into this place which began to meet not just individual comfort but also create a communal, 'playful' ambience (reflected by the diversity of behavioural patterns and the long length of time people remained in those refurbished sites). In terms of safety, these five CPDs were under similar management and security control through a set of approaches adopted in city centres elsewhere, such as application of certain rules and regulations, use of police and security personnel, CCTV monitoring, and so on. Evidence of crime was not observed, nor were 'disturbing' behaviours, such as vandalism, drinking, and rowdy youth, etc. It was observed that in many cases *management and control did not compromise the general freedom of action* - people could carry out various activities as they wished, some of which might arguably not be in accordance with private or commercial interests, such as the impromptu dancing observed in

Nanjing Road, skateboarding of teenagers in Central Street, etc. And in particular, the 'socially-marginalised people' (unlicensed hawkers, beggars, trash collectors, and street labourers) were not excluded; in many cases they shared the public space with others in the connivance of the management personnel. In sum, the potential conflict between safety and freedom of action appeared to be not as strong as expected in these CPDs. There seemed a subtle but effective balance between these two ends, contributing to the overall positive ambience of public realm.

◆ *Social cohesion*

This dimension can be measured by the extent to which people from different classes, ages, races and cultures can be brought together and intermingle in public space. The specialisation of physical environments, i.e., different spaces serving different social groups, usually leads to a low degree of social cohesion. Arguably, this has not occurred in CPDs. As discussed above, the five CPDs offered adaptable places that were shared by different groups with various behaviours. At least, *five types of users* could be identified through the study: *visitors* from other areas or cities shopping or making a tour in the CPD; *residents from local communities* using the CPD as a 'socialising or strolling' place; *office and shop workers* working in the CPD; *marginalised individuals or labourers* hanging out or making a (illegal) living in the CPD; and *representatives of public and private sectors* using the CPD as a 'promotional site' for their businesses. Among them existed a mix of sex, age, and family relation - both males and females, elderly and young, singles and couples were observed sharing the public space. And often, the distinction between 'consumers' and 'place users' was ambiguous - many people tended to linger and socialise in the street after finishing shopping in the stores. Arguably, this categorisation covers the major users and groups that 'a place of cohesion' must include, and thus reflects an extent of social integration in these CPDs.

But on the other hand, there was indeed a certain degree of *separation in time and space for particular groups and behaviours*. For example, in Jie Fangbei exercisers from the local community usually came up in the early morning, while family groups would increase in the evening; and street labourers (such as bangbang men) tended to linger around building edges, while unlicensed hawkers often appeared in places near the street entrances and they usually increased during evening hours. Similar phenomena were also observed in Central Street where the elderly group favoured gathering in the 'handwriting square', while teenagers confined their skateboarding to

some 'marginal' places. One may argue that these still demonstrate potential social stratification. But from a practical perspective, this temporal and spatial differentiation is needed to stabilise an extent of general social tolerance. Moreover, there was also evidence indicating that the degree of social cohesion could extensively increase in places where 'food' played a vital role - the Snack-bar Street in Wang Fujing and the Ba Yi Road in Jie Fangbei offered more opportunities for various populations (sellers, consumers, opportunistic street labourers, etc.) to intermingle and have face-to-face communication, despite their different social backgrounds. These to some extents confirm, in a Chinese urban context, the opinion from both William Whyte and Ray Oldenburg, that food and its related 'third-place' environments (broadly defined) can make public space inclusive and lively.

◆ *Sense of place*

Although purely architectural design is not the decisive factor for social activities of a space/place, it arguably has considerable influence upon the sense of that place. As discussed in *Chapter 2*, in practice the sense of place can be embodied by certain inherited elements such as older buildings and historical structures. Architectural observations in all the five CPDs indicated that they had *different manifestations of place and local distinctiveness*. Xin Jiekou and Jie Fangbei seemed to have been heavily modernised and westernised so that very few historical buildings and relics had remained (Jie Fangbei had nevertheless sustained the *Monument*, its most valuable historical symbol; while Xin Jiekou had swept away all its historical items). Wang Fujing was also overwhelmed by new international-style architecture; but it tried to give local characteristics to new construction, such as adding traditional pitched roofs and decorative patterns on westernised buildings, or simplifying its historical relics (the *Well*) into landscape elements. As for Nanjing Road and Central Street, they had restained some key aspects of local tradition, by regenerating many old buildings rather than totally dismantling them. But it was also evident that more and more high-rise buildings were imposing challenges upon the physical identity of these two places. In an overall sense, there was a general trend that the five CPDs had grown visually similar to other central districts of other cities, creating an increasingly anonymous environment associated with mass consumption culture. However, as also discussed in *Chapter 2*, the sense of place is not always physically inherited; it can be also constructed through *the ways the place is involved with people's activities over time*. In this regard, Wang Fujing had created its Snack-bar Street where the

traditional dining culture was spontaneously integrated with people's consumption and social needs. Similarly, the 'handwriting square' in Central Street and the 'Golden Line' in Nanjing Road had also successfully reinvented their 'identities' by hosting meaningful public events and activities. These examples therefore provide a significant understanding of public space, suggesting that a 'user-led' sense of place is equally important as, if not more valuable than, a 'place-based' one.

### 7-1-5 So to conclude: revising the research hypothesis

In light of all the analyses and discussions raised above, we now revisit the research hypothesis of this study (firstly presented in *Chapter 3*). Some important revisions are made to this hypothesis, to provide an overall conclusion to all the previous discussions:

◆ *China's current CPDs, in significant contrast to their past counterparts, particularly those in the pre-market era, have created comparatively more inclusive urban spaces with higher diversity of public use. In that sense, they present a higher degree of 'publicness' and prove the 'enabling' effect of contemporary consumerist culture.*

◆ *The assumed homogenisation is witnessed as one of the major problems faced by these CPDs, but mostly in terms of physical identity of places as well as variety of retailers, rather than in usage patterns. The anticipated social exclusion however is not prevalent. This is primarily due to a management tolerance of diverse activities in the street, many of which are often associated with the 'socially-marginalised' people, and also because there is still no intense effort by local governments to hand over much street control and regulation to private or corporate bodies.*

◆ *But there are ranges of practical problems which are largely induced by inappropriate design and management rationales/policies/approaches which essentially express the 'constraining' effect of consumerist culture. They to a great extent lead to a constant commodification and symbolical manipulation of places in favour of the government's economic pursuits and the interests of capital, plus a certain degree of presence of privatisation in public space. These are giving more priority to commercial, rather than social, functions of these CPDs. Fortunately, the observed vibrancy in activity and the variety of users have acted as an effective antidote to these potential negatives. In many cases, they 'compensate for' the 'constraining' dimension, creating the 'ambience' of public*

*realm. But still, whether this balance will be sustained, and to what extent the public space will be still co-produced through the active involvement of the users, largely remain uncertain in the future. Local governments are developing some design and management strategies which are unlikely to encourage a broader range of 'public experiences'. In this regard, recommendations are needed to create a more 'responsive' public environment (see below).*

## 7-2 Design and management recommendations

Based on all the discussions presented above, nine specific recommendations are made below, each addressing one particular aspect of the design and management of CPDs. In total they do not constitute a 'comprehensive' solution. Rather, they are the practical suggestions for improving the physical and social environments of CPDs; and they provide ideas that all the players involved in the development of China's CPDs can draw on.

### 1. Start with an integrative and long-term initiative

The need for an integrative and long-term initiative in delivering a CPD was frequently recognised throughout this study. The government should at first make a strong political commitment to not just creating commercial prosperity, but to delivering a high-quality public space. This should be combined with a systematic and effective involvement of the public, in order to include the needs of a broad population, so that the potential clash between the official vision and the public prospect can be avoided. Then the commitment must be realised through hand-in-hand with a farsighted, long-range planning control approach which not just lays emphases upon specific properties but also has a consistent focus on the production of the public realm. From the experiences of this study, such an approach often takes the form of urban-design-led development strategy the key elements of which can be easily adopted into local statutory planning regimes.

### 2. Respect existing urban fabrics

The experience in Xin Jiekou proves that a 'wholesale' pedestrianisation with a wide demolition of the existing urban fabric has multi-fold risks. It may create an environment which stays isolated from the main pedestrian flow, and thus becomes difficult to access and penetrate. It may cut off the local traditional commercial culture, and result in a level of homogeneity in the physical environment. And it may largely expel the local residents and simultaneously breach the sense of

communal life. In contrast, an incremental pedestrianisation that is confined within existing street boundaries may to an extent function as an antidote to these negatives. It tends to retain necessary accessibility and permeability of public realm and to connect the pedestrian part to a wider area of the city. And it can arguably preserve a degree of formal and functional identity of the central area, and give more leeway to the local community in sustaining their interests. Therefore an appropriate CPD development should not seek to erase existing urban fabrics. Rather, it should aim to blend in new developments with a moderate upgrade of former urban patterns. In particular, the pedestrian street should be built on existing patterns of movement (existing roads, traffic lanes, walking paths, etc.) which can be then modified by new paving and adding extra amenities.

### 3. Give privileges to small retailers/shops

Evidence in this study shows that a sizeable proportion of small retailers/shops can help to sustain a degree of mixed use of land which is crucial to local commercial vitality. It can also enhance the physical distinctiveness of places as small shops are likely to present a degree of wealth of design details. Furthermore, small shops are likely to provide active frontages with niches for people to linger, thus raising opportunities of optional activities and incidental socialisation. The common trend illustrated in this study, however, is that many CPDs are currently giving increasing privileges to mega-retailers (in the form of shopping malls and big department stores) while tending to reduce small, local shops. As the consequence, these CPDs are being gradually homogenised, becoming artificial environments featuring corporate interest. Possible solutions include that local planning authorities should require developers to offer more small shop units with mixed functions in their new constructions. Small retailers should be given more prerogatives to continue their land tenures, and existing mega-shop owners should be obligated to upgrade their ground frontages, by either releasing more places for small shops, or enhancing the extent of physical activeness on building facades. And it may be possible to develop some 'concentration sites' in these CPDs for local retailers, like the 'marketplaces' in European cities.

### 4. Create small sitting and sheltering places

Pre-industrial Chinese cities did not have the tradition of building huge civic plazas and public parks which arguably prevailed in Western cities. As the historical analysis of this study reveals, the Chinese street with its numerous, affiliated small open places were used as the prime public space.

The empirical observations show that the scarcity of land resource in today's Chinese cities still precludes the possibility of building more large-scale squares or boulevards in urban central districts. On the contrary, many of the pedestrianised streets which served traffic purposes in the pre-market era now need to be further sub divided into interlinked small places to serve far more public uses. Two specific approaches are potentially feasible: one is to lay a consistent, linear 'resting zone' in the middle of the street (as seen in Nanjing Road), another is to place a number of 'nodal sites' on different locations (as seen in Jie Fangbei). No matter what form it takes, the common prerequisite to their availability is: first to stay off the main pedestrian flow so that they are not disturbed by the 'movement lane', and second to include adequate seats and 'shelters' (such as trees). These two elements can together create enclosures which make people feel comfortable and protected, thus facilitating civil and community activities. In terms of how much sitting and sheltering space should be required, William Whyte's experience in New York provides some ideas: 10 per cent of the total open space is a minimum area for sittable setting, 1 tree for every 25 feet of sidewalk and it must be at least 3.5 inches in diameter and planted flush with the ground. But whether these fit Chinese needs requires further empirical studies.

## 5. Integrate open spaces into buildings

Much evidence in this study sees that buildings are often treated by designers as isolated entities rising straight out of their footprints and set back from streets or public squares. As the result, the street would become a crowded walking strip, and buildings would lose their potential of sheltering and gathering more people. The 'colonnade strategy' observed in Nanjing Road and Jie Fangbei is one effective approach to tackling this problem. Another feasible concept may be to enhance the integration between buildings and open spaces. This calls for the opening of walking corridors on the first-floor level of buildings fronting the street, which can be accessible from the ground through public stairs or elevators. Individual buildings should open their stores on the first-floor level to these new corridors and continue them from one building to another through covered bridges over the street, so that a comprehensive, multilevel walking system can be constructed. Equipped with resting areas and conveniences (public toilets, etc.), these new corridors could provide more environments for people's socialisation. However, planners should take precautions against potential problems, such as alienation of these skywalks from life in the 'surface street', or homogenisation in function on an elevated level (i.e., corridors only for movement, rather than

socialisation), which have been observed in Western cities. But, due to the high density of population in China's urban central areas, a multilevel walking system is less likely to largely diminish the pedestrian amount in the main street. Therefore, the key point here is that these first-floor walking spaces should be treated as a real constituent part of the public realm in terms of openness and management. Issues such as public access, provision of amenities, activity control, safety, and comfort must be carefully handled.

## 6. *Boost the value of historic identity and articles*

The experience of Nanjing Road and Central Square proves that the historic identity of a place has significant values to local development, not just in cultural and social terms but in economic aspects. Those refurbished old buildings to a large extent retain the authenticity of the physical environment, and largely become the host sites for high-end shops and restaurants, attracting large numbers of tourists and consumers. This largely owes to the strict regulation on the preservation of historical buildings, which prevents short-sighted, reckless redevelopment. This principle should be applied in any CPDs with historical remains. But old buildings and structures should not be simply treated as a show-case item; they should be related to the 'involvement of the people', e.g., the Victory Monument in Jie Fangbei should have played as a more open and accessible setting, perhaps similar to the Eros Statue in the Piccadilly Circus of London, which can seat people resting and watching others. For those CPDs with few historical items, they should be encouraged to provide museums, galleries, and even street art works which can reflect the local history, and to have restaurants and shops offering local food and crafts. These can help reduce the homogeneity of corporate consumerism.

## 7. *Exert the significance of 'food'*

The observations in Jie Fangbei and Wang Fujing prove the vital contribution of 'food' to both local economy and social vibrancy. The Ba Yi Road and the Snack-bar Street characterise the typical Chinese third-place environments. Unlike their Western counterparts which feature cafes and beer sites, they mostly offer local traditional food at low prices, often with the provision of outdoor tables and chairs and displays of the cooking process. These elements together attract people, and people attract more people. To a large extent, activities of selling and buying local food also stand counter to the homogenisation of mass consumerist culture; and similar to small retailers, the existence and

popularity of local-food shops also contributes to a sense of community. Therefore CPDs should consider the feasibility of developing a specific site for traditional food consumption. Ideally it should be a place not just for eating and drinking but also for people to be able to rest and watch at an affordable cost. Both public and private sectors should play their respective roles in maintenance to sustain a clean, orderly, convenient and localised food-consumption environment.

## 8. *Sustain general tolerance in management*

It is observed that the general management in the CPDs is not 'zero tolerance'; instead, it usually allows time and space for the 'socially marginalised group', including beggars, unlicensed hawkers, and street labourers. A strict place control based on private property rights is not apparent in the CPDs and in many cases the public can still use the privately-owned 'public' space in the same manner as they do in any fully public space, with the same freedom and the same constrains. Some evidence shows that an inclusive and vibrant place can be largely self-policing, and there is rarely trouble of any kind. In the case of Jie Fangbei's Min Zu Road, for example, people staying on the benches are not bothered if trash collectors are sleeping on the same ledges, and the vulnerable public assets (seats, lamps, etc.) are not suffering much breakage or vandalism. Based on all these evidence, therefore, it is worth saying that such benign tolerance should be encouraged and sustained in the day-to-day street management. The local byelaws should be further specified to distinguish between 'harmful' and 'harmless' activities and groups, controlling the former while without constraining the latter. Police, street managers, and security guards should be encouraged to behave tolerantly towards marginalised people as long as they don't bother others. And private property owners and shop keepers should be regulated by particular byelaws to not just sustain the quality of places (up to the same standard of public space), but also allow them to be accessed by the public and used for free public uses at all time.

## 9. *Separate activities in time and space*

In relation to the 'tolerance' proposal above, however, some certain activities may still disturb certain individuals although they are permissible to the majority. These may include skateboarding, leaflet distributing, dog walking, encroaching the street for unlicensed vending, etc. But evidence acquired in this study indicates that a certain degree of separation of these activities in time and space can tackle the problem. For example, in Central Street teenagers are allowed to skateboard

within the secondary places off the main street, and in Jie Fangbei unlicensed vending is largely given 'silent approval' during off-work hours. These approaches can arguably secure to a maximised extent the right of use and action that one desires in public space, but still with the recognition that it is a shared space in which the satisfaction and comfort of the majority is the principal concern. Thus, it is suggested that as long as this 'spontaneous' separation works, there is no need for the local management sectors to explicitly regulate it - it is perhaps best to sustain the 'intentional connivance' and let these places and activities be 'self-regulating'. A certain level of physical differentiation (e.g., signposts, varying pavements with different degrees of 'durability', etc.) is perhaps needed to indicate the allowed behaviours; but again, unnecessary barriers or over-demanding signs must be avoided. An overall accessibility within public space should be still a precondition to this proposal.

## 7-3 Limitations and future researches

This study has combined research strategies of historical analysis, rapid survey, and detailed case study. There is a significant proportion of quantitative analysis in terms of behaviour and land use examinations. But generally, qualitative-data collection and analysis were adopted as the major research method through these three strategies. Therefore, the limited acquisition of quantitative evidence may to a certain extent hinder this study from raising more in-depth analyses in some specific aspects (e.g., comparable amounts of public events in these CPDs, statistic indications of architectural impacts on people's behaviours, public viewpoints in quantitative terms, etc.). This is considered as the prime limitation of this study in a general sense. On the other hand, this study just acted as a 'pilot overview'; it addressed several key issues of China's CPDs, which still need extended researches to specify and revise the preliminary findings. Four aspects in this regard are identified (see below).

*First*, in terms of the state/government side, this study carried out numbers of planning-document analyses and interviews with key officers; but it did not probe the formal planning and management regimes. Namely, it did not examine how individual redevelopment projects or street regulations were carried through any specific planning control or official administrative process. As the result, it could only raise a series of design and management 'recommendations', rather than formulating immediate revisions of current planning and management policies. This thus calls for some *more*

*policy-based researches*, to find out how specific developments or events are examined, approved, and implemented within current planning and administrative frameworks, and thus what and how feasible policy improvements should be made to create direct changes.

*Second*, this study only managed to interview a limited number of private developers. It was mostly through planners' perspectives plus direct observations that the impacts of the private dimension were outlined. This is partly because this is primarily an urban-design research, as predefined in *Chapter 1*, which mainly aims at empirical design and management solutions, rather than too much property or development partnership analysis. But this prevents this study from generating more meaningful understandings of the significance of private interest which always provokes arguments in public-space making. Future researches can thus *pay more attention to the developer dimension*, to observe how the tension between private and public interests will evolve along with CPDs' future development, how private players' deal with public space will change, if the private control over the public domain familiar in Western cities will eventually prevail in Chinese CPDs, etc.

*Third*, this study revealed that a sense of civility and community was sustained in China's CPDs, which was largely reflected by the spontaneous behaviours of users in the public space, such as strolling, exercising, unlicensed vending, street labouring, and so on. It was mainly through direct, on-site observations that these data were obtained. This study did manage to have some random street interviews; but they are limited in number, and thus appear insufficient for the needs to learn the 'subjective experiences' of more users as well as to learn more about the identities of these users (e.g., whether they are residents within these CPDs or they just come from other neighbourhoods of the city, what is the social-economic status of these users, how is their accessibility to these CPDs). This was primarily due to the time and budget limits of this research - a thorough, systematic interview or questionnaire in these large and populated central areas demands much more money, time, and assistance than the researcher could afford. Besides, considering that this is a research in the subject of urban design, an ethnographic study of users might be useful but not highly necessary. Therefore, a *deeper community-based research* can be expected in the future. It should have more thorough interview/questionnaire investigations with users, street managers and security guards, to learn the public satisfactions, criticisms, perceptions and needs regarding the quality of public realm. In particular, such a community-based research could discover more evidence from the users'

experiences relating to the process of gentrification in these CPDs, a significant topic which has been discussed at several points in the thesis but still needs much more investigations and analyses. And this topic also demands an investigation of wider areas of the city, rather than CPDs themselves (see below).

And *fourth*, *the implication of CPDs' experiences to a wider area of public space* can be another important future topic. The major public spaces of the city have always had city-wide significance, and they must be well connected with each other (economically, physically, and socially), in order to create a comprehensive, vibrant 'public-space network' for all citizens. In this respect, a number of recent Western urban-design researches are good examples, such as *Towards a fine city for people: public spaces and public life - London, June 2004* by Gehl Architects (2004), and *New city spaces* by Gehl and Gemzoe (2001). Thus, future researches on the one hand need go beyond the boundaries of CPDs, to more look at how these central districts have impacted the development of other areas, and then to explore how these different parts can be integrated to create an effective, overall public realm. In particular, the effects of gentrification, as have been discussed above, will be effectively evaluated through this wider examination (e.g., whether the physical deterioration and economic decline which used to prevail in these CPDs have been completed terminated, or they just have shifted to different lower-income neighbourhoods). On the other hand, it also needs to explore how the 'positives' and 'negatives' of CPDs can produce practical implications to other types of public space which are not necessarily consumption based (such as civic spaces, green spaces, neighbourhood spaces, etc.). They are all supposed to contribute to the vibrancy and health of public life, despite their differences in function; therefore, it is important for them to learn that in CPDs' experiences 'what works' and 'what does not' in creating a diverse and inclusive public realm.

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# Appendix 1

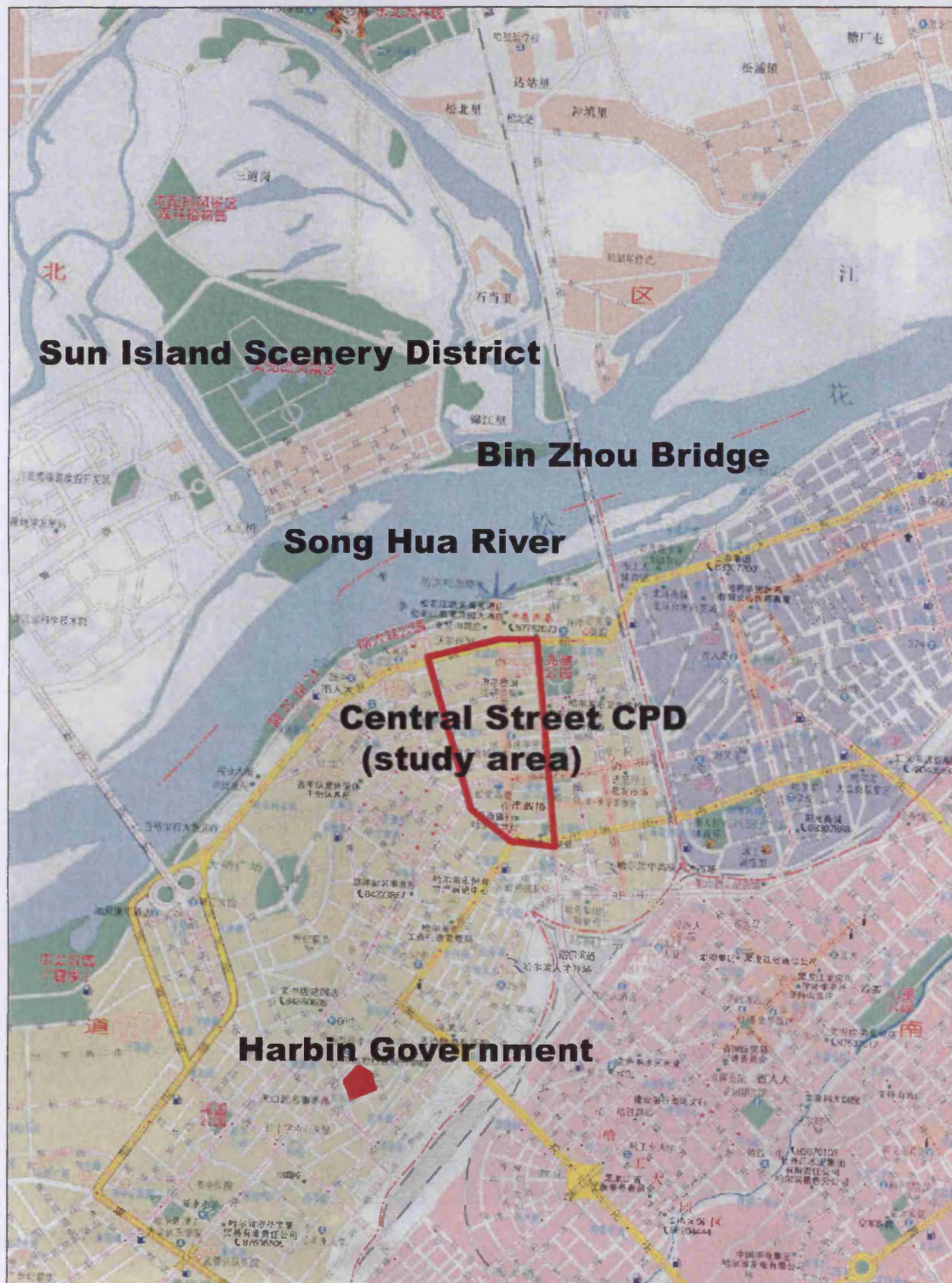The locations of five selected cities

# Appendix 2
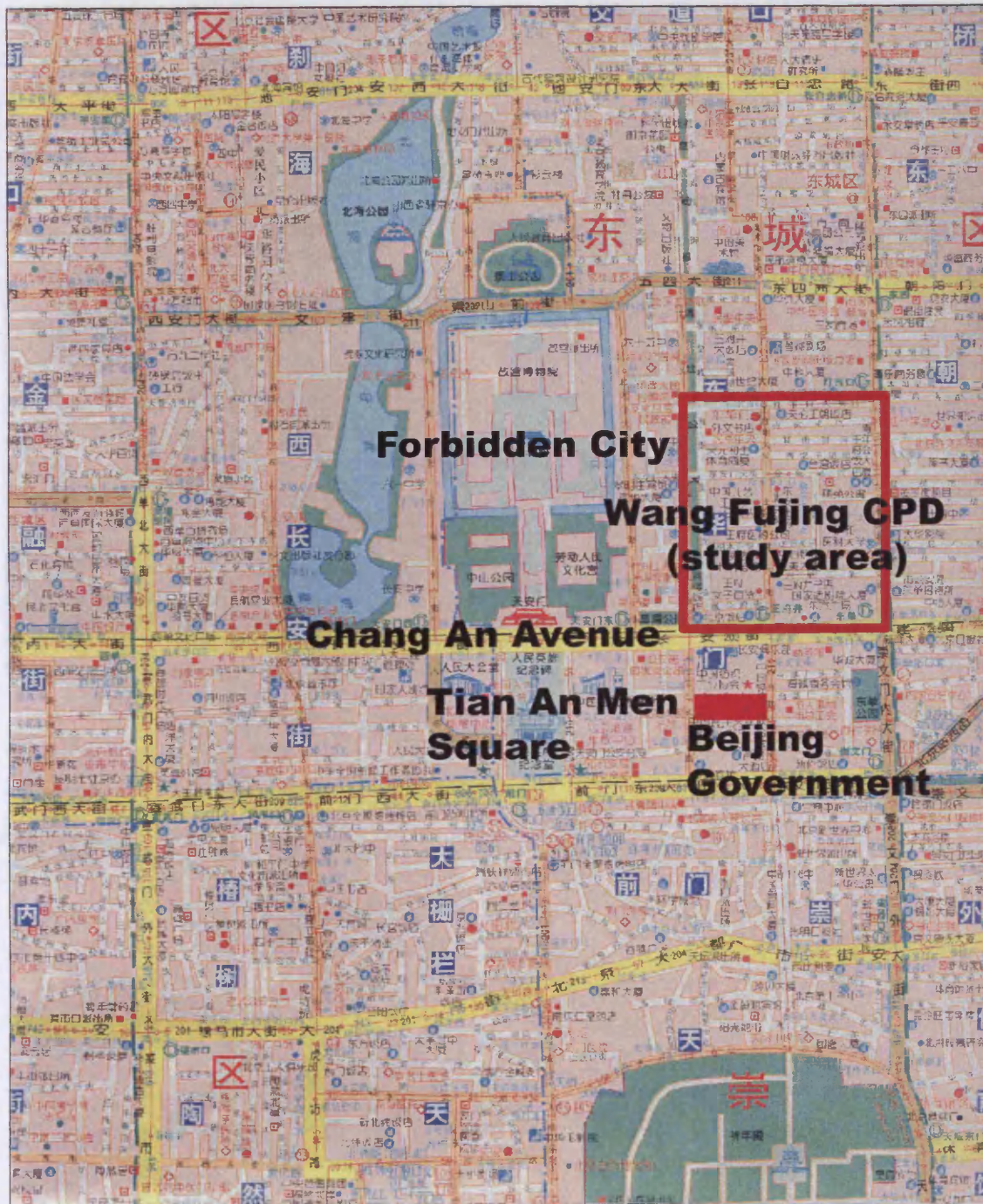


The location of Wang Fujing in Beijing.

# Appendix 3
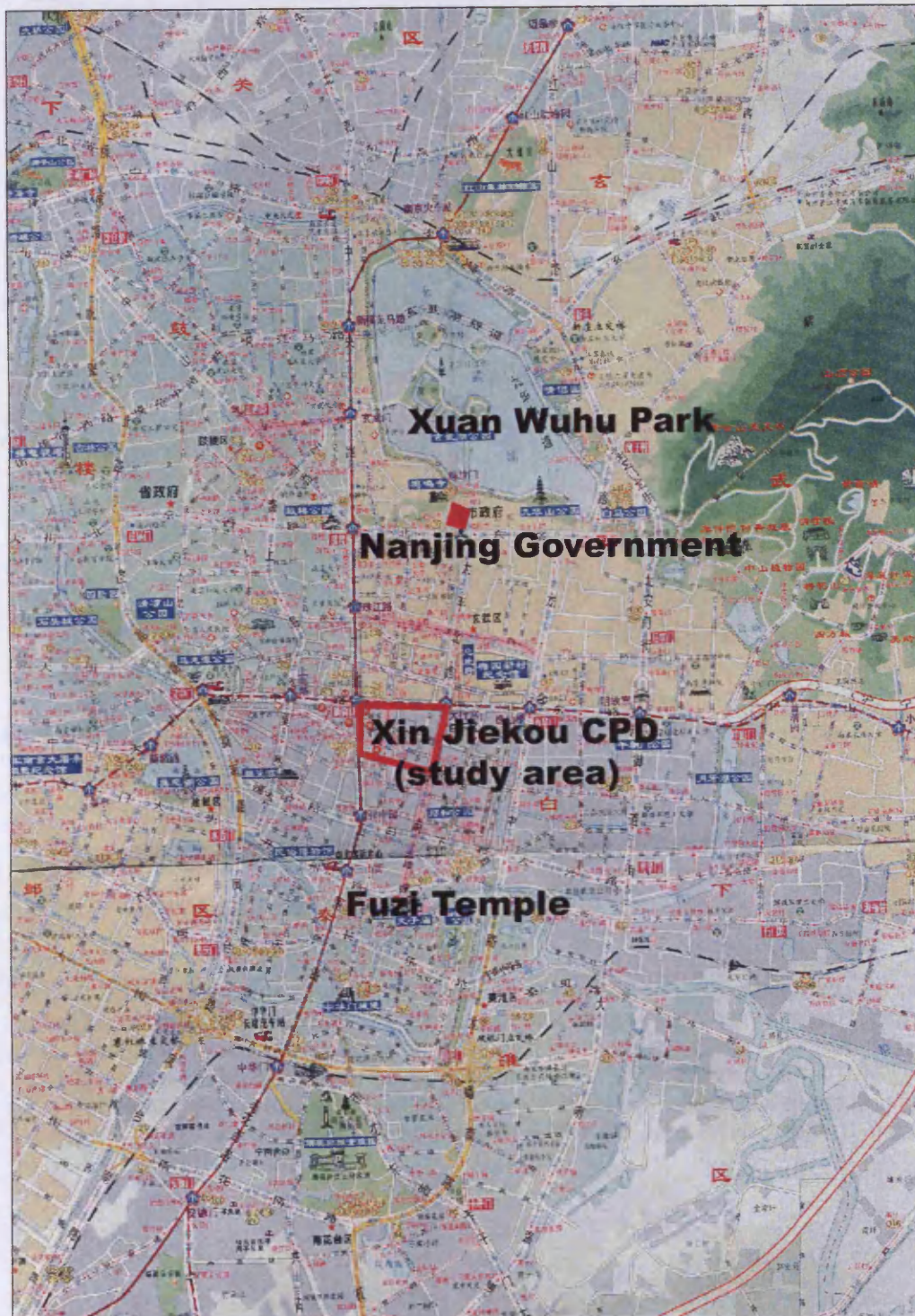


The location of Nanjing Road in Beijing.
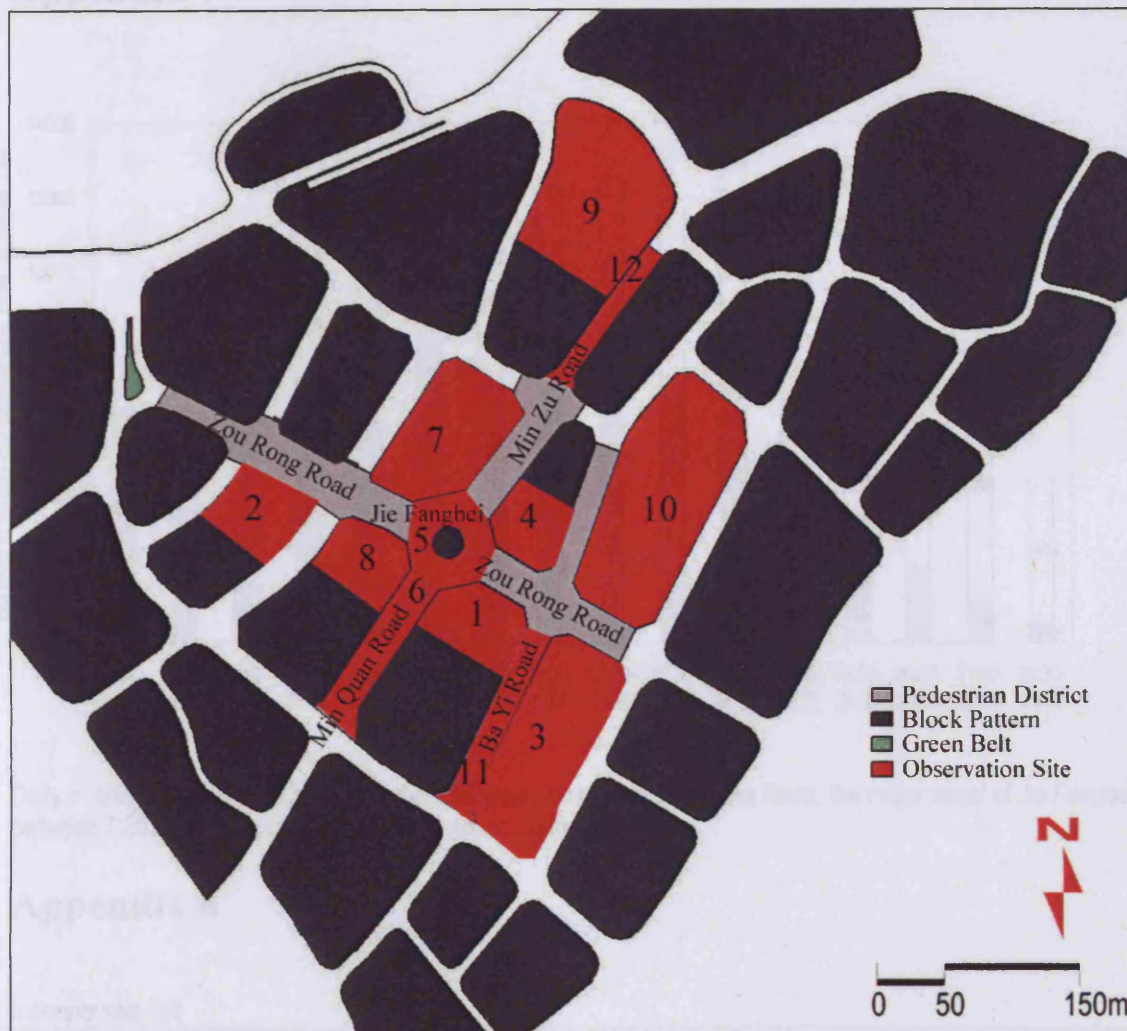
# Appendix 4



The location of Central Street in Harbin.
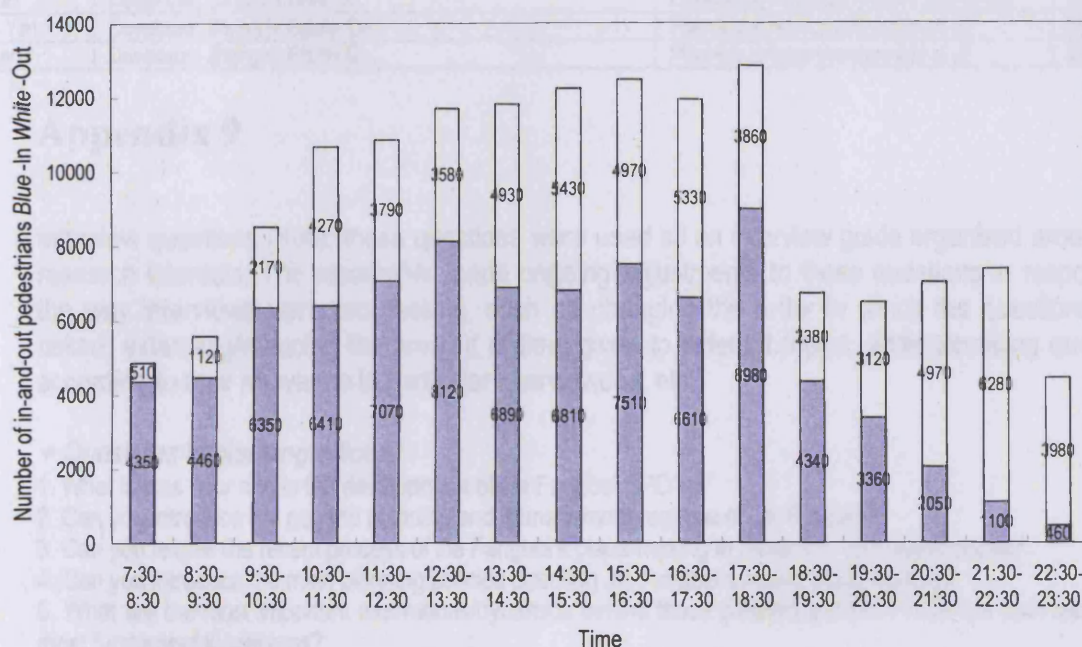
# Appendix 5



The location of Xin Jiekou in Nanjing.

# Appendix 6



Morphological pattern of Jie Fangbei and selection of observation sites (Source: adopted from the master plan of Jie Fangbei provided by Chongqing Urban Planning Bureau; observation sites were selected in pilot study). *Sites of the first high-rise boom*: 1-Chongqing Commerce Mansion, 2-New Century Mansion, 3-City of Dainty, 4-Yangtze Peninsula Mansion. *Sites of the first pedestrianisation*: 5-The Central Square, 6-The Min Quan Road. *Sites of the second high-rise boom*: 7-The Times Square, 8-The Xin Hua Bookstore, 9-Land King Plaza, 10-The Metropolitan Plaza. And *sites of the second pedestrianisation and street refurbishment:* 11-The Ba Yi Road, 12-The Min Zu Road (northeast end).

# Appendix 7



Daily in-and-out pedestrian amount at the northwest entrance of Zou Rong Road, the major street of Jie Fangbei, between 7:30 and 23:30, counted on 24th October, 2006.

# Appendix 8

Interviewee list

| Group 1: Planning officers-8 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Name | Position | Relation to Jie Fangbei (JF) | Interview date |
| Mr. YANG Rongliang | Former Director, Chongqing Urban Planning Bureau (CUPB) | Was directing the whole planning of JF | 12/June/2007 |
| Mr. LIANG Xiaoqi | Deputy Director General, CUPB | Directing the whole planning of JF | 19/June/2007 |
| Mr. GU Fei | Chief, Comprehensive Plan Section, CUPB | Directing the comprehensive plan of JF | 21/June/2007 |
| Mr. QIU Shujie | Chief, Detail Plan and Urban Design Section, CUPB | Directing the urban design of JF | 22/June/2007 |
| Mr. ZHANG Min | Chief, Traffic Plan and Research Section, CUPB | Directing the Traffic plan of JF | 25/June/2007 |
| Mr. CHEN Ming | Chief, Land Use Plan Section, CUPB | Directing the land use plan of JF | 25/June/2007 |
| Mr. DU Rong | Chief, Yubei Branch Bureau, CUPB | Directing the plan of some sub-CPDs | 27/June/2007 |
| Mr. ZHANG Qing | Deputy Chief General, Urban Planning Exhibition Gallery | Was directing planning permission of JF | 29/June/2007 |
| Group 2: Planers, designers and academics -9 | | | |
| Name | Position | Relation to Jie Fangbei | Interview date |
| Mr. CAO Chunhua | Former Planner, Chongqing Urban Planning Institute | In charge with 1997's urban design of JF | 2/July/2007 |
| Mr. DONG Haifeng | Planner, Chongqing Urban Planning Institute | In charge with 2002's urban design of JF | 29/June/2007 |
| Mr. ZHANG Xingguo | Professor, Chongqing University | In charge with 2004's urban design of JF | 22/June/2007 |
| Mr. DAI Zhizhong | Professor, Chongqing University | Panel member of planning commission | 2/July/2007 |
| Mr. WEI Hongyang | Professor, Chongqing University | Panel member of planning commission | 3/July/2007 |
| Mr. TANG Miao | Lecturer, Chongqing University | Was participating in architectural design of JF | 5/July/2007 |

| Mr. LI Bingqi | Director, Chongqing Design Institute | Was participating in architectural design of JF | 11/July/2007 |
| Mr. CHEN Hangyi | Chief Manager, Chongqing Bojian Architectural Design Co. | Was participating in architectural design of JF | 19/July/2007 |
| Mr. LI Ge | Vice Director, Chongqing Hexin Architectural Design Institute | Was participating in architectural design of JF | 20/July/2007 |

**Group 3: Developers-4**

| Name | Position | Relation to Jie Fangbei | Interview date |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mr. FANG Ming | Developer, Yingli Estate Co. | Developing schemes in JF | 20/June/2007 |
| Ms. WU Yajun | Developer, Longhu Estate Co. | Developing schemes in some sub-CPDs | 3/July/2007 |
| Ms. ZHANG Yan | Developer, Zhongrui Estate Co. | Planning to have development in JF | 23/July/2007 |
| Mr. LUO Laian | Developer, Zhongrui Estate Co. | Planning to have development in JF | 23/July/2007 |

# Appendix 9

Interview questions (Note: these questions were used as an interview guide organised around key research interests. The researcher made ongoing adjustments to these questions in response to the way interviews were progressing, such as changing the order in which the questions were asked, extending/reducing the amount of time given to different topics, adding/omitting questions according to their relevance to particular interviewees, etc.)

◆ *Questions to planning officers*
1. What is/was your role in the development of Jie Fangbei CPD?
2. Can you introduce the general planning and management regimes of Jie Fangbei?
3. Can you review the recent process of Jie Fangbei's place-making in relation to your experiences?
4. Can you introduce the main planning policies directing Jie Fangbei's recent place-making?
5. What are the most important motivations/dynamics behind these different policies? What are their respective, most fundamental concerns?
6. What are the practical approaches raised by these different policies? And how are they implemented to specific places or buildings through planning control, how are the different stakeholders (e.g., senior government officers, developers, designers, etc.) involved with these processes? Please state with examples.
7. Then from your opinion how do you evaluate the effectiveness of these approaches in creating specific places or buildings to particularly make them both economically and socially successful? Please state with examples.
8. We've watched some problems in particular places (such as...) and learnt critiques from the public or other key players (such as...), how do you respond to these?
9. In a general sense, what is your suggestion as to the design and management of Jie Fangbei's public space?

◆ *Questions to planners and designers*
1. Can you briefly introduce your participation in Jie Fangbei's planning, urban design or architectural design?
2. Can you generally review the whole planning or design process?
3. What guided the plan or design in terms of governmental policies and approaches? While what was the virtual, main driving forces dominating the plan/design (what exactly did you want to achieve through your plan/design)? Any conflicts between these two aspects? If any, how did you cope with that in the process?
4. What is the final outcome of your plan or design? How do you assess its general quality (in physical and social terms)?
5. Any critiques from others?
6. Then in retrospect, what do you think the lessons would be?
7. What is your suggestion as to the design and management of Jie Fangbei's public space?

◆ *Questions to academics*
1. How are/were you involved in Jie Fangbei's place-making?
2. From your experience or research, can you review the process of Jie Fangbei's recent place-making?
3. From your experience, how do you evaluate the respective role and impact of different key players (planning

authority, developers, designers, street managers, etc.) in the process of Jie Fangbei's place-making?

3. How do you evaluate the recent key planning policies in place-making (such as...), including their concerns, approaches and concrete outcomes?

4. How do you evaluate particular places or buildings (such as...) especially in terms of their contribution to the public realm?

5. From your opinion, what are the main design and management problems in Jie Fangbei's public space? What are the reasons? Please state with examples.

6. Then what is your overall suggestion as to the design and management of Jie Fangbei's public space?

♦ *Questions to developers*

1. How are/were you involved in Jie Fangbei's place-making?

2. Please briefly introduce your finished or proposed development in Jie Fangbei?

3. What was/is the most important concern or pursuit of that development? What approaches did/do you intend to realise that pursuit?

4. Then what was/is the main requirement from the planning authority to that development? Any policies that you had/have to conform to? How did/do you respond to these in the development process? Any pressures, conflicts, negotiations, etc.?

5. From your perspective, how is the final outcome of that development (or, how will it be) particularly in terms of its place quality? Any critiques from others?

6. In a general sense, whether or how do you like to relate your development to the public realm? How do you evaluate the effect of good place-making in private development? From your perspective, what would be good design and management strategies/approaches in Jie Fangbei's future place-making and development? Please state with examples.